

LIBERIA:

Focus for IDP returnees moves from conflict to development

A profile of the internal displacement situation

27 July, 2007

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Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

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OVERVIEW

Liberia: Focus for IDP returnees moves from conflict to development

With the return of the remaining registered internally displaced people (IDPs) in December 2006, the process of resolving Liberia's internal displacement crisis was considered complete. More than 326,000 IDPs returned to their areas of origin and the 35 camps that had hosted them were officially closed in April 2006, formally marking the end of a 17-year period during which much of Liberia's population of three million had at some time been internally displaced. Considerable political progress was made by the government of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to make the transition from conflict to development. The country has also started consolidating peace and stability, with the dismantling of former armed factions and the disarmament of over 100,000 combatants. The sanctions on the country's timber and diamonds have been lifted and Liberia can now progress towards sustainable post-conflict recovery and development.

Despite the fact that the humanitarian crisis is over, the humanitarian needs of many people in Liberia remain considerable. Much must still be done to enable the reconstruction of livelihoods to ensure continuing peace and stability. Years of conflict have left profound social scars and disruption, and all Liberians have been directly or indirectly affected. Acute mismanagement and corruption have devastated Liberia's infrastructure and economy, leaving it one of the poorest countries in the world. Despite the government's progress, regular and visible results are necessary if it is to continue enjoying the popular support that it needs to move forward with reconstruction. Returnees are faced with the challenge of rebuilding their lives without access to basic social services or economic opportunities, while gender-based violence and communal conflicts over land and property rights continue unabated. The high unemployment rate clouds the positive results of the disarmament and demobilisation process. An undetermined number of urban displaced people are living in often grim conditions in abandoned public or private buildings in Monrovia, and they are finding it more and more difficult to access official assistance.

Sustainable reintegration and long-term stability will only be achieved if Liberia addresses the root causes of its historical instability and rebuilds around the equal inclusion of all members of society. The government of Liberia has already taken positive steps but it will need long-term international support for the daunting task of post-conflict reconstruction.

Background and causes of displacement

The internal displacement crisis in Liberia was caused by the 14-year civil war that started in 1989. Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia launched an armed rebellion against President Samuel Doe's increasingly brutal regime, starting in the north of the country and quickly reaching the capital, Monrovia. Taylor's attempt to take control of Monrovia was prevented in 1990 by the intervention of a Nigerian-led peacekeeping mission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). However, Taylor managed to consolidate his power base with the creation of a relatively effective "shadow regime" in the rest of the country. He effectively controlled the Liberian countryside through repression and violence, including ethnic massacres and gross human rights violations. An estimated 150,000 people were killed and several hundred thousand internally displaced during this first phase of the conflict.

In 1997 Taylor won a landslide victory in the presidential contest, enabling him to claim the legitimacy he craved through the ballot box. While the international community contemplated the trade-off between stability and justice in preparing its response (J. Goodhand and P. Atkinson, 2001), predictable problems quickly surfaced: factional and ethnic tensions continued across the

country, exacerbated by Taylor's tendency to brutality and despotism and the high number of combatants still to be disarmed. Conflict broke out again in 1999 between government forces and the newly-formed rebel group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, and grew worse with the appearance of another rebel movement in 2003, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia, which launched border attacks on neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. Sporadic but intense fighting caused almost continuous displacement, eventually engulfing the capital Monrovia in June 2003 and causing a major humanitarian and human rights crisis that attracted, albeit briefly, intense international attention (UNHCR, 10 June 2003; CRS, 1 August 2003).

The arrival of ECOWAS troops in August 2003, followed by the deployment of United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) peacekeepers, helped restore calm to Monrovia, while President Taylor was forced into exile under huge international pressure. Following the national transitional government of Liberia (NTGL) led by Gyude Bryant, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was inaugurated as president in January 2006 after elections judged free and fair in October 2005. Some IDPs in camps threatened to disrupt the elections unless they were helped to return home in time to vote (IRIN, 15 September 2005), and some candidates reportedly tried to take advantage, by promising assistance to return home in exchange for votes (RI, 22 July 2005), but in the end the disruption never materialised. The National Elections Commission did amend polling regulations to enable IDPs to vote in the camps, albeit for presidential and vice-presidential elections only (NEC, 5 August 2005). Relatively few IDPs chose to vote: out of 1.2 million people registered to vote, accounting for just over one third of the general population, only five per cent were IDPs.

The new government led by President Johnson-Sirleaf is faced with huge challenges. Liberia's political history has been scarred by interlinked conflicts that "sustained division and prevented nation building" (B. Tarr, March 2007). This recurring instability can be traced back to the absence of effective governance. The Liberian state has long been centralised and authoritarian, limiting participation in policy-making processes. The short-term peace and stability of the country depends absolutely on the successful reintegration of former fighters (IRIN, 20 April 2007) who have been bemoaning their situation since the beginning of 2007 (IRIN, 9 January 2007; IRIN, 9 February 2007). Disgruntled ex-combatants were believed to be at least partly responsible for the riots that erupted in Monrovia in October 2004, killing 19 people and seriously injuring more than 200 (UN OCHA, 7 November 2004). In 2005 ex-combatants awaiting rehabilitation and reintegration became increasingly volatile, rioting on several occasions in Monrovia and provincial towns (UN SC, 17 March 2005; IRIN, 13 May 2005).

The return process

The process of return and reintegration of IDPs was launched in November 2004, as, on completion of the disarmament and demobilisation process, the counties of return were declared ready to receive returnees (IRIN, 8 November 2004). A "Community Resettlement and Reintegration Strategy" prepared by the NTGL with the support of the international community provided the framework. Thanks to improvements in security in the areas of origin and the IDPs' desire to finally return to a normal life after 14 years of civil war, the return and resettlement process was completed within 18 months, faster than originally planned (UNMIL, 17 June 2006). However, the return of IDPs was reported to be slow and regularly delayed until it became the political priority of UNMIL in view of the October 2005 elections (X. Zeebroek, July 2006). The government declared the return process to be complete in April 2006 and UNHCR officially completed its repatriation operation for Liberia's refugees in June 2007.

Despite the positive results, criticisms have been regularly voiced about the IDP return process. Some IDPs have complained over its timing, as it took place during the rainy season and in the middle of the academic year (JRS, 21 December 2006). Discrepancies in the treatment of refugees and IDPs have also raised concerns, with refugees reportedly benefiting from much better services than IDPs (A. Davies, M. Murray, October 2005), including in terms of

transportation assistance and return packages. The lack of a clear division of roles between UN agencies under the existing collaborative approach was addressed by the introduction of the cluster approach in early 2006, which also enabled greater transparency and accountability in the delivery of aid (UNHCR, 24 July 2007).

In accordance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, some IDPs exercised their right to resettle elsewhere in the country. Lack of family links and of basic services in the areas of origin, proximity to former camps or to the economic or educational opportunities in Monrovia, and new family links due to intermarriages have all played a major role in the decision to resettle. Among the different counties, Bomi has appeared to be one of the preferred destinations due to its proximity to both former camps and the capital's services (JRS, 21 December 2006). However, a number of IDPs have also decided to stay around the former camps, especially where relationships with their local communities have proved cordial and special arrangements for the use of the land have been successfully worked out.

No IDPs remaining?

Acknowledging the continued presence of people in the former camps, the IDP Consultative Forum (ICF), the inter-agency body in charge of the repatriation and reintegration process, commissioned a multi-agency assessment exercise which led to the publication of the IDP Camp Closure Assessment Report (ICF, 14 June 2006). The results indicated that 16,324 of the 28,753 Liberians still living in the former camps were registered as official residents of those camps. The remainder had never registered for return. Included in these numbers were (registered) IDPs who had decided to go back to the camps after returning to their communities of origin, and also some local residents who had moved into the camps after the IDPs left. In December 2006, UNHCR brought an end to the IDP return movement by helping a final 5,245 IDPs to return to their areas of origin (UNMIL, 10 December 2006; UNHCR, 12 December 2006). An additional 122 unregistered families, identified as vulnerable, were later helped to return in April and May 2007 (UNHCR, 24 July 2007).

Some doubts have, however, been raised about the accuracy of the figures. A report published by the Jesuit Refugee Service to assess the return process six months after the closure of the camps raised concerns over two main issues: firstly the lack of a proper registration procedure and the sole use for this purpose of the World Food Programme's logs; and secondly the reliability of the methodology used by UNHCR in the camp closure assessment exercise (JRS, 21 December 2006). Furthermore, in an effort to move forward from relief to development and to consider the humanitarian and development needs across the whole of the country, the distinction between local communities, returnees and IDPs is being abandoned. However, following its May 2007 real time evaluation, UNHCR has acknowledged the presence of a residual caseload of internally displaced people in former camps, and an undetermined number of people in a situation of urban displacement (UNHCR, 24 July 2007).

The government of Liberia, with the support of the international community, made a clear policy decision in assigning legitimate IDP status only to those Liberians living in official camps. This approach left out of the return process those people who had found refuge in Monrovia and who are still occupying public or private buildings. The Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission has drawn up a list of public buildings occupied by "squatters" but has made no suggestions on how and where to relocate these people. The issue has been discussed within the ICF, but so far no plan has been endorsed. Even though the challenge lies in the difficulty of distinguishing legitimate IDPs who need protection assistance from the rest of the groups living in the buildings, humanitarian actors have warned that the problem will worsen over time if no proper solutions are found. As a report commissioned by the Camp Coordination and Management Cluster has pointed out, they are IDPs insofar as they have not been able to either return home or integrate in the local community (D.Lilly, forthcoming).

The challenges for returnees

Returning IDPs have remained vulnerable to human rights violations – particularly teenage mothers, children and young girls. Even though it is very difficult to establish the actual incidence of rape as many cases tend to go unreported, addressing sexual violence remains a top priority (Action Aid, March 2007). Given the polarisation of gender roles brought about by the civil war, gender-based violence has been more and more a part of family relationships, with domestic violence becoming a common feature in return communities (JRS, 21 December 2006; J. Munala, January 2007). While positive steps have been taken, with the adoption in December 2005 of new legislation that made rape illegal for the first time in Liberia, and the formulation of a multi-dimensional national action plan (E. Johnson-Sirleaf, January 2007), gender-based violence is still rampant, mainly due to a persistent culture of impunity for sexual violence, and a judicial system which is still ineffective (UNMIL, May 2007; L. Bruthus, January 2007).

Since the end of the IDP (and refugee) return process, there have also been increasingly frequent clashes between rival ethnic groups over land and property ownership, particularly in Nimba county, which saw some of the heaviest fighting during the civil war. Tensions between ethnic Mandingo groups on one side and Gio and Mano people on the other, engendered by Charles Taylor during the 1990s in his quest for economic and political power, have erupted into violence more frequently since Mandingo people have returned from camps within Liberia and across the sub-region to find their homes occupied (IRIN, 8 February 2007; GoL/Ad Hoc Presidential Commission, October 2006).

As evidenced by the return of some IDPs to their former camps, there is clearly a severe lack of basic services and infrastructure in key areas of return. Lofa county, which was once home to many of Liberia's IDPs, was almost entirely devastated in the war. Almost two thirds of communities in Liberia do not have adequate shelter. The healthcare system throughout the country remains in emergency phase, with agencies and NGOs implementing more than 70 per cent of health service delivery (UN, 12 February 2007). With their withdrawal planned for 2007 within the transition from relief to development, a worrying gap in provision is already expected. More than 75 per cent of the population has no access to referral care services such as essential and emergency obstetric care, resulting in some of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world. The lack of water and sanitation facilities is a matter for serious concern: less than 10 per cent of the rural population is estimated to have access to safe water, resulting in widespread infection from various water-borne diseases (UN, 12 February 2007).

Liberia is also one of the most food-insecure countries in the world, with less than 10 per cent of arable land being cultivated. This is due to a number of factors, including the continued disruption of agricultural systems due to the displacement of farming communities, limited access to food due to absence of market mechanisms, high unemployment and lack of economic opportunities, socio-economic dislocation and the breakdown of family and community coping mechanisms (GoL, January 2006) especially among IDPs who have been displaced repeatedly since 1999. In March/April 2006, the Government of Liberia conducted a countrywide Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey which found 11 per cent of the rural population to be completely food insecure, rising to 28 per cent in the areas that were most affected by war and displacement (GoL, October 2006). These results add to the acute shortage of housing and shelter opportunities which prevents people from resettling and discourages the movement of qualified staff towards rural areas.

Reconstruction of livelihoods is the basic pre-condition for sustainable peace and stability. In an economy where unemployment rates are especially high among youth, the long-term success of reintegration strategies will largely depend on the creation of viable economic opportunities in the return communities. A joint study conducted by the International Labour Office and UNHCR found

that the majority of youth and adolescent returnees will have to find employment opportunities within the informal sector despite the lack of policies and programmes to sustain them (ILO-UNHCR, December 2006). As mentioned in the UN's Common Humanitarian Action Plan, "despite the end of the humanitarian crises, there remain urgent humanitarian needs across Liberia" (UN, 12 February 2007); and even though the lack of basic social infrastructure affects in equal terms the different parts of the country, return areas need to be prioritised to facilitate social reintegration (*ibid.*).

Government's actions must show visible results

Liberia has made significant progress in consolidating peace and democracy. The country is on the right track towards economic recovery, sustainable growth and longer-term stability, but huge challenges still remain. The long-standing constraints of weak national response capacity and limited humanitarian access due to endemic insecurity and poor infrastructure have improved. Restoration of basic services in areas of return and generation of employment opportunities remain at the top of the government's list of priorities, but visible progress is still limited.

After years as a pariah state during the rule of Charles Taylor, the free and fair elections held in October 2005 provided the first essential step towards restoring Liberia's credibility. More than one year after the election of the first female head of state in Africa, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's government has impressed international donors with its efforts to achieve financial accountability. In a country where donor assistance has been undermined by "corrupt diversion and political manipulation of aid" (K. Savage, April 2007), this newly-acquired image helped to enable considerable progress on the issue of debt relief and debt reduction at the Liberia Partners Forum in February 2007 (UN News, 16 February 2007). Having been up to \$3.7 billion in debt, Liberia was able to secure a US offer for debt relief, soon to be followed by several other countries (IRIN, 14 February 2007). The Government also received positive feedback on the implementation of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme, a three-year anti-corruption plan drafted and imposed by key donors in 2005, and on its interim poverty reduction strategy, which highlights the challenges for the transition from relief to development (GoL, January 2006). Finally, in "recognition of the progress made by Liberia", the UN Security Council lifted a six-year old ban on diamond exports in April 2007, even though the diamond mining is to be legalised again only after the government introduces an effective monitoring system (UN SC, 27 April 2007; IRIN, 5 June 2007).

Considerable efforts have also been made to addressing the deep-rooted problem of impunity, most notably with the June 2006 transfer of Charles Taylor to The Hague to face a UN Special Court's charges of war crimes committed during the conflict in neighbouring Sierra Leone, and the launch of Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, again in June 2006 (IRIN, 5 June 2006). However, as Amnesty International has warned, there are both political and practical challenges in addressing impunity in Liberia (AI, 15 February 2007). Politically, the pervasive culture of violence during the 14 years of conflict has left the political class compromised, with current Members of Parliament facing allegations of human rights abuses; practically, the work of the Commission is hampered by the difficulties of operating in a context of post-war reconstruction and by a chronic lack of funding.

Liberia still faces massive reconstruction and development challenges, and humanitarian support is still essential in principle areas of return such as Lofa and Bomi counties. With some 500,000 displaced people having returned or resettled in areas where basic services including provision of drinking water, healthcare and education are critically inadequate, the situation remains fragile (UN SC, 15 March 2007). Constant tangible improvements are necessary for the government to continue enjoying people's support given the length of time that the task of rebuilding Liberia will take (BBC, 16 January 2007; NRC, 31 December 2006), but the path will not be smooth; while the government faces damaging allegations of corruption by the country's auditor general (BBC,

21 June 2007) and legal procedures get underway against alleged coup plotters (BBC, 21 July 2007), steps “critical to the consolidation of peace in the country are yet to be completed, including the reintegration of ex-combatants, the resettlement of returnees, the reform of the judiciary and the extension of the rule of law throughout the country” (UN SC, 15 March 2007).

Positive reviews and outstanding challenges for the cluster approach

The UN manages the humanitarian response in Liberia through UNMIL. Having absorbed the office of the Humanitarian Coordinator, UNMIL has maintained since the beginning of 2003 a fully integrated structure, led by the Special Representative of the Secretary General.

In 2006, in order to help Liberia’s new government meet its responsibility to assist and protect both returning IDPs and the “residual” IDPs still living in camps or in public buildings, the international humanitarian community in the country reorganised in line with the global humanitarian reform process to overcome a legacy of weak, confusing coordination mechanisms and bitter divisions, particularly between the UNMIL and humanitarian agencies (A. Davies, M. Murray, October 2005).

The 2006 introduction in Liberia of the new cluster approach – whereby clear responsibilities have been assigned to lead organisations at sector level in order to strengthen the accountability and predictability of humanitarian response – appears to have addressed at least some of the previous coordination problems, helped also by the creation of an Inter-Agency Standing Committee country team including non-UN organisations. UNHCR, which had already played a key role in the IDP return process in Liberia, assumed cluster lead for camp management, emergency shelter and protection (UNHCR, 21 April 2006). As part of its new responsibilities UNHCR elaborated both a camp closure and a protection strategy, which established a monitoring framework mechanism in camps and areas of return.

Despite concerns voiced by some international NGOs over the risks of undermining the UN-NGO relationship and the “humanitarian space” (X. Zeebroek, July 2006; IASC, 26 October 2006), the cluster approach has received positive reviews. The results of UNHCR’s real-time evaluation presented in June 2007 show that there is “strong participation by all actors and good leadership in the Liberia cluster approach” (UNHCR, 24 July 2007). It is further noted that the designation of cluster leads has given legitimacy, accountability and predictability to the operational responses and that there is an excellent cooperation between the international community, the government and the NGO community. The availability of funds has been crucial to UNHCR’s ability to provide a coordination role, whereas for other cluster leads the central emergency response fund (CERF) has played an essential support role. The previous emergency response fund in Liberia had directed the largest share of funds to support the activity of local NGOs, but it was closed at the end of 2005 despite the dissent of some of the beneficiaries (UN OCHA, January 2007). Inter-cluster coordination is clearly of crucial importance to avoid overlaps and make certain that all the gaps are accounted for.

Although the situation in Liberia is considered to be improving, and no Consolidated Appeal Process is planned for 2007, several challenges still face the international response. The Common Humanitarian Action Plan, launched in February 2007 to provide a bridging fund for humanitarian activities during the transition from emergency to recovery and development, had received little over one third of its funding requirements (\$45.9 million of an estimated total of \$117 million) by 21 July 2007 (UNMIL, 23 July 2007). In order to avoid gaps in the provision of assistance, continued funding must be ensured while the role of the UNDP-led early recovery cluster must be expanded, especially as some of the humanitarian actors begin to withdraw or scale down their operations (UNMIL, 17 June 2007; UNMIL, 10 June 2007).

CAUSES AND BACKGROUND

Background

Chronology of key events, 1980-2007

BBC News, 4 June 2007

"1847 - Constitution modelled on that of the US is drawn up.

1847 July - Liberia becomes independent.

1917 - Liberia declares war on Germany, giving the Allies a base in West Africa.

1926 - Firestone Tyre and Rubber Company opens rubber plantation on land granted by government. Rubber production becomes backbone of economy.

1936 - Forced-labour practices abolished.

1943 - William Tubman elected president.

1944 - Government declares war on the Axis powers.

1951 May - Women and indigenous property owners vote in the presidential election for the first time.

1958 - Racial discrimination outlawed.

1971 - Tubman dies and is succeeded by William Tolbert Jr.

1974 - Government accepts aid from the Soviet Union for the first time.

1978 - Liberia signs trade agreement with the European Economic Community.

1979 - More than 40 people are killed in riots following a proposed increase in the price of rice.

Years of instability

1980 - Master Sergeant Samuel Doe stages military coup. Tolbert and 13 of his aides are publicly executed. A People's Redemption Council headed by Doe suspends constitution and assumes full powers.

1984 - Doe's regime allows return of political parties following pressure from the United States and other creditors.

1985 - Doe wins presidential election.

1989 - National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor begins an uprising against the government.

1990 - Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) sends peacekeeping force. Doe is executed by a splinter group of the NPFL.

1991 - Ecowas and the NPFL agree to disarm and set up an Interim Government of National Unity.

1992 - The NPFL launches an all-out assault on West African peacekeepers in Monrovia, the latter respond by bombing NPFL positions outside the capital and pushing the NPFL back into the countryside.

Tentative ceasefire

1993 - Warring factions devise a plan for a National Transitional Government and a ceasefire, but this fails to materialise and fighting resumes.

1994 - Warring factions agree a timetable for disarmament and the setting up of a joint Council of State.

1995 - Peace agreement signed.

1996 April - Factional fighting resumes and spreads to Monrovia.

1996 August - West African peacekeepers begin disarmament programme, clear land mines and reopen roads, allowing refugees to return.

1997 July - Presidential and legislative elections held. Charles Taylor wins a landslide and his National Patriotic Party wins a majority in the National Assembly. International observers declare the elections free and fair.

Border fighting

1999 January - Ghana and Nigeria accuse Liberia of supporting Revolutionary United Front rebels in Sierra Leone. Britain and the US threaten to suspend aid to Liberia.

1999 April - Rebel forces thought to have come from Guinea attack town of Voinjama. Fighting displaces more than 25,000 people.

1999 September - Guinea accuses Liberian forces of entering its territory and attacking border villages.

2000 September - Liberian forces launch "massive offensive" against rebels in the north. Liberia accuses Guinean troops of shelling border villages.

2001 February - Liberian government says Sierra Leonean rebel leader Sam Bockarie, also known as Mosquito, has left the country.

2001 May - UN Security Council reimposes arms embargo to punish Taylor for trading weapons for diamonds from rebels in Sierra Leone.

2002 January - More than 50,000 Liberians and Sierra Leonean refugees flee fighting. In February Taylor declares a state of emergency.

Rebel offensives

2003 March - Rebels advance to within 10km of Monrovia.

2003 June - Talks in Ghana aimed at ending rebellion overshadowed by indictment accusing President Taylor of war crimes over his alleged backing of rebels in Sierra Leone.

2003 July - Fighting intensifies; rebels battle for control of Monrovia. Several hundred people are killed. West African regional group Ecowas agrees to provide peacekeepers.

Taylor in exile

2003 August - Nigerian peacekeepers arrive. Charles Taylor leaves Liberia after handing power to his deputy Moses Blah. US troops arrive. Interim government and rebels sign peace accord in Ghana. Gyude Bryant chosen to head interim administration.

2003 September-October - US forces pull out. UN launches major peacekeeping mission, deploying thousands of troops.

2004 February - International donors pledge more than \$500m in reconstruction aid.

2004 October - Riots in Monrovia leave 16 people dead; the UN says former combatants were behind the violence.

2005 September - Liberia agrees that the international community should supervise its finances in an effort to counter corruption.

Johnson-Sirleaf elected

2005 23 November - Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf becomes the first woman to be elected as an African head of state. She takes office the following January.

2006 February - Truth and Reconciliation Commission is set up to investigate human rights abuses between 1979 and 2003.

2006 April - Former president Charles Taylor appears before a UN-backed court in Sierra Leone on charges of crimes against humanity. In June the Netherlands-based International Criminal Court agrees to host his trial.

2006 June - UN Security Council eases a ban on weapons sales so Liberia can arm newly trained security forces. An embargo on Liberian timber exports is lifted shortly afterwards.

2006 July - President Johnson-Sirleaf switches on generator-powered street lights in the capital, which has been without electricity for 15 years.

2007 April - UN Security Council votes to lift its ban on Liberian diamond exports. The ban was imposed in 2001 to stem the flow of "blood diamonds", which helped to fund the civil war.

2007 May - UN urges Liberia to outlaw trial by ordeal.

2007 June - Start of Charles Taylor's war crimes trial in The Hague, where he stands accused of instigating atrocities in Sierra Leone."

Seven years of widespread violence and displacement precede the 1996 Abuja Peace Agreement

- People started to flee as civil war broke out in 1989
- Proliferation of armed factions caused anarchy and many sought shelter in Monrovia
- The capital Monrovia engulfed by violence for several weeks in April 1996, displacing some 46 percent of Monrovia's population
- Peace agreement facilitated as ECOMOG gained control over Monrovia in May 1996
- Charles Taylor won 1997 Presidential elections in an atmosphere of intimidation

Kpatindé, 1996, "Internally Displaced Persons", para. 8

"Like the 750,000 Liberian refugees who managed to flee to Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, the troubles of Liberia's internally displaced began in December 1989, when the NPFL rebels took up arms to overthrow the regime of Samuel K. Doe. Caught in the crossfire, many civilians had no option but to head for neighboring countries – especially Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea – or to the capital, which was considered a safe haven once the ECOMOG troops had established control there in 1990. Subsequently, factions proliferated, essentially along ethnic lines, and anarchy reigned, forcing an ever-increasing number of Liberians to flee first to Monrovia and then on to the neighboring countries."

Amnesty International, 20 June 1997, "Liberian Tragedy"

"The warring factions have terrorized the local population. Fighters have mutilated captives, using their victims' intestines to cordon off areas newly controlled by the victorious group. They have cut up human bodies and scattered them around villages. Many areas have passed under the control of successive warring factions and Liberia has effectively become a series of competing fiefdoms ruled by faction leaders.

[...]

All parties to the continuing conflict committed gross human rights abuses. Fighters from all the warring factions tortured and deliberately killed unarmed civilians suspected of opposing them, as they seized territory or raided another group's territory. All armed groups were responsible for deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, although in many cases it was not possible to establish which group was responsible."

Human Rights Watch, 17 November 1997, para. 4

"Tens of thousands of Liberians were killed during the war and almost half the country's population displaced. Despite the presence of regional peacekeepers and a United Nations military observer mission, fighting resumed numerous times during the war, and the number of factions proliferated over the years. All the factions, including Charles Taylor's faction, were responsible for terrorizing the local populations in order to loot and to discourage support for rival factions. Widespread atrocities against civilians were committed including killings, torture, forced labor, and extortion."

UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 23 October 1996, sect. 4.5

Many thousands of persons were forced to flee Monrovia in 1996:

"Prior to the 6 April [1996] fighting there were approximately 750,000 IDPs in Liberia. Of these, an estimated 300,000 were located in shelters in and around Monrovia. The 6 April fighting has exacerbated the situation. Approximately 46 percent, some 361,880, of the estimated 780,000

inhabitants of Monrovia had to abandon their homes. Of these, 30 percent are in shelters and 17 percent have fled the greater Monrovia area. These populations are completely dependent on the international community for all their basic needs."

US Committee for Refugees, 1997, p. 77

"Renewed violence in April [1996] pushed an estimated 300,000 persons from their homes in Monrovia and devastated the morale of many Liberians. Families fled to Monrovia's schools, warehouses, dilapidated government buildings, and to private homes in safer parts of the city. Up to 20,000 fled to a Monrovia military base that subsequently came under attack. Another 20,000 took refuge in the U.S. embassy's residential compound. Outside Monrovia, tens of thousands fled to the central Liberian town of Gbarnga in search of safety."

Kpatindé, 1996, "1996 in Review", paras. 3-4

"1996 has been a year marked by a renewal of violence, especially in Monrovia, which had until then been considered a haven of peace. The fighting began on 6 April when the provisional authorities tried to arrest the leader of one of the factions, Roosevelt Johnson, who is a suspected accomplice in a murder case.

Starting on 6 April and for several weeks, Monrovia was engulfed by violence and horror. Stores were looted. Offices and warehouses of the humanitarian agencies were sacked, forcing them to evacuate all non-essential personnel. Nothing seemed to stop the spiral of violence. Not even an orphanage was spared. On 30 April armed men assaulted and looted the Vahun Children's Center, an orphanage run jointly by a local agency and UNHCR, where 75 unaccompanied Sierra Leonean children and some 20 Liberian orphans were sheltered. "

UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 23 October 1996, sect. 2.3

"The 6 April crisis marked yet another tragic episode in the more than six-year-old conflict. It is estimated that 46 percent of Monrovia's population, some 361,880 persons, were displaced and some 3,000 persons killed in the fighting."

UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 23 October 1996, sect. 2.1

"The fighting that erupted in Monrovia on 6 April 1996 paralysed the Abuja peace process launched in August 1995. The April crisis, characterised by widespread looting and a complete breakdown of law and order, continued until the Military Observer Group of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOMOG) peace-keeping force asserted a tenuous control over the city in late May.

Intensive diplomacy by various parties to put the peace process back on track culminated in the Abuja Agreement of 17 August 1996, reached exactly one year after the Abuja Agreement of 1995."

US Department of State, 26 February 1999, para. 1

"In July 1997 Taylor won the presidency, and his National Patriotic Party (NPP) won three-quarters of the seats in the Congress, in elections that were administratively free and transparent, but were conducted in an atmosphere of intimidation, as most voters believed that Taylor's forces would resume fighting if Taylor were to lose. The leaders of the former warring factions, including Taylor, did not make any serious attempt to reconcile their differences. In his first year in office, Taylor restored the trappings and ceremony customarily associated with the presidency, but his NPP Government did not pass any significant legislation. The judiciary is subject to political influence, economic pressure, and corruption."

Instability and new displacement follow as new rebel groups re-ignite conflict, 1999

- In 1999 Liberian rebels operating from Guinea initiated attacks in Lofa County close to the Guinea border
- By mid-2000 the rebels became identified as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)

Amnesty International, 1 August 2001

"The exact identity of the armed opposition groups -- and their leaders -- which have been attacking Liberia from Guinea since 1999 has been difficult to establish. However, since the beginning of the latest round of incursions in July 2000, attacks on Liberian territory have been claimed by a group called the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). The LURD is reportedly composed of former fighters from the civil war of 1989 to 1996, many of whom became refugees in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire after the end of the war."

Human Rights Watch, 2000

"In July 2000, another invasion was launched by a group calling itself Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) from the Guinea border into Liberia, resulting in fighting and displacement yet again in Lofa County. These periodic eruptions of violence contributed to the continuing destabilization of the subregion, and within Liberia assumed an ethnic dimension as the government indiscriminately blamed members of the Krahn and Mandingo communities for the attacks."

International Federation of the Red Cross, 20 February 2001

"In July 2000, armed insurgency and sporadic gun battles occurred at the border towns of Voinjama in Lofa County, causing loss of life, the destruction of property, the looting of homes and the displacement of over 45,000 persons to Salayea District, close to Bong County, in Upper Lofa and Camp Anthel in Lower Lofa Counties. Recently, the government announced the expulsion of the armed insurgents. In October 2000, ethnic violence erupted between the Mandingos and Mano people in Nimba County. Several people were injured, and houses and vehicles were destroyed."

US Committee for Refugees, 28 August 2000, para. 2

"Liberian government officials claimed that an incursion by armed dissidents in July took control of several towns in northern Liberia's Upper Lofa County and forced 30,000 people to flee their villages. The government declared a state of emergency in the county in mid-July."

International Federation of the Red Cross, 19 October 2000

"Accusations by both sides over border raids launched by unidentified gunmen have created poor diplomatic relations between the two countries. President Lansana Conte of Guinea has accused Liberians of involvement in cross-border attacks on Guinean villages, while Liberia accuses Guinea of harbouring insurgents who are fighting government forces in northern Liberia."

Two years of continuous deterioration, August 2001-August 2003

- Reported in October 2001 that clashes were getting closer towards Monrovia
- President Taylor declared state of emergency on 8 February 2002 as rebels advanced towards Monrovia
- The Liberian government blamed its failure to defeat the rebels on the UN arms embargo on the country

- Arrival of new rebel movement called Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) in south eastern Liberia (April 2003)

October 2001

USAID, 3 October 2001

"The security situation in Liberia remains precarious. Fighting between GOL troops and anti-government forces continues to displaced thousands of Liberians. Until August [2001], fighting had been concentrated in the northern Liberian county of Lofa. However, in the past two months clashes have been reported in Gbarpolu, closer to the capital of Monrovia."

February 2002

UNHCR, 21 February 2002

"The fighting Tuesday in Bong Mine, just 80 kilometres northeast of the capital, marked the second time this month that rebels belonging to Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy have succeeded in bringing the fighting to the doors of the capital. A rebel attack on Klay Junction north of Monrovia last February 7 sent tens of thousands of people fleeing, including some 6,000 who sought shelter in refugee camps established for Sierra Leoneans. "

IRIN, 8 February 2002

"Liberian President Charles Taylor declared a state of emergency with immediate effect on Friday [8 February 2002] after shooting was reported close to the capital, Monrovia, Information Minister Reginald Goodridge said. Speaking on CNN, Goodridge said the measure was taken because of 'imminent danger' in Liberia as a result of the activity of armed rebels.

On Thursday, shooting had been heard at Klay Junction, a crossroads about 50 km north of the capital, on Thursday and internally displaced people (IDPs) fled the area, the head of delegation of Medecins sans Frontieres-France in Monrovia, Giuseppe Scollo, told IRIN on Friday. 'We have no more access to the area,' he said.

The IDPs had moved south to Klay following a rebel attack nearly two weeks ago near a temporary IDP camp at Sawmill, some 100 km north of Monrovia. Scollo said there were around 10,000 IDPs at Klay a few days ago, but we have no idea how many there are now,' he said. ."

February 2003

IRIN, 13 February 2003

"Fighting between Liberian government troops and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebel group has spread from western and northern regions to the southwestern Atlantic port of Robertsport, humanitarian sources in Monrovia reported on Wednesday.

Robertsport, 78 km west of the capital, Monrovia, is the provincial capital of Grand Cape Mount county. It is strategic because it would give the LURD access to the sea for possible movement of supplies and open up a new frontline near the border with Sierra Leone, the sources said."

IRIN, 10 February 2003

"Fighting between government troops and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebels resumed last week in western Liberia after a weeks-long lull. It has cut off humanitarian access to large numbers of displaced people, mainly women and children, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported on Friday. "

UN OCHA, 26 March 2003

"Fighting between Liberian government troops and rebels of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) group was reported on Tuesday at Kley junction, 35 km from the capital, Monrovia, as the rebels moved closer to the capital.

The sound of gunfire, which started at midday, caused panic among thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in several nearby camps including Ricks, Jah Tondo and Water-in-the-Desert. Residents of Monrovia were also worried and the main markets of Duala and Waterside were closed down. Cellular communication was interrupted briefly. Humanitarian sources said their staff were stopped by loyalist forces from driving out of the capital."

Global Security, 2003

"In early 2003 a dissident movement known as the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) surfaced in the south-eastern region of Liberia. MODEL was described by one of the LURD leaders, Joe Willie, in an interview on 9 April 2003 with the BBC radio "as an integrated force..." of LURD. According to reports by local newspapers, MODEL appears to be the result of the breaking apart of LURD. However, this new group is reported to have gained ground in the south-eastern counties, namely, Grand Gedeh, Sinoe and Grand Kru. Its main target seemed to be the port of Buchanan in Grand Bassa County, from where the Government of Liberia is exporting the country's major produce, timber. On 27 April 2003, fighters belonging to MODEL engaged in a major battle to take the town of Greenville, the main port of south-eastern Liberia, where several logging companies have based their operations. The rebels also attacked government troops on the road between the towns of Tappita and Gborlor-Diallah close to the Ivorian border. At the time of submission of this report, fighting is said to be ongoing around Greenville as government troops attempt to recapture the strategic town. Several logging companies have closed down their operations in Sinoe County as a result of the fighting, while ships were diverted from Greenville port to the port of Monrovia."

IRIN 28 April 2003

"A new rebel group, Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) has attacked the strategic southeast Liberian coastal town of Greenville, while an older rebel group hit Tappita in the northeastern county of Nimba.

Defence sources told IRIN that MODEL attacked the port city of Greenville, provincial headquarters of Sinoe County, on Saturday. They said the attackers came from Paynes town, also in Sinoe. The county is close to Grand Gedeh, which has seen fighting between rebels and pro-government forces for the past few months. Grand Gedeh is on the border with western Cote d'Ivoire.

Several armed groups are reported to be operating in eastern Liberia and western Cote d'Ivoire: forces loyal to the Ivorian government; Ivorian rebels; forces opposed to Liberian President Charles Taylor; and armed groups which work for one or other of the belligerents or for themselves, according to humanitarian sources.

Residents had fled Greenville for Buchanan, a coastal city farther west, before Saturday's attack. Logging companies in the area suspended operations.

Defense sources said Tappita, the largest town in Nimba County other than Ganta, was also attacked by MODEL on Saturday. The attack came after the rebel group overran government troops at a location between Tappita and Zwedru, near the border with Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. The attack on Tappita came as government troops failed in an attempt to retake the border town of Ganta from another rebel group, the LURD."

Ethnicity has been one factor behind the fighting (2005)

- During the Liberian conflict, warring factions have manipulated ethnicity as a means to recruit fighters
- Ethnic Krahn and Mandingo people have traditionally been regarded as allies of the former Doe regime and as enemies of Charles Taylor, who found support among the Gio and Mano tribes
- Discrimination has been particularly rife against the Mandingos, including during voter registration for the October 2005 elections

Human Rights Watch, 2000

"Ethnic Krahn and Mandingo people, historically seen to be allied with the repression of the former Doe government and with anti-Taylor factions during the war, were particularly susceptible to harassment at the hands of the state security apparatus. Following the violence in Monrovia in 1998, Krahn were targeted for extrajudicial executions, harassment, and politically motivated criminal charges. In the aftermath of the Lofa County incursions in 1999, security forces killed, tortured, and mistreated civilians, particularly members of the Mandingo ethnic group. During the incursions and counter-attacks in Lofa County, hundreds were killed and thousands of citizens as well as Sierra Leonean refugees were forced to flee the area. Although some of the alleged abuses by the security forces were investigated by the government, in all cases security personnel were treated leniently or exonerated. Since the 1999 and 2000 rebel incursions in Lofa County, Mandingo residents remain afraid to return to their homes."

IRIN-WA, 15 October 2000

"Liberia's vice-president, Moses Blah, has warned against rising ethnic unrest in the northern county of Nimba.

Blah, quoted on state-run radio, described the tension between members of the Mandingo and Mano ethnic groups as 'disturbing'. Blah headed a presidential committee that visited Nimba County last weekend to investigate the ethnic clashes.

Liberian newspapers reported on 10 October [2000] that armed police had been deployed to the Nimba town of Ganta to quell riots between groups of Manos and Mandingos. Reports said the riots in Ganta, which is located about 220 km northeast of Monrovia, had left the city centre deserted and some homes and businesses looted.

Some reports said the clashes are rooted in a land dispute. The unrest has been aggravated by tension between the Liberian and Guinean governments, which have accused each other of backing dissidents. Mandingos are considered by many Liberians to be close to Guinea."

UN, November 2000

"The festering ethnic clashes between the Mandingo, Gio and Mano tribes in Nimba and Bong Counties could continue and cause further internal displacement."

IRIN, 28 August 2003

"Liberian state radio reported that MODEL killed hundreds of people in Bahn. Information Minister, Reginald Goodridge, told IRIN the killings were "tribal revenge killings" by the Krahn tribe who dominated MODEL against Gio and Mano tribes, who supported Taylor.

MODEL issued a statement denying that it had killed civilians. However eyewitnesses told international journalists that the rebels hacked at women and children with knives, opening up their stomachs. They burnt also down whole villages."

Amnesty International, 19 September 2005

“During the internal armed conflict, the leaders of the various warring factions manipulated ethnicity as a means to recruit fighters. The inter-ethnic hatreds that were nurtured during the war have had a lasting impact, leading to large-scale violence that the authorities have had difficulty in controlling. Few attempts have been made in the transitional period to address this issue at its core. Amnesty International believes that the government must tackle it as a priority, and that it should be a central focus of the work of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights Commission – one of whose functions is to address discrimination – and of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

[...]

Discrimination against the Mandingo community is rife, members of the community told Amnesty International in meetings in May 2005 with civil society organizations in Bong and Montserrado counties. They complained of being subjected to discrimination during the registration of voters for the October elections because of their names, appearance, speech or clothes. They said they had to produce more evidence that they were of Liberian nationality than other ethnic groups in Liberia. Voter registration guidelines require two people already registered to vote to vouch that the applicant is Liberian and a member of the community. Members of the Mandingo community told Amnesty International that they had asked for a meeting with officials of the National Elections Commission but had received no response.

Some local media organizations and non-governmental organizations reported similar allegations. However, government officials – including from the National Elections Commission – and some UN staff told Amnesty International that there had been only isolated instances of discrimination or denial of voter registration to Mandingo people, and that it was not a widespread problem.

Such differing perceptions are of concern. Amnesty International believes that, if officials are widely believed to have discriminated against a sector of the population, the government should make public its opposition to such discrimination on ethnic grounds, and should take action to investigate allegations of discrimination during voter registration and to prevent it during the October vote, for example by the deployment of monitors at ballot stations.”

Despite progress towards peace, many challenges remain (2005)

- According to the UN Secretary General, despite certain gains in the peace process many challenges remain
- Ongoing concerns include reports of corruption within the transitional government, disgruntled ex-combatants resorting to violence and insecurity arising from property disputes
- Lack of funding, particularly for reintegration projects for ex-combatants, is a paramount concern

UN Security Council, 17 March 2005, paras. 2-3, 14-20, 26

“During the reporting period, some progress was made in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Preparations for the October 2005 elections remained on course, as the National Elections Commission announced the electoral timetable. Electoral activity continued to intensify as political parties and aspiring presidential candidates discussed potential alliances. The former armed factions turned over a new leaf, with some forming new political parties and others associating themselves with existing parties. Increased numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees returned to their homes in the counties. The training programme for the new Liberian police service made steady progress. The process of restoring county administration continued, albeit at a slow pace. Limited progress was made in efforts to entrench the rule of law and improve the human rights situation in the country and the National

Transitional Government of Liberia continued to function, notwithstanding serious internal tensions.

Despite the gains, the peace process still faces many challenges. There continues to be concern about the performance of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, particularly its lack of transparency in the collection and use of revenues and the resistance of some government and public corporation officials to reforms and audits aimed at fighting corruption.

[...]

The overall security situation in Liberia remained calm but fragile during the reporting period. There were several incidents of lawlessness and violent unrest, but no major disturbances that threatened the peace process.

In December 2004, the security situation in Monrovia was marred by large demonstrations of students from the Monrovia Consolidated School System protesting the closure of schools. They blocked roads and attacked vehicles belonging to government officials and members of the National Transitional Legislative Assembly. Protests were also conducted by civil servants against the non-payment of salary arrears dating back to the Charles Taylor Administration.

Ex-combatants awaiting rehabilitation and reintegration opportunities also became increasingly volatile, holding protests during January and February 2005 in Monrovia, Buchanan and Gbarnga. On 26 January, ex-combatants blocked roads in the Gbarnga area with burning tyres and furniture and on 8 February, 50 former combatants armed with stones blocked the gates to the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration in Monrovia.

Ex-combatants have also caused disturbances at rubber plantations. On 14 February, former MODEL combatants engaged in acts of violence at the Sinoe rubber plantation during an ownership dispute. The plantation was subsequently closed pending the finalization of a new ownership agreement. In Bomi County, excombatants from the former LURD continued to occupy the Guthrie plantation illegally, warning that they were prepared to use violence to maintain control.

In Pleebo and Harper, Maryland County, there were alarming incidents of mob violence from 16 to 23 January, resulting from allegations that the disappearance of certain individuals was due to ritual killings. In Harper, these incidents resulted in the destruction of police and United Nations property, as well as injury to members of the local population. The National Transitional Government of Liberia responded by instituting a dusk-to-dawn curfew and UNMIL troops and formed police units acted quickly to restore calm. The curfew was eventually lifted on 7 February.

As more refugees and internally displaced persons return to their original homes, property disputes continue to pose security challenges. At the same time, reconciliation efforts have continued in order to minimize tensions between ethnic groups, including the Mandingo, Mano and Gio peoples, as well as the Mande Mel tribal groups.

New security concerns and challenges are arising as the October elections approach. Potential catalysts for instability include the escalating price of essential food items, particularly rice, which is the staple food, salary arrears claimed by civil servants, labour disputes and growing frustration among ex-combatants who have not had access to reintegration opportunities. It is also likely that disaffection will rise among unemployed youth, students and government workers, who are dissatisfied with the Government's failure to deliver basic services.

[...]

The most pressing challenge is to create long-term reintegration opportunities for more than 100,000 ex-combatants. Only 25,591 ex-combatants are currently participating in reintegration projects funded by the UNDP Trust Fund, the European Commission and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Ongoing reintegration projects consist of public works and infrastructure development (6,891 ex-combatants), vocational training (4,214 ex-combatants), agricultural projects (1,496 ex-combatants), formal education (11,000 ex-combatants) and apprenticeship schemes (1,990 ex-combatants). A number of projects in the pipeline would provide immediate opportunities for 44,502 ex-combatants. However, many of these projects have yet to commence owing to a lack of funding. The importance of ensuring that ex-combatants are provided with sustainable reintegration opportunities to assist them in becoming productive members of their communities cannot be overemphasized. In that regard, I appeal to the international community to contribute generously towards reducing the current funding shortfall of \$40 million, which is urgently needed to provide reintegration projects for ex-combatants."

For political analysis see International Crisis Group, [Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States](#), 8 December 2004

Illicit diamond and timber trade have fuelled the Liberian conflict, 2000-2006

- Uncontrolled logging and diamond mining in Liberia remains a threat to regional peace and security , according to campaigning NGO Global Witness, resulting in cross-border trafficking of resources, weapons and mercenaries
- A UN sanctions regime was again renewed at the end of 2005, banning the sale or supply of arms, diamonds and timber, as well as travel, imposed by resolution 1521 (2003)

UN News, 21 June 2005

"Underlying the Sierra Leone conflict and its spread in the sub-region is the trade in its illegally mined diamonds, and the proliferation of small arms in the entire region. Instability in Sierra Leone and Guinea is fuelled by armed support being provided outside the country to the RUF in Sierra Leone and the related insurgents who attack Guinea. Trafficking in diamonds and gun-running are used to finance war efforts.

Reports indicate that diamond exports from the sub-region have risen and have been channelled through a variety of countries. It is believed that official channels only partially reflect the real trade in diamonds, as reports indicate that some gems could be reaching Western Europe under fake country of origin certificates for tax purposes." (UN, November 2000)

"Expressing broad criticism of Liberia's Transitional Government, the United Nations Security Council today unanimously extended for six months the existing sanctions against the West African country's diamond exports, which it said have been increasing, and re-established a panel to investigate if and how funds are being raised to buy weapons to foment new violence.

Describing the context in which it was making its decision on diamonds, the Council noted its concern over 'the increase in unlicensed mining and illegal exports of diamonds and the National Transitional Government of Liberia's agreement to, and lack of transparency in, granting exclusive mining rights to a single company.'

On this basis, therefore, it said, it would renew the measures on diamond exports imposed by its embargo of 2003 for a further period of six months from the date of adoption of this resolution.

It urged the NTGL to intensify its efforts, with the support of the peacekeeping UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), 'to establish its authority over the diamond-producing areas, and to work towards establishing an official Certificate of Origin regime for trade in rough diamonds that is transparent and internationally verifiable, with a view to joining the Kimberley Process.'

Kimberley verifies that the exports are not 'blood diamonds' being sold to buy arms for militias.

Even though the presence of UNMIL had improved security, the Security Council said, the NTGL had not extended its authority over the country's timber producing areas, or its borders and, although there was no evidence now of illegal timber exports, the NTGL had undertaken few of the reforms that would lead to the lifting of the export embargo.

The Council called on the NTGL, therefore, 'urgently to intensify its efforts to reform the Forestry Development Authority, to implement the Liberia Forest Initiative and to implement the Forest Concession Review Committee's recommendations for reform, which will ensure transparency, accountability and sustainable forest management and contribute towards the lifting of the measures on timber.'

It invited the Government to consider hiring independent, temporary, external advisers on the management of Liberia's diamond and timber resources so as to increase investor confidence and attract additional donor support.

The NTGL had not established the transparent financial accounting that would ensure that government revenues were not being used for fuelling conflict, but were used, instead, for the benefit of the Liberian people. Without this improvement, the Council said it would not unfreeze funds, other financial assets and economic resources seized last year.

Former President Charles Taylor, now living in exile in Nigeria, and his associates continued to be banned from using stolen property to interfere in restoring peace and stability in Liberia and the sub-region, the Council said."

Global Witness, 18 September 2002

"Due to the UN Security Council's inaction on Liberia, the Liberian timber industry remains a primary source of funding for Liberia's war machine. Many logging companies continue to be actively engaged in illegal arms imports for the government, committing human rights abuses and destabilising Liberia and the entire West Africa sub-region. A new Global Witness report, titled *Logging Off: How the Liberian Timber industry fuels Liberia's humanitarian disaster and threatens Sierra Leone*, exposes the direct links between Liberia's timber industry and the conflict. The report also details how the United Nations has failed to heed the evidence presented by its own Expert Panels to actively address the destabilising role of the Liberian logging industry. Global Witness recommends that the UN impose a complete embargo on Liberian timber, and mandate any new Expert Panel on Liberia to conduct a thorough investigation of the Liberian timber industry.

'UN failure to acknowledge 'conflict timber' as a war commodity just like diamonds or oil and its refusal to allow Expert Panels to conduct a thorough investigation of the timber industry frustrates attempts to resolve the conflict in Liberia,' says Global Witness Campaigner Alice Blondel. 'The Security Council's refusal to impose a ban on Liberian logs exports—due primarily to the objections of France and China—means that the international community's attempts to bring peace to Sierra Leone could soon be completely undone'.

Global Witness and UN Expert Panels have uncovered numerous violations of current UNSC sanctions by the Liberian government and timber companies, continued human rights abuses by parastatal logging company militias, and significant inaccuracies in the UN's own research of the Liberian timber industry."

Global Witness, 12 February 2004

" 'With the end of Liberia's brutal 14 year civil war, this is a crucial time for Liberia's chances at long-term peace. The new Liberian government and international community must ensure full and accountable control over the country's natural resources, that all logging industry links to illegal activities are severed and that the rule of law is strictly enforced, before restarting logging operations,' says Michael Lundberg, of Global Witness. With positive developments having already been made in Liberia, including the installation of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) and deployment of UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) peacekeepers, the pledging of US\$ 520 million at the recent International Conference on Reconstruction for Liberia (4) will help facilitate Liberia's moves toward political, social and economic reform. 'If the UN and the Liberian government do not have full control of the country's resources before trade resumes, Liberia's recovery and possibly the stability of the region could in the future be jeopardised.'

The Liberian logging industry has long played a role in fuelling conflict in Liberia and the region, with industry revenue having been misappropriated to fund sanctions-busting, while some elements of the industry have also aided rebel groups in neighbouring countries (5). The UN Security Council, recognising the adverse impact of the Liberian logging industry on regional security, instituted an embargo on Liberian timber imports in July 2003 (6). The embargo was renewed in December 2003 and is to remain in place until the Liberian government guarantees 'full control over the timber producing areas...[and] all necessary steps to ensure that government revenues from the Liberian timber industry are not used to fuel conflict...' (7). The Security Council has established an embargo oversight committee and authorised another Expert Panel on Liberia to investigate logging industry activities and reforms. During this critical transition period, Global Witness further encourages the engagement of an independent monitor to observe the reform process and ensure that the logging industry does not undermine Liberia's progress."

For more information on the diamonds-for-guns trade in West Africa, see the Report of the Panel of Experts appointed to Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), para 19, in relation to Sierra Leone (S/2000/1195)

See also:

'Logging Off', Global Witness, September 2003 (How the Liberian timber industry fuels Liberia's humanitarian disaster and threatens Sierra Leone)

'Broken Vows', Global Witness, March 2004 (Exposing the "Loupe" Holes in the Diamond Industry's Efforts to Prevent the Trade in Conflict Diamonds)

UN OCHA, 10 June 2004

"The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has retained sanctions on Liberia under UNSC Resolution 1521 despite pleas by NTGL Chairman Gyude Bryant to have the sanctions lifted. Although in a report to the UNSC the panel of experts on sanctions indicated that it had no proof of weapons smuggling into Liberia since August 2003 or diamond and timber smuggling out of the country, the report indicated the existence of organized international smuggling networks that had the potential of reactivation. The UN expert panel recommended that the NTGL needed to do more in complying with recommendations of the Timber Sanctions Review Committee by establishing sector reforms. The Panel had also urged for greater adherence to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme that requires participating countries to enact legislation that clearly defined procedures aimed at promoting transparency in the production, sales, import, transit and export of rough diamonds. The expert panel was concerned over the lack of structure, oversight and accountability in the financial management systems of the timber and diamond sectors. Notification was also made of lack of capacity of the NTGL to deliver services and extend its authority throughout the country and as such, has limited control only in areas where UN peacekeepers are deployed. It is widely believed that the retention of the sanctions on Liberia will stop check illicit mining of Liberia's productive sector currently held in areas under the control of MODEL and LURD fighters."

Global Witness, 7 December 2005

"An upsurge in illegal diamond mining and logging by ex-combatants in Liberia is undermining international efforts to promote good governance and stability in the worn torn West African country, and could fuel a return to warlordism, according to a new report by Global Witness.

'An Architecture of Instability,' released today by Global Witness, warns that the government and its international donors have failed to grasp the challenge of demobilising thousands of ex-fighters who are finding jobs in the illegal mining and logging industries.

The regulation of the diamond and timber industries are crucial to the prospects for peace in Liberia because revenues from illegal resource extraction during the civil war funded warlords like the notorious Charles Taylor, now in exile in Nigeria.

Ex-combatants were supposed to have been reintegrated into the Liberian economy through a disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) programme run by United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). But the programme has failed to find sufficient funds to provide enough rehabilitation places, and a lack of employment opportunities has caused these ex-fighters to drift instead into natural resource extraction.

[...]

Global Witness has found that the Liberian government and UNMIL have failed to exert their control over natural resource extraction, or to control the country's borders to stop the export of

diamonds in violation of UN sanctions. Charles Taylor also continuous with impunity to violate the terms of his exile and meddle in Liberia's political affairs."

UN Security Council, 20 December 2005

"The Security Council, determining that the situation in Liberia continued to constitute a threat to international peace and security, decided today to renew its bans on the sale or supply of arms, diamonds and timber, as well as travel, imposed by resolution 1521 (2003).

Unanimously adopting resolution 1647 (2005) under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, the Council also re-established the Panel of Experts appointed pursuant to resolution 1607 (2005) until 21 June 2006 to, among other things, conduct a follow-up assessment mission to Liberia and neighbouring States, in order to investigate and compile a report on the implementation, and any violations, of the measures imposed by resolution 1521 (2003).

By its resolution 1521 (2003), the Council had, responding to changes in Liberia, including the establishment then of a transitional government, adjusted its embargoes against the West African country, especially its ban on timber and diamond exports, and imports of war materiel. It decided that those measures would remain in effect until peace was maintained, export transparency was established and the Government controlled the national forests.

Also by today's text, the Council decided to review the measures at the request of the new Government of Liberia, once it reported that the conditions set out in resolution 1521 (2003) for terminating them had been met, and provided the Council with information to justify its assessment. It also welcomed the determination of the President-elect of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, to meet the conditions for terminating the measures.

Further, the Council encouraged the new Government to implement reforms within its timber industry, which would ensure transparency, accountability and sustainable forest management, and contribute towards the lifting of the measures on timber, as well as consider the possibility of commissioning independent external advice on the management of Liberia's diamond resources.

In addition, the Council called on the international donor community to support the incoming Government by providing generous assistance to the peace process, including for the reintegration of ex-combatants, reconstruction and humanitarian appeals, and by responding to the Government's financial, administrative and technical needs, particularly to assist it in meeting the conditions required for the lifting of the measures imposed."

Africa's first female president faces enormous task of rebuilding the country, 2006-2007

- Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is declared president of Liberia after the final round of elections in November 2005, declared free and fair by international observers
- Johnson-Sirleaf's main challenger, George Weah, complains of fraud, resulting later in violent protests by his supporters
- Restoration of electricity to the capital Monrovia and rehabilitation of the education sector are among the new president's top priorities
- Liberia's progress offers hope but continuing support from the international community is needed
- The US offer to forgive Liberia's \$391 million is a further positive development towards entrenching lasting peace

IRIN, 23 November 2005

"Harvard-educated Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf stamped her name in the history books on Wednesday, when she was confirmed Liberia's, as well as Africa's, first female president.

Amid tight security enforced by UN peacekeepers and newly-trained Liberian police officers, the National Electoral Commission officially pronounced her winner of the final round of the presidential poll on 8 November, with 59.4 percent of the vote against her challenger, football hero George Weah, with 40.6 percent.

'I declare Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf winner,' proclaimed Commission head Frances Johnson-Morris at a formal ceremony held in the same building where she is to be sworn in on 16 January.

Weah, whose party has challenged the result though international observers gave the process the thumbs up, did not attend.

'I feel very pleased and excited, but humbled by the awesome challenges that we are facing to rebuild our country. It is a victory for the Liberian people,' said Sirleaf after the ceremony.

Weah's Congress for Democratic Change party has complained of fraud during the historic vote closing an era of unrest, and the National Election Commission is conducting hearings into the complaint.

Sirleaf, an economist by training, has worked for the UN, the World Bank and in the 1970s served as finance minister, a job that nearly cost her her life when the government was overthrown in a 1980 coup by Samuel Doe. Most of the cabinet were stripped, tied to poles on the seafront and executed by firing squad.

She is also no stranger to the inside of a Liberian prison after serving two jail terms on charges of treason in the 1980s, earning her the nickname of 'Iron Lady'.

In 1997, she took on former warlord Charles Taylor in elections held during a brief break in the country's 14 years of fighting. But the bespectacled grandmother lost by a landslide amid fear of recriminations if the rebel leader did not get his prize.

Sirleaf's critics accuse her of being part of the elite that drove the resource rich Liberian economy into the ground, sparking Doe's military take-over. She is also criticised for initially backing Taylor's march on Monrovia, though she maintains that her support for his rebellion was short-lived.

Now Sirleaf will have to turn some of her tough traits to rebuilding a broken country smashed by years of brutal civil war that ended when Taylor took exile in Nigeria in 2003.

First on the new president's to-do list is restoring electricity to the tired seaside capital Monrovia. Sirleaf has promised to switch the lights back on within six months, and says she has found private investors ready to do the job.

Schooling is another priority in a country where youngsters were pulled out of classrooms by errant warlords, armed, pumped with drugs and sent to the frontlines to fight. Some 45 percent of the population is illiterate, according to the UN, and Sirleaf wants to provide free primary school education for all."

UN Secretary-General, 14 February 2007

" Three years ago, as Liberia emerged from 14 years of war, many of you gathered in New York for a donors' conference. At that time, the country's infrastructure was in shambles, State institutions were nonexistent, Monrovia lay in ruins and thousands of people remained displaced.

Since then, Liberia has made real progress towards restoring and consolidating peace:

- Former armed factions have been dismantled, and more than 100,000 combatants have been disarmed;
- Free and fair elections in late 2005 led to a new democratic Government headed by President [Ellen] Johnson-Sirleaf;
- More than a half million displaced Liberians have returned to their homes;
- The training of a new police force and of the army is well under way; and
- Sanctions on the country's timber have been lifted, and an economic governance reform programme is being implemented.

As a result, Liberians finally have reason to be hopeful about their future: school enrolment is at an all-time high; children are being vaccinated; civil servants are being paid on a regular basis; and corruption is being investigated and prosecuted. Liberia is fast emerging as a pillar of stability in the region.

These are welcome developments, but they represent, at best, the end of the beginning. Much work lies ahead to entrench lasting peace and development in this war-ravaged part of Africa. Liberia's Government and citizens will necessarily take the lead in such efforts. But, to succeed, they must be able to count on the continuing and collective support of the international community."

UN News Service, 16 February 2007

"The United Nations envoy to Liberia today said "real progress" had been made this week in dealing with the impoverished country's almost \$4 billion debt, but acknowledged that major challenges remain in rebuilding, particularly in the security sector and in creating jobs, following 14 years of brutal civil war.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative, Alan Doss, attended the 13-15 February Liberia Partners Forum, which was held at the World Bank in Washington, alongside Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz, and other senior UN and international officials.

"There were three principle outcomes of the meeting," Mr. Doss told reporters at UN Headquarters in New York. "One, I think the Government's poverty reduction strategy...was very well received by all of the partners...Second there was real progress on the whole of issue of debt relief and debt reduction, which for Liberia is a huge problem. This is a country where it has a \$3.7 billion debt," he added."

"The United States took the lead in announcing that it was in the process of forgiving all of Liberia's debt, which is \$391 million to the United States alone. Germany, the UK and several other countries also announced that they would be on the same track. There was also progress in reaching agreement to deal with multilateral debt – principally the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the World Bank and the African Development Bank."

The UN Security Council lifts ban on timber and diamond exports, 2006-2007

- The UN Security Council lifted bans on timber and diamond exports in 2006 and 2007

- The Liberian government plans on introducing a monitoring system before legalising diamond mining

UN Security Council, 20 June 2006

"The Security Council

[...]

Decides not to renew the measure in paragraph 10 of resolution 1521 (2003) that obligates Member States to prevent the import into their territories of all round log and timber products originating in Liberia."

UN Security Council, 27 April 2007

"The Security Council

[...]

Decides to terminate the measures on diamonds imposed by paragraph 6 of resolution 1521 (2003) and renewed by paragraph 1 of resolution 1731 (2006)."

Reuters, 27 April 2007

"The U.N. Security Council on Friday [April 27] lifted a 6-year-old ban on Liberian diamond exports aimed at stopping so-called blood diamonds -- used to finance wars in Africa -- from reaching the world market.

The unanimous vote by the 15-nation Council was in "recognition of the progress made by Liberia" in setting up controls on its diamonds, which helped fuel a 14-year civil war that ended in 2003, British Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry said.

The resolution said Liberia had taken action to meet the minimum demands of the Kimberley Process, a mechanism that requires participating governments to provide certificates for rough diamonds to show they came from legitimate operations."

IRIN, 5 June 2007

"Two months after the United Nations lifted a six-year ban on Liberia exporting diamonds the government has still not legalised diamond mining.

"Right now people shouldn't start mining until certain mechanisms are in place to ensure transparency," Liberia's deputy minister for lands and mines Ernest Jones recently told IRIN.

Jones said the government needs to ensure that controls are in place to manage what has been a corrupt and conflict-prone industry. The controls include reissuing licences to prospective miners and deploying government officials to monitor the extraction, transport and sale of all stones, he said.

The government says it is setting up a network of 10 regional diamond monitoring offices."

For more information on the use of diamonds and timber in the Liberian conflict, see [Illicit diamond and timber trade have fuelled the Liberian conflict, 2000-2006](#)

Peace Process

ECOWAS-sponsored peace agreements, 1990-1996

Michelle Pitts, Spring 1999

"The responsibility for ending the bloodshed was assumed by Liberia's neighbors in ECOWAS. This group had felt the effects of the civil war to a much greater extent than did the countries outside of the region. In response to both regional instability and a heavy refugee flow, ECOWAS created the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a force aimed at resolving the conflict, restoring order and establishing a democratically-elected government. The ECOMOG force was the first African sub-regional peacekeeping body to intervene in another state.

[...]



To address the underlying issues of the civil war, ECOWAS sponsored a series of peace agreements (starting in November 1990 with the Bamako Agreement) complementing the ECOMOG operation. These summits brought the factions together in an effort to negotiate acceptable terms for peace. From Bamako on, the process of hammering out a peace agreement proved to be more difficult than participants expected, and the ECOWAS-sponsored summits resulted in failure after failure. Initially, the west Africans were unable to mediate effectively between the original warring factions (NPFL, INPFL and AFL). When the Liberians became increasingly frustrated by the peace process and splinter groups developed, the peace process became further complicated.

The ECOWAS Sponsored Peace Agreements

28 November 1990	Bamako Agreement: All of the warring factions agree to a ceasefire.
30 October 1991	Yamoussoukro Agreement: All of the warring factions agree to encampment and disarmament of factions under ECOMOG supervision.
17 July 1993	Geneva Agreement: The NPFL, ULIMO and the Liberian Interim Government agree to a ceasefire.
25 July 1993	Cotonou Agreement: The NPFL, ULIMO and the Liberian Interim Government agree to encampment and disarmament of the factions under ECOMOG supervision. They also agree to a tri-partite transitional government responsible for organizing general elections in February 1994.
12 September 1994	Akosombo Agreement: The NPFL, ULIMO and AFL agree to a ceasefire, the installation of a transitional presidency composed of members decided upon by the three factions, and plan for general elections in October 1995.
21 December 1994	Accra Agreement: The NPFL, AFL, ULIMO-K, ULIMO-J, Lofa Defense Force, LPC, CRC-NPFL and the LNC agree to establish safe havens and buffer zones, to have elections in November of 1995, to demobilize, and to re-adopt the transitional presidency of the Akosombo Agreement.
19 August 1995	Abuja Agreement: All of the warring factions agree to a ceasefire, a period of disarmament, the creation of a collective presidency, and plan for general elections in August 1996.
17 August 1996	(Revised) Abuja Agreement: All of the warring factions agree to disarmament, dissolution of all factional militia and plan for general elections in May 1997.

Accra Peace Agreement of August 2003 brings high hopes for peace but instability remains (October 2003)

- Peace agreement signed on 18 August 2003
- August 2003: ECOMIL troops supported by US Marines offshore, helped restore security in Monrovia
- October 2003: a Chapter VII mandate by the Security Council initiated the establishment of a UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)
- Mandate include deployment of a peacekeeping force of 15,000 troops
- Liberia, however, remains highly unstable, with three armed factions operating in various parts of the country

IRIN 18 August 2003

"The Liberian government and two rebel movements signed a peace agreement on Monday [18 August 2003] night that paves the way for an interim government headed by an independent civilian to take power in October to rebuild the nation and prepare for elections in two years' time.

The deal was signed two and a half months after peace negotiations began in Ghana on 4 June and just one week after former president Charles Taylor stepped down and flew into exile in Nigeria on 11 August.

The peace settlement is aimed at ending 14 years of near constant civil war in this shattered West African country, where 85 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

The deal was brokered by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which has already begun deploying Nigerian troops in the capital, Monrovia. They form the vanguard of a multinational peacekeeping force that will eventually number 3,250.

[...]

It [the interim government] will be led by a civilian unconnected to the regime of Blah and former President Taylor or the LURD and MODEL rebel movements.

The new president will be chosen by the three warring factions and 18 unarmed political parties which attended the Accra peace talks and will have a mandate to rule until January 2006.

[...]

The 50-page Comprehensive Peace Agreement spells out a plan for the disarmament of the warring parties, the deployment of an international stabilisation force and the laying of foundations for the future stability of Liberia.

[...]

The document calls for a 76-member transitional legislative assembly to be created. In this, 12 seats will be allotted to each to the three warring factions, one to each to the 18 political parties that participated in the peace talks and seven to civil society groups. Each of the 15 counties in Liberia will also have a special representative."

UN News Service, 5 August 2003

"With the first contingent of Nigerian peacekeepers now on the ground in Liberia, United Nations and other relief agencies are taking advantage of a lull in the violence to rush food and medical supplies to hundreds of thousands of desperate and hungry people crowding the streets of war-ravaged Monrovia.

With the support of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the airlift of Nigerian troops and equipment -- the vanguard elements of the Multinational Force authorized last Friday by the Security Council -- continued today. Following the arrival of 184 troops yesterday, UNAMSIL said that by mid-afternoon today, 152 more Nigerian soldiers, two Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs), one land rover and one day's supply of rations had been moved from Sierra Leone to Liberia.

[...]

UN agencies have welcomed the arrival of the peacekeepers in the hope that the deployment will enable the return of aid workers and help stave off the deepening humanitarian crises in Monrovia, where hundreds of thousands of people, including a patchwork of refugees from Sierra Leone and internally displaced persons (IDPs), are living in the streets without adequate food, shelter or sanitation."

UN Security Council, 11 September 2003

"With the recent political and military developments in Monrovia, the security situation in the country continues to improve. Liberia remains highly unstable, however, as armed groups, militia and criminal elements operate throughout the country. While there are no exact figures regarding the strength of the various armed groups, government forces are estimated to consist of some 20,000 to 30,000 elements, comprising armed forces of Liberia soldiers, militia formed outside the armed forces around local leaders and including a large number of child soldiers, and elite paramilitary personnel. The Government controls the greater Monrovia area and the centre of the country. The LURD rebel movement is estimated to have a strength of some 5,000 fighters concentrated primarily in western Liberia, while MODEL, which has an estimated 1,500 to 3,000 fighters, is operating in eastern parts of the country."

UN, November 2003, p 6

"[In November 2003, the UN reported that:] Though there have been positive developments, the situation remains generally tense, volatile and unpredictable.

The deployment of ECOMIL troops supported by US Marines offshore in early August [2003], helped restore security in Monrovia and key surrounding areas, thus re-establishing the confidence of the population and enabling greater humanitarian access. However, the limited logistical capacity of ECOMIL, hampered their ability to effectively deploy in key areas of concern. The humanitarian community had to provide logistical and communication support to enhance ECOMIL's effectiveness so as to enable them to patrol areas where IDPs and refugees were residing to ensure their protection and security.

The Security Council approved the establishment of a UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) with a peacekeeping force of 15,000 troops backed by a robust Chapter VII mandate that came into effect on 1 October 2003. The mandate of the peacekeeping force, in addition to monitoring the ceasefire agreement and securing strategic locations, specifies that it should facilitate the: free movement of people, humanitarian assistance and goods; safe return of Liberian refugees and IDPs; safety of Ivorian and Sierra Leonean refugees; protection of civilians; and safety of UN personnel."

For the text of UN Security Council Resolution 1509 (2003), [click here](#)

For political analysis, see:

[International Crisis Group, Rebuilding Liberia: Prospects and Perils, 30 January 2004](#)

Further background to the Liberian conflict may be found on the [Global Security.org website](#)

Establishment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), 2003-2007

Security Council Report, March 2006

"First established in 2003, UNMIL's mandate is to:

support the transitional government;

support the elections;

develop an action plan for disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR), and carry out voluntary disarmament;

support the reform of the security sector, particularly by training the police;

monitor Liberia's borders and the flow of arms; and

arrest and hand former Liberian President Charles Taylor over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL).

Many of these tasks have now been completed.

UNMIL troops are deployed in four sectors, each with a brigade-strength unit, covering (i) Monrovia and its environs; (ii) north-western provinces bordering Sierra Leone and Guinea; (iii) central provinces bordering Guinea and north-western Côte d'Ivoire; and (iv) eastern provinces bordering Côte d'Ivoire.

With the final withdrawal of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the Council authorised in September 2005 the deployment of 250 UNMIL troops to provide security for the SCSL.

The Council also authorized the redeployment of 200 troops and 125 police officers from UNMIL to assist the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) in February 2006. This was a compromise decision at a much lower level than recommended by the Secretary-General to offset the lack of support in Côte d'Ivoire.

Those decisions heralded a trend in inter-mission cooperation in West Africa. The idea was originally envisaged by the Secretary-General to contain costs and increase performance with improvements such as coordinated operations. But it has increasingly meant redeployments between missions to offset troop shortages.

In view of outstanding tasks in Liberia, it is perceived within the Secretariat that drawdown planning is premature at this stage. The report will instead present priority tasks, which could become the core of a new UNMIL mandate in the post-transitional period. They include:

reintegration programmes and security sector reform;

extending state authority;

assisting with improvements in the control over natural resources; and rule of law and human rights."

More specifically, UNMIL's mandate provides for support for humanitarian and human rights assistance. In this sense, UNMIL is mandated:

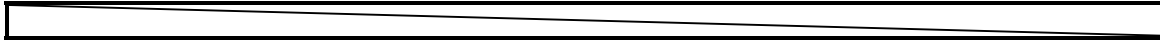
UN Security Council, 19 September 2003

"(k) to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance, including by helping to establish the necessary security conditions;

(l) to contribute towards international efforts to protect and promote human rights in Liberia, with particular attention to vulnerable groups including refugees, returning refugees and internally displaced persons, women, children, and demobilized child soldiers, within UNMIL's capabilities and under acceptable security conditions, in close cooperation with other United Nations

agencies, related organizations, governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations;

(m) to ensure an adequate human rights presence, capacity and expertise within UNMIL to carry out human rights promotion, protection, and monitoring activities."



The Truth and Reconciliation Commission faces serious challenges (2007)

UN Human Rights Council, 28 February 2007, paras. 3-7

"The establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was provided for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in Accra in 2003. The required national legislation establishing TRC, the Act to Establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC Act), was passed and signed into law in June 2005. The nomination and selection process for the nine national commissioners commenced that August and TRC was inaugurated in February 2006. The ceremonial launch was held in June 2006.

The Government of Liberia has led this process by providing US\$ 1.4 million in the first year (1 per cent of the national budget) for TRC. The international community has matched this contribution. Funding will be the major challenge in the years ahead and the timely allotment of monies will be critical to effective action. The full establishment of a secretariat for TRC is urgent, so that commissioners do not have to involve themselves with administrative issues and can concentrate on policy matters. The international community also has a key role to play in providing technical advice and expertise.

However, there is serious concern that there appears to be a lack of coordination within the commission on programming and activities. The timely elaboration of well conceived programmes and a budget will influence the willingness of donors to make funds available in the future. The disharmony between the commissioners themselves and also with the members of the International Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) is leading to an incomplete implementation of the TRC Act. This has also resulted in a failure to address some critical issues such as sensitization of both the general public and civil society organizations. The Commission's outreach efforts to introduce and explain its work to the public will determine its impact and the support of an active and effective civil society. While they will remain independent, these organizations can make valuable contributions to the work of the commission. Such groups must also monitor activities of the commission and provide honest feedback on progress.

There is also an urgent need to establish an information management system for storing and analysing statements and other information received in the statement-taking process that commenced in October 2006. A number of aspects of the statement-taking process were heavily criticized by interlocutors. The absence of any apparent mechanism to protect the guarantee of confidentiality or forms of protection to be provided to victims, perpetrators and statement-takers was highlighted. A number of interlocutors questioned the effectiveness of the vetting process. The need to incorporate a gender perspective into this exercise was emphasized so that the participation of women could be facilitated and they would be encouraged to provide statements.

This situation needs to be addressed urgently, as an effective TRC can play a central role at this time of transition and in the ongoing reconciliation efforts being undertaken in Liberia. The

elaboration of clear terms of reference for the ITAC members together with the establishment of an effective secretariat would contribute to the effective and efficient running of this institution."

AI, 15 February 2007, Part III

"The TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] has a mandate to hear from a wide spectrum of victims and perpetrators, with the aim of reflecting a communal approach towards justice and accountability. The government, civil society and the international community have high expectations for the TRC process, which is expected to play a role in addressing impunity following the 14-year conflict in Liberia.

Amnesty International believes that the TRC has an important role to play in investigating past crimes and recommending reparation for Liberia's many victims. Its most important function is to contribute to justice by establishing the facts about past crimes, such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, thus contributing to justice. The only functions that the TRC can offer relative to prosecutions will be to gather and preserve evidence for future use, and to make overall recommendations about prosecutions.

However, the TRC should not bear the entire burden of addressing the past. In particular, it is not, and should not be considered, a substitute for civil or criminal proceedings before judicial bodies. The TRC is not a court and it cannot establish individual criminal responsibility. It also can not award reparations."

Causes of displacement

The main cause of displacement has been attacks on towns and villages and major human rights abuses (2002)

- Primary cause of displacement is insecurity caused by fighting between Liberian government forces and rebels
- Many boys and young men have been abducted and forcibly conscripted into pro-government forces, separating families and making women and children more vulnerable
- Large-scale displacement has been triggered by radio announcements by the Liberian government, warning of imminent rebel attacks, which often never materialize
- The targeting and hunting down of suspected 'dissidents' by Liberian security forces has also caused large numbers of people to flee
- HRW has documented that the Liberian government and, to a lesser but still significant extent, the LURD forces, have continuously violated their obligations under international law

AI, 1 October 2002

"The causes of displacement are varied but are primarily due to the insecurity caused by the fighting between Liberian government forces and the LURD. Repeated attacks on towns and villages by both sides has had a devastating effect on the Liberian civilian population. Fighting has intensified since the beginning of 2002 with heavily populated towns and villages frequently attacked. These attacks have invariably involved human rights abuses against civilians, civilians caught in the cross-fire and massive looting sprees.

Civilians leave their homes suddenly to escape death or injury, and repeatedly complain of further hardship where they flee. Many leave when they hear heavy gunfire, as the result of a camp or village being attacked, or are told by government forces to flee to escape rebel forces. Often

civilians complain that money and personal items are taken from them at government checkpoints, leaving them without the resources to flee to safety. There are large numbers of women and young children in IDP and refugee camps as many boys and young men have been abducted and forcibly conscripted into fighting forces loyal to the government. This has led to separation of families and put women and children at risk of sexual and gender-based violence such as rape and sexual slavery.

Large-scale displacement has also been caused by radio announcements by the Liberian government warning of impending attacks, often apparently without foundation, so that abandoned homes and property can be looted by security forces. On 13 May 2002 the government announced on the radio that rebels were planning an attack on Buchanan in Grand Bassa County, central Liberia. This resulted in a movement of several thousand civilians towards Grand Gedeh County, eastern Liberia, who were reportedly positioning themselves to be ready to cross the border into Cote d'Ivoire, if necessary. Buchanan was not subsequently attacked.

Another cause of flight has been the targeting and hunting down of suspected 'dissidents' by Liberian security forces. Since May 2002 men and boys of Mandingo ethnic origin have been the primary targets of arbitrary arrest and detention without charge by Liberian security forces. This has caused large numbers to flee the country, primarily to Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. Many complained of harassment at border checkpoints. Others perceived to oppose the government have also sought refuge outside the country, including human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents, and in some cases, former members of the government who have become disaffected with the current government."

HRW, 1 May 2002

"Human Rights Watch has also documented that armed forces loyal to President Charles Taylor have continued to commit massive violations of human rights and humanitarian law, including summary executions; indiscriminate killing of civilians; intentional targeting of civilian areas; widespread rape and other kinds of sexual violence including sexual slavery; abduction and "disappearance" of both adults and minors; illegal detention; torture; forced recruitment; and forced labor. Survivors reported civilians being locked into houses and burned alive. Government troops routinely targeted fleeing civilians, and abducted boys for forced conscription and girls to serve as "wives."

[...]

LURD rebel forces have also committed gross abuses against civilians, including summary killings, abduction, rape, abuses in the context of forced recruitment of men and boys, and forced labor. Rebel abuses appear to be less widespread and systematic than those committed by government forces. A large proportion of LURD fighters were previously affiliated to the two factions of the rebel United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) during the pre-1997 civil war."

Continuous new displacement as conflict escalates: chronology of events (2001-March 2003)

- Fighting in Lofa County between Liberian forces and dissidents on the border with Guinea intensified in February 2001; thousands of civilians flee
- By mid-2001, people continued to flee southwards as a result of the fighting in Lofa
- In May 2002, civilians are forced to flee once again when fighting breaks out near Gbarnga, and again comes dangerously close to Monrovia. Three IDP camps are forced to close.
- By February 2003 fighting spread from three major fronts; from the Tubmanburg-Kley junction (west of Monrovia), from the area between Bopolu and Arthington (northwest of Monrovia) and from the northern county of Lofa.

- Between February and May 2003 IDPs from 11 out of 14 IDP camps outside Monrovia were displaced by attacks on their camps

February 2001:

ACT, 30 March 2001

"In February 2001, the latest fighting erupted in Kolahun District in Lofa [which] [...] produced a new wave of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

[...]

[...] an estimated 150,000 persons are on the run for their lives, most of them having abandoned the major towns and took refuge in remote villages, running from the fighting forces. Homes of civilians fleeing the fighting have been completely looted; while some homes have been burned."

March 2001:

AFP, 5 March 2001

"Liberian Defence Minister Daniel Chea on Monday [5 March 2001] said rebels had seized the key northern town of Voinjama, which lies near the Guinean border.

Chea made the remarks to AFP after unconfirmed reports reached the Liberian capital that "dissidents" had hoisted a flag in Voinjama, about 260 kilometres (160 miles) north of Monrovia.

[...]

The defense minister said between 20,000 and 30,000 civilians displaced by the fighting were moving in large groups away from the conflict area."

SCF, 6 April 2001

"In March, fighting between dissidents and government forces moved further southwards towards Tarvey, Gbapolu County. The latest reports of fighting come from Gelmah to the south of Kolahun. This movement southwards has caused previously internally displaced people (IDPs) to flee again further south. Almost all of the 2,000 registered IDPs who were in Tarvey until recently, left there at the end of March, some of them moving on foot further south to Amtel and the rest fleeing into the bush."

April 2001:

IRIN-WA, 6 April 2001

"Thousands of civilians have been fleeing heavy fighting between government troops and insurgents in upper Lofa County, northern Liberia, Defence Minister Daniel Chea told reporters on Wednesday. He said the civilians were going to lower Lofa County.

Chea described the fighting - in Foya and Kolahun - as serious but denied claims that the insurgents, who call themselves Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, had seized control of a vast swathe of territory. Chea said government troops still controlled the provincial towns of Voinjama, Vahun and Zorzor. He blamed the cross-border attacks on Guinea, which has made similar charges against Liberia."

July 2001:

IRIN-WA, 4 July 2001

"Liberia's Defence Ministry reported renewed fighting in the northern county of Lofa even as relief organisations continued to appeal for assistance for people displaced by the insecurity there. Defence Minister Daniel Chea said on Tuesday [3 July 2001] that Lofa was under attack by Guinea-based rebels, AFP and humanitarian sources reported.

Chea said thousands of civilians, mainly women and children who had returned to Voinjama after pro-government forces expelled the dissidents from Lofa in June, were reported to have fled into the forest. He also reported rebel attacks in Kolahun, about 310 km north of the Liberian capital."

October-December 2001: Fighting getting closer to Monrovia

UN, November 2001, p. 3

"The outbreak of major military confrontations along Liberia's border (Lofa county) with Guinea led to the displacement of some 65,000 IDPs since May 2001. In addition, this outburst of violence resulted in new Liberian refugees in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire, as well as the premature return of Sierra Leonean refugees from Liberia to communities in Eastern Sierra Leone."

ACT, 11 December 2001

"On Friday 7 December 2001 ACT member, Lutheran World Service - Liberia Program reported that fighting had broken out on 23 November 2001 in Fassama (100km north of Bopolu) between government forces and a dissident faction belonging to the Liberia United for Reconstruction and Democracy (LURD). About 2,000 people, mostly women and children are reported to have made the 100 km journey to Bopolu in search of security, food, and other humanitarian support. While LWF/WS was preparing to assist the newly arrived in Bopolu, internally displaced people (IDPs) started fleeing the camp at Bopolu after claiming that they had heard heavy gun fire coming from North of Bopolu, in the town of Gaingbai."

January-February 2002:

UNHCR, 21 February 2002

"Fighting in the mining town of Bong Mine near the capital of Monrovia between troops loyal to President Charles Taylor and rebels trying to overthrow him has caused the displacement of at least 20,000 persons, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said Thursday.

[...]

Most of those who fled the most recent clashes sought refuge in Kakata, some 70 kilometres northeast of Monrovia. Reports from the area said many were desperately seeking transportation to get further away from the fighting.

Both United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organisations were gearing up Thursday to respond to the emergency situation in Kakata. The Liberian government's refugee agency (LRRRC), which has been funded by UNHCR since 1993, is carrying out a global survey on the number of persons displaced by the fighting. Initial U.N. estimates puts their number at 50,000 to 60,000. The government, however, put the figure into the hundreds of thousands."

May 2002:

UNICEF, 29 May 2002

"Fighting intensified in May and spread to Bong and Bomi Counties, causing massive movements of population to Ganta (Guinea border), Bomi, Grand Bassa and Margibi counties. The latest round of fighting also hit the centrally located city of Gbarnga and its environs, making residents and humanitarian agencies to flee. These attacks led to the closure of the second largest university (Cuttington), a Lutheran Mission hospital (Phebe) and three camps (CARI 1, CARI 2 and TV Tower) holding over 35,000 IDPs.

Humanitarian agencies have set-up transit camps and mobile clinics to assist the fleeing IDPs as alternative sites are being sought. The constant insecurity and desertion of camps by IDPs has increased the cost of providing support to the vulnerable populations. As old camps are deserted and looted, the humanitarian agencies have to reinvest in new structures. The number of IDPs in camps and transit sites is approaching 100,000."

IRIN, 10 May 2002

"At least 40,000 people have been displaced in Liberia by the latest fighting between government troops and rebels in central Bong County, humanitarian workers in the capital, Monrovia, told IRIN on Friday.

More displacement was expected as the fighting intensified around the town of Gbarnga, 160 km north of Monrovia, the workers added. The majority of the displaced were moving south to Margibi County, while a few were moving into Nimba County.

The fighting had by Friday reportedly spread to several areas on the outskirts of Gbarnga. A government military camp housing the engineering and artillery base was overrun by the rebels, news agencies reported.

At least 900 students and teachers from the Cuttington University College, the second largest University in Liberia, were evacuated by a police convoy to Monrovia on Tuesday, the workers said. Fleeing residents, they said, spoke of heavy gun fire coming from the town.."

February 2003: Thousands of IDPs arriving in Monrovia

IRIN 10 February 2003

"The Liberian government said on Saturday that it was searching for land from private owners near the capital, Monrovia, to settle at least 7,000 people displaced by renewed fighting between its troops and rebels.

The executive director of the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission, Sam Brown, told IRIN that all existing camps were full, but new IDPs continued to flock to them. IDPs at the Jah Tondo and Ricks camps, 15 and 13 km west of Monrovia respectively, told IRIN that shelter and accommodation were inadequate and some of them slept in makeshift shelters. [...]

'With access to humanitarian staff and goods cut off, aid agencies already in these camps have been left to deal with the influx. The numbers are increasing,' OCHA said. Teams led by representatives of non-governmental organisations and aid agencies were continuing to register new arrivals and provide them with food and non-food items, health care and family-tracing services.

OCHA reported that some Sierra Leonean refugees and Liberian IDPs had fled their camps, reportedly due to harassment by militias who also robbed fleeing people of their valuables. OCHA also said that retreating rebels had reportedly abducted a number of people."

IRIN, 5 February 2003

"At least 5,000 people have fled fighting in western Liberia between government troops and Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebels, humanitarian sources in Monrovia said.

The sources said the new internally displaced persons (IDPs) had sought refuge at IDP camps in Montserrado County, which includes the capital, Monrovia. Most come from around the towns of Kley and Tubmanburg, northwest of Monrovia.

The government has massed heavily armed troops near the two towns. Defence Minister Daniel Chea confirmed the capture by LURD of Tubmanburg, 60 km west of the capital, and Bopolu, some 100 km northwest of Monrovia. The capital was calm but with more roadblocks.

Humanitarian sources said fighting on Tuesday spread from three major fronts; These include the Tubmanburg-Kley junction, which lies west of Monrovia along the road to Sierra Leone, and the area between Bopolu and Arthington, northwest of Monrovia. The third front was in the northern county of Lofa, extending from St Paul's Bridge on the border with Bong county to Gbalatuah.

On Monday, humanitarian agencies held meetings to draw up contingency plans to respond to the situation, especially in Montserrado which already hosts four camps for Sierra Leone refugees with a total population of 17,000 people and seven IDPs camps holding an estimated 117,000 persons. "

March 2003:

UN OCHA, 18 March 2003

"Fighting between Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy Rebels and Liberian Government forces in Liberia's Bong County has caused an estimated 15,000 persons to flee the town of Gbarnga toward Totota, where there are already an estimated 60,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). There are unconfirmed reports that another 2,000 internally displaced persons who had been staying at a camp called TV Tower have been forced to flee for their safety again. The United Nations humanitarian community in Liberia has dispatched a team to the area to gather more information. The United Nations team will work closely with the Liberian Government's own emergency agency, the LRRRC, to determine the number and condition of the people who have fled.

Fighting has also recently occurred near Liberia's capital in the north-west of the country. Within the capital city of Monrovia, armed security officers are reported to have searched houses in the Mamba Point and Waterside areas as part of a "Cordon and Search" operation. The United Nations has also received reports of the forced conscription of men and women into fighting forces.

Last week, fighting was reported in the western towns of Combat and Zinc in Bomi County. In response to humanitarian needs in that area, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) began lifting food rations to IDP camps near Monrovia in Montserrado County for distribution to previous IDP beneficiaries. The food assistance is expected to benefit some 111,525 IDPs in eight camps."

Additional displacement as conflict escalates in eastern areas close to Côte d'Ivoire, February- August 2003

- Worsening situation in Côte d'Ivoire impacting on the conflict dynamic in eastern Liberia
- Violence in Toe Town at the border with Côte d'Ivoire forced MSF to stop assistance to refugees and returnees (February- March 2003)
- Civilians in eastern Liberia forced to flee attacks on transit in Zwedru and Toe Town by Liberian rebels entering from Côte d'Ivoire (March 2003)
- Fighting between GOL and MODEL in August 2003 forced between 8,000 to 10,000 people on flight from their homes near Buchanan, 120 km southeast of Monrovia

MSF, 11 March 2003

"[S]ince the weekend of Feb 28-March 1 [2003], the fighting in eastern Liberia at the border with Ivory Coast has caused both the local population and the refugees to flee, dispersing in all directions. Some of the refugees - themselves a mix of people from countries including Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Benin, Ivory Coast - as well as Liberian returnees have found refuge in the surrounding villages while many more have resorted to hiding in the bush. For the moment access to them is impossible due to the insecurity.

"Our teams were forced to leave the area because it was too dangerous to stay and we are very worried now about the situation of the people in the region, both local population and the refugees. Thousands of innocent people remain trapped in an extremely violent and volatile situation, cut off from medical care of any kind," continues Kostas Moschoschoritis.

For many weeks MSF has been urging the UNHCR to move the transit centre further away from the border and to clearly identify a permanent camp that could offer adequate assistance, security and protection to the refugees. "As long as they are forced to stay in the transit camps close to the border and fighting areas, they are too vulnerable. And recent events have proved this to be the case," Kostas Moschoschoritis concluded."

ACT, 12 March 2003

"Fierce fighting between government and rebel forces in the area of Toe Town in south eastern Grand Gebeh County, Liberia has forced thousands of people to flee the region. ACT member Lutheran World Federation/World Service's representative in Liberia, Charles Pitchford reports that Toe Town itself was an area used as a transit point for thousands of people fleeing the conflict in the Ivory Coast to Liberia.

"The latter arrivals are becoming displaced before they can be settled," said Pitchford. "Refugees are having to be moved for (their) safety and more Liberians are being displaced as a result of new fighting in Toe Town, as well as recent conflict in Roberts Sport and Tubmanburg." Pitchford says that although LWF/WS continues to provide assistance to the people affected by the conflict, this can only be done when it is safe enough.

Local media reports suggest that the rebel force of the Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) has been joined by militia loyal to the Ivorian government, adding complexity to a conflict that has been dragging on for more than a decade."

UNHCR, 3 March 2003

"More than 2,500 Ivorians and other nationals have been forced to flee a UNHCR transit camp in eastern Liberia after fighting erupted in Grand Geddeh district. This is their second displacement in months, having just fled a conflict in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire.

The latest round of fighting, which erupted in eastern Liberia's Toe Town on Friday evening, is said to have involved some Liberian mercenaries, reportedly entering from Côte d'Ivoire and possibly also supported by Ivorian fighters. The Liberian Defence Minister said the rebel group, LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy), was responsible for the attack.

[...]

'This development is a very serious one, not only for Liberia but also for UNHCR operations in this part of the world,' said Moses Okello, the agency's Representative in Liberia. 'UNHCR has assisted close to 100,000 persons who have fled the Ivorian conflict since mid-November, but now even this relative 'safe haven' inside Liberia is coming under attack, forcing thousands of people to flee again.'

Since fighting spread to western Côte d'Ivoire last November, the UN refugee agency in eastern Liberia has assisted close to 40,000 Ivorians and 45,000 Liberian refugees previously living in Côte d'Ivoire. UNHCR has also helped some 13,000 third-country nationals, mainly from Burkina Faso and Mali, who were living in Côte d'Ivoire and had crossed the border into Liberia for safety.

The agency set up four transit centres along the borders and was in the process of establishing more permanent camps where Ivorian refugees, many of whom are presently staying in volatile border villages, could be hosted. The Liberian returnees have been assisted to return home to relatively safe areas of Liberia, while those coming from places still at war inside Liberia were transferred to existing camps for internally displaced persons in Totota, north of Monrovia.

UNHCR is very concerned about the safety of the people placed under its protection, and about the security of its staff and non-governmental organisation partners in the border areas. According to the agency's staff in the region, these developments should not immediately affect the assisted return movement for Liberian refugees stranded near Tabou, in south-western Côte d'Ivoire. Some 2,350 Liberians have been assisted by UNHCR to return to Harper, in eastern Liberia, since January 17. Harper is located at the southern tip of Liberia, quite a distance away from the current conflict zone.

In another development closer to Liberia's border with Guinea, a large number of people have reportedly fled from New Yourpea and Dubuzon towns and were walking in the direction of Saclapea in Nimba county, where UNHCR also has a newly created refugee camp for Ivorians.

These extremely worrying developments come as fighting rages in western Liberia, where LURD rebels have been causing trouble in parts of the Lofa, Gbarpolu, Bomi and Grand Cape Mount counties. Fighting has also been getting increasingly close to Monrovia in recent weeks."

AFP, 9 April 2003

"Fighting in and around the northeastern Liberian town of Ganta has forced thousands of refugees from Ivory Coast's war and internally displaced Liberians to flee to unknown areas, a newspaper reported Wednesday. A transit center established by the Young Men's Christian Association in Ganta, some 240 kilometres (150 miles) northeast of the capital Monrovia, which hosted 3,000 Ivorians and other west Africans nationals, is now empty, the independent Inquirer daily newspaper said.

Some 20,000 refugees and internally displaced Liberians, most of them women and children who had been sheltering in the town of Saclepea, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) east of Ganta, have also been driven out of the area by the fighting between rebels and President Charles Taylor's government. Tracking the fleeing civilians was difficult since the United Nations and international agencies had withdrawn their staff from the conflict areas after three aid workers, including a Norwegian national, were killed in the region."

USAID, 27 August 2003

"According to international media reports, during the weekend of August 23-24 [2003], fighting between MODEL forces and GOL troops near RIA, half-way between Monrovia and Buchanan, led to the displacement of up to 10,000 people.

The attacks by MODEL forces took place at Lloydsville, near Cotton Tree and Owensgrove villages, 50 km southeast of Monrovia, and led to mass population movements toward Harbel.

Between 8,000 to 10,000 people fled their homes over the weekend of August 23-24 after fighting between GOL and MODEL forces near Buchanan, 120 km southeast of Monrovia. "

Civilians repeatedly displaced as conflict engulfs most of Liberia, February- August 2003

- Both government and armed opposition groups accused of forcing people to leave their homes
- By February masses of people were arriving at camps near Monrovia from nearby towns seized by rebels
- LURD rebels captured the city of Gbarnga in Bong County by the end of March and forced an estimated 20,000 IDPs to flee nearby camps
- April: counter-offensive by Government forces in northern Liberia forced civilians to flee into the bush
- In June 2003 WFP characterized the situation as anarchy
- Reported in August that IDPs who had previously fled to Harbel to escape the fighting in Monrovia had to flee Harbel to avoid the recent outbreak of fighting between MODEL and the GOL

AI, 12 May 2003

"Hostilities - which had already exacted a terrible toll on the civilian population - have worsened since January. Fighting has spread to areas previously unaffected as the armed opposition group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) has advanced towards the capital Monrovia. In addition, a new armed group has emerged in the east along the Côte d'Ivoire border - the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). Extension of the conflict almost throughout the country has considerably increased the number of Liberian civilians and refugees of other nationalities now at risk.

Both government and armed opposition groups are committing human rights abuses. Civilians are being killed, either deliberately or caught in cross-fire, raped, forced to leave their homes, abducted and forced to fight or carry looted goods. Forcible recruitment, including of children under the age of 18, has become rampant, particularly among displaced people. Those resisting recruitment have been killed by government forces.

[...]

Amnesty International remains seriously concerned that refugees and internally displaced people are particularly vulnerable and in urgent need of protection. The number of displaced people has swollen dramatically. Camps for the displaced and refugees from Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone have been deliberately attacked or caught in fighting, forcing their occupants to flee yet again. Access by humanitarian agencies, whose staff have also been attacked and killed, is now severely restricted. "

FEBRUARY:

AFP, 13 February 2003

"Liberian rebels have reportedly seized the border town of Toe near Ivory Coast, taking their campaign to the southeast for the first time to turn up the heat on President Charles Taylor to quit power. The rebels attacked Toe after crossing into Liberia from western Ivory Coast, which is controlled by two Ivorian insurgent movements which have emerged during five months of civil war, reports reaching Monrovia said."

AFP, 6 February 2003

"Hundreds of fleeing residents Thursday poured into camps near the Liberian capital Monrovia from nearby towns seized by rebels who have threatened to overrun the seaside city in days.

At the Jah Tondo Displaced camp located about 15 kilometres (nine miles) from Monrovia, more than 1,000 people fleeing fighting in the towns of Bopolu, Suehn and Tubmanburg were registered on the first two days of this week.

'On Monday alone, we registered 600 new arrivals, while more than 500 were registered on Tuesday,' said Liberia Refugee Agency monitor Robert Toe.

'New arrivals for Wednesday and Thursday have not yet been registered,' he said.

The situation was similar in other camps near the capital, officials said. "

MARCH :

WFP, 4 April 2003

"(a) Fighting escalated through the week and especially after 21 March when LURD rebels attacked and captured the city of Gbarnga in Bong County in central Liberia. As a result of the fighting, an estimated 20,000 internally displaced persons were forced to flee their camps on the periphery of Gbarnga. The IDP's have are headed for Totota, where IDP camps already host more than 36,000 displaced Liberians. Three WFP staff, who were among a large group of relief workers abducted by unidentified combatants in Zwedru, were released on 29 March and managed to cross the border into Côte d'Ivoire. The group was temporarily accommodated and assisted by WFP in Guiglo, Daloa and Yamoussoukro, before departing directly to Monrovia by WFP plane. One WFP worker has still not been released.

(b) Recent events in Gbarnga, Monrovia and Zwedru have led to an increase in the number of IDP's, relative to the number of Sierra Leonean and Ivorian refugees, who receive WFP assistance. Nationals of other countries who have been caught up in the Ivorian conflict continue to arrive in Liberia. 306 third country nationals, mainly Burkinabes and Malians, received WFP 1.8 tons of food assistance in Maryland County. WFP carried out food distributions to IDP's in Montserrado County. In Blamasee and Ricks Institute 34,591 internally displaced persons received 380.304 tons of food. Distributions in two other camps had to be abandoned when LURD rebels infiltrated and began shooting in the Ricks Institute camps."

APRIL :

AFP, 29 April 2003

"Government forces in northern Liberia have launched counter-offensives on two fronts against rebels, people fleeing the war zones have said in the capital Monrovia. Hundreds of civilians fled into the bush in the Nimba region to escape the fighting between President Charles Taylor's troops and a new rebel force known as the Movement for Democracy In Liberia (MODEL), witnesses told AFP. "My friend, the fighting is too heavy; we had to flee the town by all means," Daniel Klee, a businessman and father of three children, said on Monday. "We were dispossessed of our belongings."

MAY:

AFP, 20 May 2003

"Ten of Liberia's 15 counties are now affected by the war. The capture of Pleebo and Harper are significant as the towns are used by logging companies to export timber and by the authorities to import arms and ammunition."

JUNE:

AFP, 10 June 2003

"Liberia is sliding towards a catastrophe with thousands of people fleeing from camps for displaced people to seek shelter in the capital, Monrovia, a UN aid agency warned on Tuesday.

'It's total anarchy, it's not a war like any other,' Christiane Berthiaume, a spokeswoman for the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), told journalists.

[...]

Liberian rebel groups, which control most of the country, stepped up their offensive against President Charles Taylor's government last week, and reached the outskirts of Monrovia."

JULY:

IRIN, 19 July 2003

"Thousands of terrified civilians on Saturday headed for the centre of the Liberian capital, Monrovia, fleeing the city's western suburbs as fighting between Liberian government soldiers and rebels escalated around Virginia and St. Paul Bridge, 10 km from the city centre.

The civilians told IRIN that the rebels belonging to the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), were trying to dislodge the government fighters from the bridge and were heading closer to the city centre.

This is the third time since June that the LURD has come close to the capital. In the last two attacks, hundreds of civilians were killed and at least 100,000 people displaced. Some of the displaced are camped in at least 84 sites in the city while those from the western suburbs had returned home."

UN OCHA, 22 July 2003

"The intense shelling and gunfire is causing widespread displacement within and out of the capital of Monrovia, in areas where there isn't adequate shelter or means of survival.

The Government of Liberia has already reported over 600 deaths; if fighting does not cease, the death toll will continue to rise."

AUGUST:

USAID, 13 August 2003

"The fighting near Harbel has caused internally displaced person (IDP) movements in and around the area. News reports on August 12 indicated that IDPs who had previously fled to Harbel to escape the fighting in Monrovia departed from Harbel to avoid the recent outbreak of fighting between MODEL and the GOL.

Civilian populations are also reportedly moving towards RIA to escape the fighting."

World Relief, 6 August 2003

"The recent escalation of the fighting caused thousands of families to flee. Those who have dared to return to their homes find them looted and most of their possessions gone.

Residents who stayed were intimidated and had their belongings forcibly taken away from them."

Despite August 2003 peace agreement, continued fighting forces civilians to flee (2003)

- The August peace agreement, which paved way for a broad-based transitional government was meant to signal the immediate end of armed conflict
- But, by September tens of thousands of frightened civilians continued to flee on foot from a fresh outbreak of fighting around the town of Totota in central Liberia

- Another group of over 6,000 people is believed to be living in a new IDP camp between Salala and Kakata
- Fresh outbreaks of fighting in central Liberia in October and November 2003 send thousands more people on the run

UNHCR, 3 September 2003

"The UN refugee agency today joined other aid agencies on a mission north-east of the Liberian capital, Monrovia, to investigate new reports of large-scale displacement and to assess the humanitarian conditions in host areas.

On Wednesday, an inter-agency team that included UNHCR staff visited an area encompassing the towns of Totota, Salala and Kakata, north-east of Monrovia. The day before, sounds of shelling north of Totota had reportedly sent thousands of terrified Liberians moving towards the three towns.

In Totota alone, an estimated 80,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) have sought shelter in transit centres. In Salala, the International Committee of the Red Cross is planning to set up a second camp to cope with the recent influx. A separate group of over 6,000 people is believed to be living in a new IDP camp between Salala and Kakata."

IRIN, 4 September 2003

"Tens of thousands of frightened civilians continued to flee on foot from a fresh outbreak of fighting around the town of Totota in central Liberia on Thursday.

Relief workers said that over the past three days about 60,000 had fled on foot from Totota to Salala, 20 km further south along the main road to the capital Monrovia.

There they had crowded in an existing camp for people displaced by Liberia's 14-year-old civil war, tripling its population from 30,000 to 90,000 in just 48 hours."

UNHCR, 24 September 2003

"Fresh fighting and armed groups harassing villagers for food have sent thousands of civilians fleeing their homes in central Liberia in a new mass movement that has alarmed the UN refugee agency.

Fighting between the government and rebels of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) broke out over the weekend at Gbarnga town in Bong county, a UN security officer who visited the area today said.

The officer reported hearing explosions and gunfire and that only combatants aged between 12 and 18 were seen in the town 180 km north-east of the capital, Monrovia. Thousands of Liberians were reported heading for Guinea, about 50 km farther north-west."

UNHCR, 2 October 2003

"Violence resurfaced in Monrovia yesterday after a period of relative calm. Outside Monrovia, thousands of people are reportedly fleeing central Liberia for Guinea under threat of attack. An estimated 1,300 Liberians have fled from Lofa County, which is under the control of the rebel group Liberians United for a Return to Democracy (LURD), towards the border towns of Bignamou and Baala. Though the humanitarian community has undertaken regular missions, including to Tubmanburg, Buchanan, Harper and Zwedru, securing safe and unhindered access and security for staff and beneficiaries remains a key challenge. Civilians in many areas outside Monrovia continue to face severe shortages of food, shelter, health and education services."

IRIN, 10 November 2003

"At least 10,000 civilians fleeing skirmishes between former government fighters and MODEL rebels in Nimba County in north central Liberia, have sought shelter in the relatively unscathed town of Saclepea, relief workers said on Monday.

They told a UN assessment mission visiting Saclepea by helicopter that the displaced people had arrived over the past week.

They said the civilians had fled fleeing fighting between forces loyal to the former government of Charles Taylor, which control Saclepea, and MODEL rebels advancing towards the town from Tapeta, 60 km to the south.

The fighting flared up at the end of October, but the relief workers in Saclepea, once a bustling market town of 15,000 people, said it finally died down on 4 November.

'We have a very serious problem coping with the daily influx of the displaced. Shelter, food and medication are their immediate needs,' Cyrus Saye, a relief worker with the Liberian Red Cross Society said.

'More than 3,000 weary and distressed IDPs [internally displaced persons] are in Loryee village, one the biggest villages south of Saclepea on the road linking to Tapeta,' he added."

Monrovia riots may have been linked to problems in the disarmament and demobilisation process (2004)

- Riots that broke out in Monrovia and spread to other parts of Liberia at the end of October 2004 killed 19 people and seriously injured more than 200 others, putting on hold the official refugee and IDP repatriation exercise
- Among the various causes attributed to the riots were religious tension; a land dispute; the leadership dispute within the former LURD rebel movement; and disgruntled ex-combatants rioting for benefits

UN OCHA, 7 November 2004

"As calm returns to Monrovia and other parts of Liberia, casualty figures continue to rise in the aftermath of 28th October riots. While briefing members of the National Legislative Assembly on the prevailing security situation in the country on 2nd November, NTGL Chairman Gyude Bryant told the gathering that some 16 persons were reported dead. The over 200 persons that were hospitalized, 50 of them are in critical condition due to gunshot wound and injuries sustained from machetes.

Chairman Bryant further stated that scores of youths toting petrol bombs were also arrested in various parts of Monrovia, bringing to a total some 400 persons remanded into custody who are now being interrogated for their alleged involvement in the disturbances.

Since last week's disturbances, civil society groups, political, religious and human rights and peace building organizations have condemned the violence and the desecration of places of worship. It is now known that some 20 Mosques and Churches were burnt. Schools, business centers and individual homes were either burnt or looted. Mr. Alpha Oumar Konare, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, who also condemned the violence, claimed if allowed to escalate it could undermine the consolidation of peace in Liberia and send the wrong signals to

members of the international community that has pledged to contribute towards Liberia's post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

Many residents of Monrovia have attributed the cause of the violence to a land dispute involving Sekou Damate Conneh, former Chairman of LURD, whose defunct faction is predominantly Muslim Mandingoes. There are others who think the violence was due to the long-standing leadership crisis existing in LURD whose hierarchy concluded reconciliation talks presided over by President Tejan Kabbah during a meeting in Sierra Leone at the height of the recent crisis in Monrovia. Residents are inclined to believing that while there may have been a 'religious' twist to the disturbances, unidentified persons that were bent on using civil disobedience to avert the peace process, perpetrated the recent violence in the country that later spread to Kakata, Margibi, Buchanan in Grand Bassa and Ganta, in Nimba County.

[...]

In some quarters of the city, people feared that the violence may have also been due to agitation caused by the October 31st deadline for the end of voluntary disarmament and demobilization Process, when in some areas, combatants were yet to be disarmed and demobilized and given their benefits. Chairman Bryant had stated unequivocally, that the violence of 28th October would in no way influence a change in the 31st October deadline for voluntary disarmament. He warned that anyone found with arms after the deadline would be prosecuted, informing that all those with arms should inform the Police to take possession of the arms. November is the grace period when weapons and ammunition can be handed in at any UNMIL checkpoint voluntarily without prosecution or benefits. UNMIL has advised ex-combatants to report to the checkpoints prior to handing in the weapons.

In view of constraints (bad road condition exacerbated by the raining season) to fully implement the Disarmament and Demobilization process in the southeastern region and Lofa County in the north, UNMIL, through mobile disarmament units, would continue disarming fighters near the border with Cote D'Ivoire and in areas close to the Sierra Leonean and Guinean borders.

The SRSG Jacques Paul Klein in a radio address on 1st November stated that all fighters handing in their weapons in the two areas would qualify for a US\$300 resettlement grant. At the official close of the Disarmament and Demobilization process, UNMIL had disarmed 95,600 combatants including women and children. 27,000 rifles had been collected and 29,000 rounds of heavy weapons ammunition and about 7 million rounds of small-arms ammunition had been turned in.

In the meantime UNDP has launched an appeal for additional funding for Reintegration and Rehabilitation (RR) programmes for the former combatants stating that the program was at risk. Up to date firm pledges were made to rehabilitate and reintegrate 20,035 disarmed and demobilized ex-combatants into society. But more voluntary contributions is needed to address an additional caseload of 47,025 ex-combatants who are yet to be enrolled in RR programmes. This additional caseload signals an unanticipated though welcome desire of former fighters that have completed the demobilization phase of the DD program, to put their conflict-ridden pasts behind them. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) have therefore raised an alert to rekindle the interest and commitment of the donors to avoid a setback of the Rehabilitation and Reintegration programmes."

Economic deprivation leading to cross-border mercenary activity is a major cause of cyclical conflict and displacement – Human Rights Watch report (2005)

- Thousands of 'regional warriors' move from one West African conflict to the next, motivated largely by the promise of money and looting opportunities
- Many of the fighters were originally forcibly recruited by the rebel movements in Liberia and Sierra Leone, usually when they were still children
- Failures in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes in Sierra Leone and Liberia were responsible for many fighters re-arming
- Since mid-2004, many fighters have been recruited for fighting "missions" particularly in Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea

HRW, March 2005

"The flow of arms and combatants across the fluid borders of West Africa, paired with the willingness of governments in the region to support the actions of insurgent groups and government militias in neighboring countries has had lethal consequences, particularly for civilians. The armed groups these regional warriors are part of have a well-documented record of committing unspeakable human rights abuses against unarmed civilians and have so far enjoyed impunity for the violations they commit. Efforts by the international community to disarm and reintegrate these fighters into their home communities –including through training – have so far had limited success. At present, the armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire and the unstable political situation in Guinea appear to be the current theaters into which these regional warriors are being drawn.

[...]

The majority of these regional warriors began their fighting careers after being forcibly recruited by either the NPFL or the RUF, usually when they were still children. After fighting in their first war, however, nearly all willingly crossed borders to fight in other wars or 'missions,' a term these fighters used for war. At the time of recruitment into these subsequent wars, almost all were unemployed or living a precarious economic existence, and were motivated by the promise of both financial compensation and the opportunity to loot. Most interviewed received at least part of the financial compensation offered by the recruiters, and all participated in the looting and pillage of mostly civilian property, and benefited economically from it. Most used the money to pay rent, school and medical fees for their extended family, and to engage in petty trading.

[...]

The majority of former fighters interviewed who had participated in the 2000-2003 United Nations-sponsored Sierra Leonean Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration program (DDR) received only partial benefits, were kept out of the skills training component of the program or failed to receive any benefits at all. They also identified corruption in this process and an inadequate grievance procedure within the DRR program as serious problems. Many perceived the program's failure to engage them as having contributed to their decision to take up arms in subsequent conflicts. Similar problems were described by those within the 2003-2005 UN-sponsored Liberian disarmament program, although to a much lesser degree. A severe funding shortage of US \$39 million in the Liberian disarmament program not only left some 40,000 combatants at risk of missing out on job training and education, but appeared to make them more vulnerable for re-recruitment to fight in future armed conflicts.

Since April 2004, well over two-thirds of the Liberian ex-combatants interviewed, in addition to several of the Sierra Leoneans, had been asked to join fighting "missions" in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. Among those approached to fight in Guinea about half had been approached by commanders claiming to represent a fledgling Guinean insurgency, and the other half by those claiming to be supporters of Guinean President Lansana Conté. Aid organizations and United

Nations officials working in Liberia say that hundreds of recently demobilized combatants, including children, have since at least November 2004 been re-recruited to fight in Côte d'Ivoire. The majority have, according to their reports, gone to fight alongside militias associated with the Ivorian government.

While Sierra Leone and Liberia's progress at silencing the guns is encouraging, the developments in the past year in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea highlight the serious potential for the cycle of conflict and suffering to begin anew. All four countries – Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire – remain vulnerable to political instability and conflict as a consequence of their domestic policies, the dire socio-economic conditions endured by their populations, a long legacy of weak rule of law and the instability of their respective neighbors.

[...]

Governments of the region and the international community must pay strict attention to the importance of the economic sustainability of these fighters' new lives as well as the importance for parallel development of the communities into which they return. Shortfalls in funding to train and reintegrate tens of thousands of fighters who took part in Liberia's 1999-2003 armed conflict, as well as for programs to assist civilians whose lives were torn apart by the same, must be redressed. Corrupt practices in the disarmament and rehabilitation process, which has deprived many combatants of their benefits and made them more vulnerable for re-recruitment into other regional armed conflicts, must be addressed through the establishment of a grievance procedure endowed with the power to refer cases for prosecution.

The regional warriors interviewed for this report clearly point to the inextricable link between the level of economic deprivation and the continuing cycle of war crimes throughout the region. For that reason, improving the severe socio-economic conditions which in large part give rise to armed conflict in the region is vital. Tackling the root causes of this impoverishment is critical to putting an end to the phenomenon of mercenaries in West Africa; however it is a long-term process which necessitates sustained political will and effort on the part of governments and the international community.”

POPULATION FIGURES AND PROFILE

Global figures

A residual caseload of IDPs still remains around the camps as well as an undetermined number of urban IDPs (2007)

The figures below date to May 2007 at the time of the UNHCR mission. A verification exercise is currently being conducted and it should lead to a clearer understanding of the number of outstanding IDPs in Liberia. The return process was officially declared over in April 2006 while final stage was completed in April-May 2007.

The government of Liberia, with the support of the international community, made a clear policy decision in assigning legitimate IDP status only to those Liberians living in official camps. This approach left out of the return process those people who had found refuge in Monrovia and who are still occupying public or private buildings. The Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission has drawn up a list of public buildings occupied by "squatters" but has made no suggestions on how and where to relocate these people. The issue has been discussed within the ICF, but so far no plan has been endorsed. Even though the challenge lies in the difficulty of distinguishing legitimate IDPs who need protection assistance from the rest of the groups living in the buildings, humanitarian actors have warned that the problem will worsen over time if no proper solutions are found.

UNHCR, 24 July 2007, pp. 7, 9-10

"Between November 2004 and April 2007, an inter-agency operation assisted some 326,990 IDPs to return to their places of origin. The vast majority of these (321,634) had returned by the end of March 2006, and the camps were formally declared closed and assistance discontinued in April 2006. An inter-agency assessment in April-May 2006 found approximately 28,000 individuals still residing in the former camps, of whom just over 16,000 had received return packages but had either not departed or had done so but later returned to the camps. A further 12,000 claimed to have been wrongly excluded from return assistance owing to errors in the WFP registration and verification process; however of these, only 5,480 had their claims validated and received assistance to return. The final stage of the return process was completed in April-May 2007 as 122 unregistered families, identified as vulnerable, were transported to their areas of origin and received a specially- designed assistance package, including shelter kits.

[...]

Following the completion of the IDP return operation, approximately 23,000 individuals are believed to remain in former IDP camps. Of these, some 16,000 (5% of the original registered population) received a return package but either failed to depart, or later came back to the camps. During interviews conducted by the evaluation team, these individuals cited lack of economic opportunities and basic services in their home areas as their main reason for remaining. Others explained that members of their families had been killed by perpetrators who were now residing in their home communities. Some were single women and widows who stated that they had no family ties or sources of support in their home areas. In interviews with members of the host community, local government officials and landlords, the evaluation team was told that while former IDPs were in general welcome to remain in their current locations for the time being, they

would have no security of tenure and there would be no guarantee that they would be permitted to do so indefinitely. This situation varies from location to location.

Others remaining in the former camps claimed to have been wrongly dropped from the registration lists during a 2004 WFP verification exercise. During a further inter-agency verification exercise conducted in August 2006 only 5,480 had their claims upheld (and were subsequently assisted to return), resulting in a residual group of around 7,000 who claim to have been wrongly denied return assistance. Whilst some of these are believed to be members of local communities, there is nonetheless a significant group who continue to call themselves 'IDPs' and who harbour a sense of grievance at what they see as a denial of their rights."

Geographical distribution

Key statistics of official IDP camps (May 2004)

- IDP survey carried out in May 2004 reveals details of displaced populations in 20 official IDP camps, totalling just over 261,000 people

OCHA/UNHCR, 18 May 2004

"Key Findings – Camp Population

- Approximately 261,886 people live in the 20 Official IDP camps in Liberia.
- Wilson IDP camp in Montserrado County is the largest at over 28,000.
- Sinje 3 is the smallest IDP camp at 2,482.
- Montserrado County has an IDP population of 163,523.
- Bong County has an IDP population of 81,731.
- Margibi County has an IDP population of 16,632.
- The majority of residents of IDP camps on the western side of Monrovia plan to return to Bomi (63 percent) and Gbarpolu (16 percent) Counties.
- The majority of residents of IDP camps on the eastern side of Monrovia, along the road to Gbarnga, plan to return to Bong (38 percent) and Lofa (25 percent) Counties.
- The majority of residents of IDP camps in Bong County plan to return to Lofa (79 percent) and Bong (16 percent) Counties.

Total IDPs by Camp	
Camp	Total
Wilson	28,387
Ricks Institute	22,829
Salala	20,370
Jahtondo	19,013
Maimu1	18,579
Blamasse	18,559
Seighbeh	15,281
Maimu2	14,065
Soul Clinic	13,742
Perry Town	12,606
Maimu3	12,176
E.J. Yancy	11,809
Mount Barclay	10,469
Conneh	9,984
Plumkor	9,354
Unification Town	6,648
Fendell*	6,478
Tumutu	4,732
New Land	4,323
Singhe 3	2,482
Total	261,886

*Note: In Fendell IDP Camp residents live in the class rooms of the former College of Science and Agriculture thus accurate counts were difficult to obtain. In addition, there was a suspicion that on the day of the survey additional people came from the surrounding communities and that some residents were counted twice."

Disaggregated figures

IDP return survey reveals key demographics of camp populations (May 2004)

- May 2004 IDP Survey in Liberia's 20 official camps reveals information on age, sex and household size of more than 260,000 IDPs

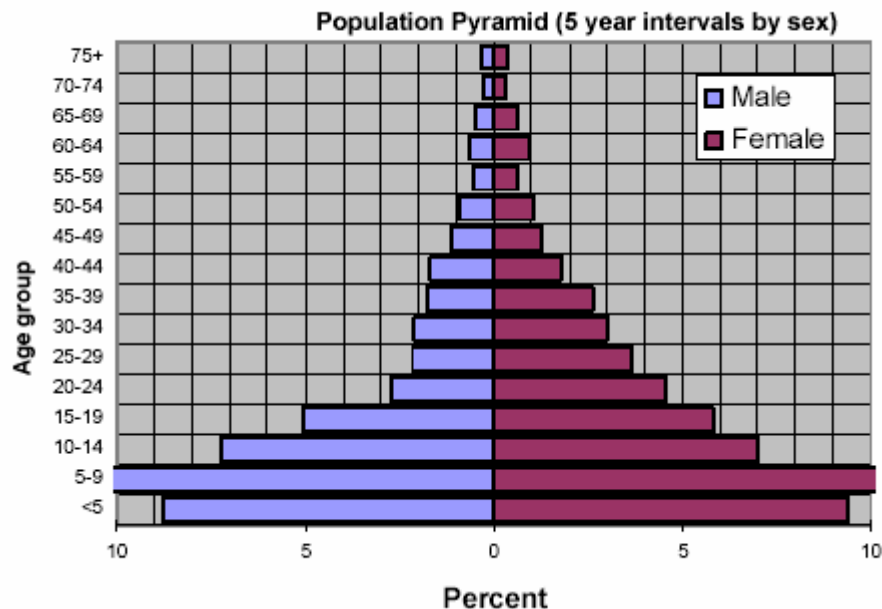
OCHA/UNHCR, 18 May 2004

"Information on the age, sex, and number of persons in each shelter was collected during the survey. There was not a significant variation in demographic data across camps or return destination thus the information is presented in tabular and graphic form rather than in map form. Figures 1 through 4 portray the basic demographics of the surveyed population.

Key Findings - Demographics

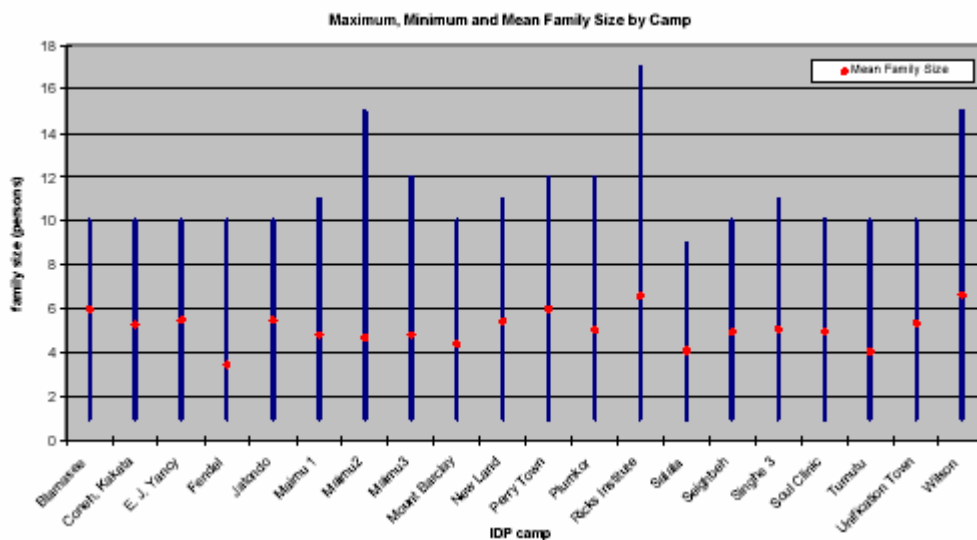
- The ratio of men to women is constant across the camp and county of return.
- Between the ages of 20 and 30 the ratio between men and women in the camps is 63 percent women to 37 percent men.
- As shown in Figure 1 in Appendix A, 54 percent of the residents of the IDP camps are women and 46 percent are men. The five and ten year spikes in ages on that graphic are a result of people not knowing their exact age.
- Figure 2 in Appendix A compares the population from the IDP survey with the 1984 census of Liberia. In the 1984 census 43 percent of the population was under the age of 15. In this IDP

survey almost 54 percent of the surveyed population is under the age of 15. However, care must be taken when comparing the data from the 1984 census to the information gathered in this survey. The IDP return survey gathered information on a specific subset of the population and this data should not necessarily be considered representative of the entire population of Liberia.



Key Findings – Demographics (cont.)

- The average household size is 5.2. The survey was administered as one form per shelter – and due to shelter size nuclear and extended families may be occupying more than one shelter.
- Fendell has the lowest average household size at 3.4 people per household and Wilson and Ricks Institute the highest at 6.6 people per household.

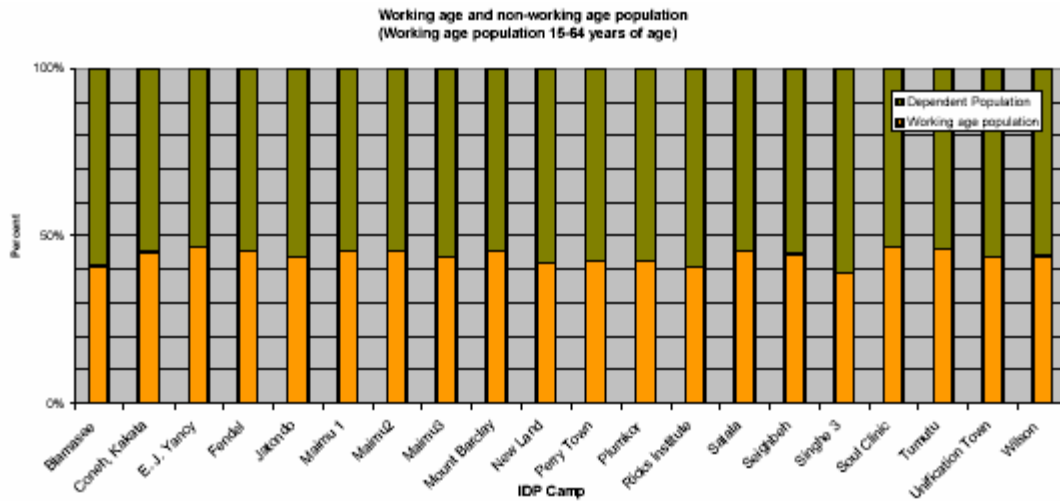


Key Findings – Demographics (cont.)

- 44 percent of the population is of working age (15-64) thus 66 percent of the

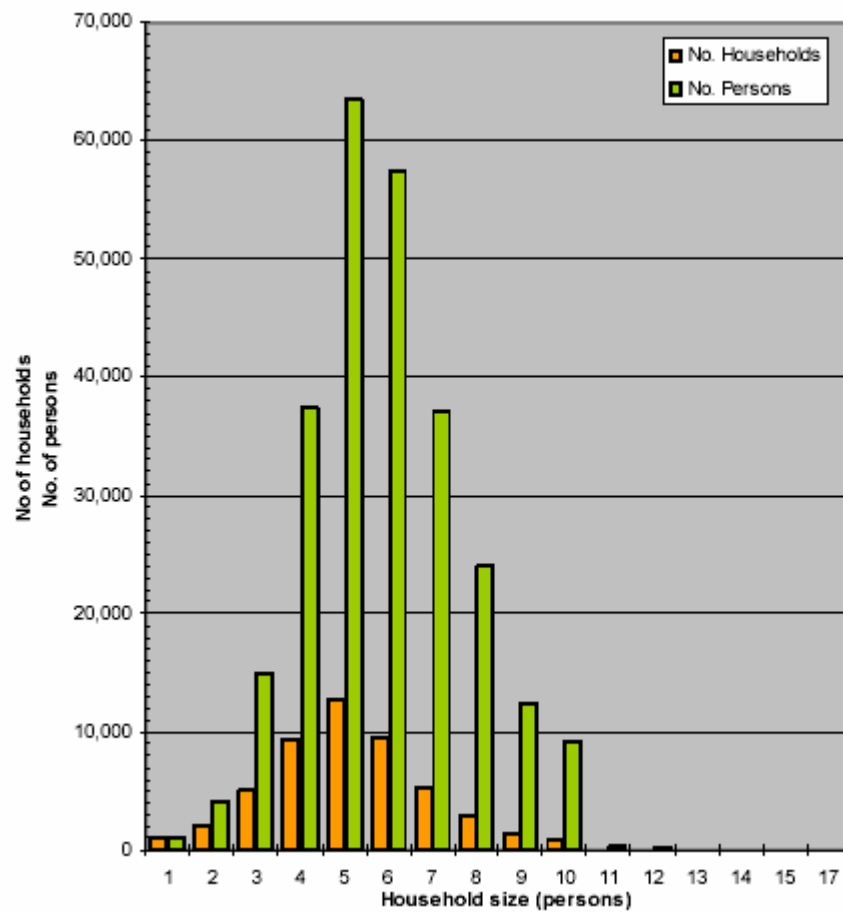
population is under the age of 15.

- The dependency ratio (working age (15-64) by non working age (less than 15) varies little between camps or when grouped by county of return (Figure 4 in Appendix A).



Key Findings – Demographics (cont.)

- 75 percent of people live in households that range in size from 4 to 7 people (Figure 8 in Appendix A).
- Less than 2 percent of the households have more than 9 people.
- Only .42 percent of the surveyed population live alone in a shelter.
- Only 9 households have more than 13 people.



PATTERNS OF DISPLACEMENT

General

Many people have been repeatedly displaced since Liberian conflict started in 1989 (December 2003)

- Fourteen years of civil war in Liberia have produced a highly complex pattern of internal displacement
- International attention has been focused, perhaps disproportionately, on IDPs in the Monrovia area
- IDPs living in informal shelters in and around Monrovia have been reluctant to relocate yet again before finally moving back to their areas of origin

UNCHR/EPAU, December 2003

"The longstanding conflict in Liberia has generated a highly complex pattern of internal displacement, with many people being uprooted repeatedly over the past 13 years. The fighting that took place in the first half of 2003, culminating in the battle for Monrovia in June and July, provoked fresh waves of internal displacement in many parts of the country, not least the area in and around the capital city. Recent estimates suggest that the number of IDPs in Liberia has now reached between 500,000 and 600,000 although the actual figure could be considerably higher.

33. With travel in Liberia being so severely restricted for security reasons, a considerable degree of international attention has been focused on those IDPs who are to be found in the Monrovia area. Many of these IDPs are accommodated in camps that were established prior to the most recent upsurge in the civil war, while others are relatively recent arrivals who crowded into the city when the fighting in and around the capital was at its fiercest. At that time, many of Monrovia's regular residents were compelled to relocate within the city and to take shelter alongside those IDPs who had displaced from other parts of the country.

34. Now that UNMIL has secured a 25-kilometre radius around the capital, UNHCR and other agencies are attempting to persuade those IDPs who cannot return to their home areas to move out of the city and to be accommodated in 'official camps' located in secure, rural sites, where basic amenities such as sanitation are easier to provide. But such proposals have met with resistance from the IDPs, who have continuing security concerns and who are reluctant to relocate again before they finally move back to their areas of origin.

35. Food supplies have been discontinued for some groups of IDPs in the Monrovia area, such as those who sought shelter at the city's main football stadium, just outside the capital. But this is a controversial initiative, which threatens to be an issue of division within the humanitarian community.

36. Because the IDPs living in and around Monrovia are easily accessible to humanitarian agencies, journalists and donor state representatives, they have attracted a large and perhaps disproportionate degree of international attention. Recent evidence suggests that the situation of IDPs in other parts of the country is equally if not more dire."

Civilians are continuously forced to move, but have few places to flee to (September 2003)

- Despite the August 2003 peace agreement, tens of thousands of civilians continue to flee fighting and human rights abuses - many of whom have fled several times already in the past
- IDPs often flee from one camp to another, as seen in Bong County in September 2003
- The displaced are traumatized and exhausted, with few places to seek refuge and in desperate need of assistance that is often not available

MSF, 9 September 2003

“Despite claims that the nightmare is now over, Liberia remains a humanitarian emergency that deserves an emergency response.

Violence and displacement in Bong County

A very clear and urgent example of this is the situation in Bong County, north of Monrovia. Active fighting just 25 kilometers from camps for displaced people in Bong County is threatening tens of thousands who are currently on the move in search of safety. It is not just the fighting between different armed groups that these civilians fear. Looting, indiscriminate violence, rape, and forced conscription committed by all the warring parties have sent thousands in search of safe havens throughout the war. The massive displacement of civilians in Bong County that is currently going on is symptomatic of the vicious cycle of violence against civilians that has been continuing since 1999.

The Totota and Maimu camps in Bong County were nearly completely emptied last week, with fifty-five severely malnourished children and tens of patients treated for cholera still unaccounted for as a result of the chaotic escape. In hours, Salala camp, which was already overcrowded with displaced people, has doubled in size to an estimated 50,000 people.

Tens of thousands of others are on the move to Kakata, where fighting occurred today, Careysburg, and Monrovia. Many of these Liberians have already fled fighting several times in the past two years alone. People have lost everything and now they are being forced to move again. They are traumatized and exhausted and fearful of being trapped behind the frontlines once again, but there are very few places left for them to flee to and assistance is seriously inadequate.

With the rainy season at its peak, the displaced of Bong are left without proper shelter, food, or health care. The newly displaced are taking refuge in schools, transit camps, and abandoned buildings. Food has not been regularly distributed in the camps in Bong since May and MSF medical teams working in Bong are seeing a rise in malnutrition. MSF has treated over 250 severely malnourished children in our therapeutic feeding center in Salala camp in the past month. MSF will open a clinic in Careysburg to provide assistance to displaced people currently moving from Bong.”

Movements of IDPs give rise to unsupported “spontaneous settlements” within communities (2003-2004)

- Spontaneous settlements in several communities in Montserrado and Margibi counties lack the “very basics of life”
- Settlements are almost exclusively inhabited by IDPs, mostly from Lofa County

- Levels of displacement vary from one settlement to another

OCHA Liberia, 20 January 2004

“The rise of poorly built non-serviced spontaneous settlements in several communities in Montserrado and Margibi counties has claimed the attention of humanitarian actors in Liberia. Given the poor quality of the built environment, existence in these settlements has the potential to expand the challenge of humanitarian assistance beyond institutionalized internal displacement. The lack of the very basics of life in these communities could lead to more disasters in terms of health and sanitation, water and nutrition.

[...]

Except for the Cotton Tree Settlement, which has been integrated into the host community, all other settlements visited were inhabited by internally displaced persons. By far the most of these people are from Lofa County, followed by people from Bong and Gbapolu, many of whom have had multiple displacements. The inter-agency Vulnerability Assessment Mapping of six communities in Monrovia (2003) suggests that displacement is in fact the fourth main coping mechanism of residents.

Levels of displacement vary from one settlement to another. Whereas the spontaneous IDP settlement located in Bensonville is in the first phase of displacement (less than 3 months), the Catholic Compound settlement in the Pipeline Community, Paynesville, goes up to 8 months. There are those who believe that needs may be streamlined according to phases of displacement.

Factors leading to displacement in these spontaneous settlements range from ‘running away from war’ to finding a ‘free’ place where other IDPs and some assistance are, and stopping to friends, relatives and kinsmen who later helped to arrange for land to build shelters.”

PHYSICAL SECURITY & FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Physical security

General protection concerns (2007)

- Between January and December 2006 a total of 2,323 protection reports were filed mostly in communities of return
- Protection cases that have been difficult to address include traditional harmful practices, early marriage, domestic violence and child abuse
- Gaps in the national protection system include the absence of key stakeholders, the lack of community awareness about rights, a weak referral system and a poor understanding of legal provisions

NRC, January 2007, pp. 8-9

"Between January and December 2006, NRC supervisors in the 15 counties collected a total of 2323 protection reports. The majority of cases were identified in communities of return, while a small number originated from IDP camps that remained officially open until April 2006. Most frequently reported cases are land and property disputes, rape, domestic violence, physically assault and child rights violations.

The reported cases should be taken as merely indicative of the nature of protection problems in Liberia due to some of the following reasons:

- It is recognized that under-reporting is a serious problem in Liberia, particularly in rural communities.
- Some cases may be reported to other agencies and this data has not been compared with that of NRC.
- Community based organisations have been slow to begin using the Protection Monitoring Form and to share reports with the PCG.
- NRC monitors visit all communities on a roving basis. They are not permanently present in all locations and some cases may not come to light when they have occurred some time prior to their visit.
- Comparative analysis of crime statistics collected by the national police has not been made.

Comprehensive statistics are not yet available for all counties on the outcome of the interventions. However, some initial data indicates that the "success rate" varies greatly with influencing factors such as original location of reported incidents (and their accessibility), presence of international agencies with resources to follow cases, motivation of government officials to see cases solved. NRC shares 100% of their cases with the protection unit of UNHCR and estimates that 85% - 90% of cases are then referred to relevant agencies including UNHCR. The intervention rate was higher during the second half of 2006 compared to the first part of 2006 and one of the reasons is more widely spread information.

Cases that have been more difficult to address include those of traditional harmful practices, early marriage, domestic violence and child abuse. In part this is due to the scale of the problem, the lack of community awareness and to some degree, the absence of a government lead strategy to address these violations.

In general terms, the reports have illustrated the gaps in the national protection system including:

- absence of key stakeholders in national protection system such as County-level government lawyers, police etc,
- lack of community awareness about rights
- weak referral systems
- poor understanding of legal provisions"

Protection concerns of children (2007)

- Save the Children study gives accounts of large numbers of children engaging in sex in camps and in communities as a means of survival
- Exploiters included humanitarian workers, camp officials, peacekeepers, government employees, businessmen and teachers
- Easier access to IDP camps facilitated recruitment of child soldiers between 1999 and 2003
- Recruitment of children into armed forces was conducted by both the government and LURD and MODEL
- Reintegration of child soldiers into the communities has proved successful
- A major concern for the physical and mental well being of children is constituted by illegal and poorly run orphanages

Sexual exploitation and abuse of displaced children

Save the Children, 7 May 2006

"This study focuses on children remaining in those camps and those who have recently been repatriated to their towns and villages of origin after the end of the war.

Save the Children, along with many other non-governmental organisations, has been working alongside the Liberian government in the IDP camps. During the course of our work with children, Save the Children staff became aware that many children were agreeing to have sex with older men for money, food and other goods and favours. In order to document more closely the circumstances surrounding this issue, and to look at ways to improve Save the Children's delivery of assistance to better protect children against such exploitation, we instigated a study in four IDP camps and four communities with a high population of people returning from the camps.

The study was conducted using focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs). It aimed to:

- provide children with an opportunity to define their needs and in particular their basic needs based on their experience of conflict and displacement.
- document the circumstances in which children in IDP settings use transactional sex in order to meet basic and other needs of their families or themselves.
- provide recommendations to inform programme decisions, ie, to strengthen programmatic approaches to address underlying causes of sexual exploitation.
- develop increased levels of understanding on how children, parents and communities in camps perceive the practice of children engaging in sex in exchange for goods and services.
- document findings in order to conduct advocacy with donors and other humanitarian actors in line with Sphere Standards.

During the study, participants shared consistent accounts of children engaging in sex both in the camps and in communities as a means of survival. [...] The results of the study show a high level of children involved in 'selling sex'(1) (as the respondents put it, 'man business'). Respondents estimated that a high proportion of girls, in both the camps and returnee communities, are

involved. The girls reportedly ranged in age from eight to eighteen years, with girls of 12 years and upwards identified as being regularly involved in 'selling sex'.

Reference was consistently made to men with money or status being involved in this exploitation. Camp officials, humanitarian workers, businessmen, peacekeepers, government employees and even teachers were frequently cited.

Most people cited lack of economic and livelihood opportunities, as well as chronic poverty, as underlying causes for the ongoing exploitation of children. Parents reported feeling powerless to stop children who were having sex in exchange for goods and services as they did not have the economic means to provide for their children. In some instances, families cited that transactional sex was a means of supporting the wider family to access things such as food or money to purchase food. In other instances, children identified more personal needs such as clothing or being able to access video clubs to watch films. The widespread nature of the problem meant it affected children in a broad cross section of environments, including entertainment centres, latrines, video clubs, bush land surrounding camps, even homes and where distributions take place.

Alarming trends began to emerge during the discussions with communities. All of the communities and camp inhabitants described the widespread nature of the problem and the increasing resignation among adults and children that sex in exchange for goods, services and as a means of survival was becoming a more common option for children to support themselves and their families. Any level of acceptance of exploitation in post-war countries will have a detrimental social and economic impact and therefore all possible steps must be taken immediately to stop this. "

Recruitment of children into armed forces

Achvarina, Vera & Reich, Simon F., Summer 2006, pp. 132, 160

"The alternative explanation we offer in this article argues that the degree to which children are protected in refugee camps is the primary determinant of child soldier recruitment rates.

[...]

Liberia, 1999-2003: No place to hide

[...]

This time, the international community refused to send troops to quell the growing disorder. In their absence, IDP protection fell under the jurisdiction of Liberia's ministry of justice, while the government's refugee agency (LRRRC) was supposed to oversee the management of camps and coordination of relief. Both, however, lacked the expertise and resources to discharge their respective functions, suffering from limited technical, financial, and logistical incapacities.

[...]

IDP children were just as vulnerable [*as refugee children*]. Without protection, the forced recruitment of children became relatively easier to implement as the plight of IDPs became increasingly desperate. The massive movement of IDPs described earlier left a large pool of children unaccompanied and unprotected in IDP camps - and therefore highly vulnerable to recruitment.

[...]

Two former child soldiers attested to witnessing both the government and LURD forces abducting children from two of the largest IDP camps (the Ricks and Wilson Center camps). Plumkor camp was also infamous for forcible child recruitment. This time, however, Monrovia was not spared. Children were regularly taken by government forces in their raids on the IDP camps near Monrovia in 2002 and 2003. As a result, parents learned to keep their children inside when the government forces visited the camp to avoid their being taken away to fight.

Both LURD and MODEL stepped up their recruitment of adults and children as they advanced toward Monrovia and Buchanan in the first half of 2003. Government forces responded by doing the same. All sides looked to large camps for their child recruits."

UN Human Rights Council, 28 February 2007, para. 24

"An assessment of reintegration of ex-combatants shows that assimilation of child soldiers has been successful, with only 5 per cent maintaining contact with their former commanders. Furthermore, 70 per cent are now attending school."

Children's physical and mental health

UN Human Rights Council, 28 February 2007, para. 28

"The existence of many illegal and privately run orphanages is a major concern. The system to date has lent itself to exploitation of children and families. The publication of draft minimum standards for operating orphanages in Liberia by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, after a consultative process involving the Child Protection Network Task Force, is a major step forward and the speedy adoption of these guidelines is now urgently required. The Ministry, in coordination with the Child Protection Network, has established a list of over 60 orphanages for closure and arrangements are being put into place for the placement of those children whose parents cannot be traced and in whose case reunification is not possible. The Minister for Social Welfare reported that any closures have to be carefully coordinated with the Ministry of Justice, as past attempts had failed, following legal challenges. The matter has become very politicized and the legislature has frequently called on her office for explanations in relation to specific closures. However, the Minister assured us that as soon as the documentation was finalized further closures would commence. A visit to one such unaccredited orphanage, which housed 61 children in totally inadequate and substandard conditions, was described to the Minister."

See also IRIN's "[LIBERIA: Fake orphans to attract donor funds](#)" (17 May 2007) and UNMIL's "[Human Rights in Liberia's Orphanages](#)" (March 2007)

SGBV remains a serious challenge to the protection of human rights (2007)

- Rape and other sexual violence have been widespread during the civil war
- It is difficult to establish the actual incidence of rape as many cases go unreported but there is still a high prevalence of SGBV
- Domestic violence has been particularly on the rise since the end of the war
- Despite the introduction of the new Rape Amendment Act in 2006, this is still not being fully implemented

L. Bruthus, January 2007

"Rape and sexual abuse were common forms of violence during the war which ended in 2003. Many young girls and women were forcibly taken as 'bush wives', cooks, cleaners and sex slaves to the fighters. The war has ended but there is strong evidence of a high prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and domestic violence throughout the country. AFELL [Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia] receives reports of up to six rape cases every day.

The vast majority of cases go unreported and rape continues to flourish in communities in post-war Liberia. Alleged perpetrators include influential community members such as teachers, religious and traditional community leaders, and fathers. There is a general conspiracy of silence/denial by the community or even the affected family. Customs and traditions often take precedence over Liberia's formal legal system. Brutal crimes of a sexual nature such as statutory

rape, gang rape, attempted rape, sexual assault, sodomy, incest, sexual harassment, prostitution, child trafficking and criminal coercion remain rampant."

J. Munala, January 2007

"[D]espite the large number of UN and other international agencies working on SGBV issues, there still appears to be a high number of incidents of post-war rape and domestic violence. This can be traced to the culture of impunity and acquiescence in a society which views rape of women as 'no big deal' and in which it is considered normal for intimate partner relations to be characterised by violence.

Sexual violence is reinforced in domestic relationships. The changed gender roles and identities that the war brought about have left many men feeling powerless. Many of those forced to watch helplessly as their mothers, wives, sisters and daughters were raped and sexually abused admit to shame and inability to live up to the hegemonic model of masculinity. The easiest way for them to regain their power has been through exerting control over their women through sexual and physical violence.

[...]

Evidence is anecdotal but interviews with women and girls in Grand Gedeh and River Gee counties reflected the scale of ongoing sexual violence. There is particular concern at the large number of reported cases of raped children. Attacks are perpetrated not only out of sexual desire but also due to belief in rape as a ritual capable of increasing power and virility."

Action Aid, March 2007, p.14

"[I]t is impossible to accurately establish the actual incidence of rape and whether this is in fact increasing, as there are no reliable comparable records and it is impossible to ascertain how many rapes go unreported. Despite underreporting, UNMIL at a senior level recognises rape as being "way off the scale". UNPOL estimates that on average eight rapes are reported weekly, with at least 350 in total in 2006. It is however difficult to assess the geographical distribution. Rape is disproportionately more reported in Monrovia, Monteserrado County (at least 173 cases in 2006), compared to the interior of the country. In many countries crime rates are higher in urban areas, but it is probable that rape is far higher in the counties than the reported statistics suggest because of the additional social and logistical obstacles to reporting. Nevertheless, of 10 cases on the circuit court's docket for Grand Cape Mount County in January 2007, seven were rape."

L. Bruthus, January 2007

"Until this year [2006] rape has been a bailable offence. Even if a suspect were arrested, he could be out of jail and back home the next day and in a position to intimidate anyone who might give evidence against him. AFELL [Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia] championed the bill which gave rise to the promulgation of the new rape law on 17 January 2006 immediately after the inauguration of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as President.

The new rape law widens the definition of rape to cover penetration with any foreign object, not just the penis, and also raises the age of a child to 18 in harmony with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Those under the age of 18 are now automatically deemed not to have given consent. The law also covers gang rape and stipulates a penalty of life imprisonment for the rape of women, girls and boys. The issue of marital rape was raised during this campaign but defeated by the majority male-dominated legislature."

UNMIL, May 2007, paras. 40-41

"The Rape Amendment Act was not fully implemented between November 2006 and January 2007, resulting in human rights violations and continuing impunity for rape. Sexual and gender-

based violence, particularly rape of children, remained a significant challenge to the rule of law and the protection of fundamental human rights.

- The Officer in Charge of the Tubmanburg Women and Children Protection Unit (WCPU), Bomi County, informed HROs that 17 cases reported in November were later withdrawn by the complainants for private settlement.
- On 10 December in Gbarnga, Bong County, a man allegedly seriously assaulted his girlfriend who was then nine months pregnant. The woman was admitted to Phoebe Hospital and miscarried on 12 December. The suspect was arrested on 11 December and charged with aggravated assault. However, on 15 December the woman died. HRO requested the police to change the charge from the initial Aggravated Assault to Murder. The case proceeded slowly; an updated police charge sheet was forwarded to the Gbarnga Magistrates' Court 5 January and the City Solicitor waited until 17 January to request a death certificate from the hospital where the woman died. By the end of January, no further progress had been achieved in this case.
- A rape suspect remanded in pre-trial detention in Grand Gedeh County on 7 November was released on 23 December. He did not show up for the Court hearing scheduled for 3 January but the Judge did not issue an arrest warrant until 10 January.
- On 6 November, the Owensgrove Magistrate, Grand Bassa County, informed HROs that a man suspected of raping a 13 year old girl had escaped from custody. The Magistrate also stated that the parents of the alleged victim had refused to appear in Court to assist in the investigation.

Two cases of reported gang-rape were not handled by the courts in accordance with the law and the suspects in each case were at liberty by the end of January, with no further action taken in prosecuting the cases.

- A 29 year old woman was allegedly raped on 1 December in Suakoko District, Bong County, by four males. The suspects were remanded in custody at Gbarnga Central Prison between 13 and 21 December. They were then rearrested and detained between 3 and 5 January. On 16 January, the Circuit Court Clerk showed HRO a document entitled "Promissory Note" signed by the Judge of the Circuit Court and two witnesses who guaranteed that the suspects would report to the Court on 10 January. The suspects did not report to Court on that date and no action was taken by the end of January to arrest them. Gang-rape is first-degree rape, and thus the right to release on bail is far more limited than in any other cases.
- Five male juveniles were arrested by LNP in Lofa County for the alleged gang-rape of a 14 year old girl. All five were released on 6 November by the Voinjama Stipendiary Magistrate, who told HRO later that the parents of the victim had asked him to release the suspects so they could arrange an out of court settlement. The following week, the County Attorney stated that the case had never been referred to his office and that he was consequently unaware of it."

Protection of displaced population still an urgent need (2006)

- As IDPs and refugees have returned to their home areas, land and property disputes have become a growing problem
- IDPs in both camps and return areas have remained vulnerable to human rights violations - particularly teenage mothers, children and young girls
- Returnee/ displaced women and girls are particularly at risk of rape and other forms of sexual violence by armed gangs and former militia members, according to 2004 independent report
- A "badly planned disarmament and demobilisation process" and a "poorly designed reintegration assistance package" may pose future protection risks for returning IDPs

NRC, 30 June 2006

“Protection problems still persist in return areas, and women and young girls are particularly vulnerable. Reports of gender based violence continue from all parts of the country. The issue of land and property disputes is also a growing problem following the finalization of the IDP return process as well as ongoing returns of Liberian refugees from neighbouring countries. Lately some serious clashes was reported in Nimba county, clashes direct related to land and property disputes following refugee returns from Guinea.”

UN, 30 November 2005

“During Liberia’s widespread-armed conflict serious Human Rights Violations and grave breaches of International Humanitarian Law plagued the country resulting in a breakdown of judicial campsites, killings and massive displacement.

Protection of the displaced population is still an urgent need, in particular vulnerable groups such as teenage mothers, children and young girls. It is also critical that protection and monitoring efforts are extended to both camps and return areas.

Reintegration of ex-combatants, refugees and IDPs continues. With the majority of IDPs assisted to return and the significantly increase in facilitated return of refugees, it is expected that the need for reintegration activities will drastically increase in 2006.

Over the past decade, thousands of children have been separated from their parents and years of conflict have weakened or eradicated positive community values and structures, such as the protection of the extended family. The conflicts have led to a boom in the number of orphanages, most with extremely low standards and dubious mandates. There is clearly a need to address and extend child protection. Rooted societal values increase the vulnerability of girls and women to abuse, particularly sexual abuse. Children and their families have very limited livelihood opportunities and some experience hunger on a regular basis. Engaging in ‘transactional sex’ activities is not an unusual coping mechanism for girls as young as 12 years old.

As a consequence of the breakdown of rule of law there is an urgent need to rehabilitate and strengthen the judicial sector, including courts, prosecutors, police and correctional facilities. There is a critical need to increase the number of qualified judges and other judiciary staff. Moreover the need to support training and capacity building within the field of Human Rights are important needs. With Liberia adapting a large number of the UN Human Rights documents there is an urgent need to harmonise national legislation with international human rights and humanitarian standards.”

Martin, 13 October 2004

“Killings, abductions, rapes, forced labour, and destruction of property have been, and continue to be, perpetrated in parts of Liberia. Fifty percent of Liberian refugee women in Sierra Leone report experiences of sexual violence before and during their flight; according to a United Nations survey in Liberia, 40% of women who came forward had suffered abuses including rape, gang rape, and being stripped naked and put on public display. The primary coping mechanism people have is simply to move.

Sexual exploitation, particularly of IDP and returnee women unaccompanied by a male partner, is reportedly widespread. According to Oxfam, in IDP camps in Montserrado and Bong counties, women who are excluded from distributions or receive insufficient assistance to support themselves and their dependants are frequently forced to trade sex for food, NFIs and shelter. Unlike in Sierra Leone, the humanitarian community in Liberia still lacks inter-agency mechanisms to eliminate these practices, and UNMIL’s own procedures for responding to allegations of abuse remain unclear. Linked to this, Oxfam and other NGOs have reportedly documented instances of aid being diverted from IDPs by the Liberian authorities, service providers, camp management staff, and by so-called “IDP leaders” and members of the camp

management committees. Non-registration of some IDPs, especially in camps, compounds this. Although in practice there are camp management structures, mechanisms at the camp level appear weak.

Forced labour and forced recruitment have been widely reported. Forced recruitment of IDP children and men has been reported amid rumours that former Charles Taylor militias are preparing to enter Guinea. Forced labour will likely continue in the countryside until combatants are completely disarmed.

Extortion is prevalent in many areas of the country, with armed gangs demanding “taxes” from civilians. Children (and others) in the demobilisation process have reportedly been asked to give a percentage of their entitlement to commanders.

Groups especially at risk

- Returnee/displaced women and girls;
- Youth and children associated with the fighting factions: over half of all youth in Liberia are ex-combatants and are extremely vulnerable to recruitment by state and non-state actors. If no economic alternatives are provided soon, they may become willing recruits or will join criminal gangs – a rise in criminality has already been reported in Monrovia, linked to the presence of former combatants. Youth and children associated with the fighting factions also face discrimination or rejection in the community.
- Women and girls associated with the fighting factions: female fighters and mothers of “rebel babies” risk marginalisation by their home communities. Protection concerns include gender-based violence such as rape and domestic abuse; lack of access to education, health care and property (especially in polygamous families) and involuntary resettlement. Those who return home face exclusion, particularly with respect to income-earning activities.
- Unaccompanied elderly, separated children, the disabled, and the chronically ill (such as persons with HIV/AIDS), in addition to threats of abuse and exploitation, they face particular risks in terms of access to services and information.
- The Mandingos: tensions between them and majority groups arise from disputes over land and perceived lack of respect for majority group traditions. Most Mandingos are Muslim and intermarriage with other clans is rare. They are also resented for their relative economic success. They are still collectively associated with LURD, although Mandingos have participated in all sides of the conflict as well as suffered its consequences.
- Third country nationals, particularly the Lebanese.

Future Risks

A badly planned disarmament and demobilisation process has produced large groups (twice those planned) of men and young children with available money, but few weapons have been handed in. Lack of funding for the reintegration component of the process, coupled with lack of economic opportunities, increases the chances that these former combatants will return to their previous ways of making a living. Reports of recruitment in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire for Guinea increase the risks for continued instability in the region.

In addition, a poorly designed reintegration assistance package, which does not include seeds and tools for an essentially rural population, may be a recipe for further unrest as returned populations have exhausted their four-month WFP rations and have no possibility of obtaining food otherwise.”

Inadequate IDP protection in camps (2004-2005)

- In IDP camps rape and other forms of SGBV and abuse remain "rampant" while the response is "inadequate", according to the IDD in October 2004, and again in May 2005
- Limited resources mean providing protection and assistance to all IDPs in camps is problematic, reports NRC
- In order to avoid complete dependency on external assistance, many displaced people in camps develop their own survival strategies - with large numbers of young women and widows turning to prostitution

IDD, June 2005

"Protection remains a serious concern in Liberia. In camps, protection issues range from continuing and increasing reports of SGBV, theft of IDP and camp assets, and unaccompanied children, left in the camps to finish schooling while their parents have returned. For those returning, there are reports that some have been unable to find shelter or have found their former homes occupied by ex-combatants and lack shelter pending restitution of the property. Communities of return are also witnessing increasing rates of SGBV, including domestic violence.

Although protection was considered one of the fundamental pillars of the 2004 *Action Plan*, the mission found a continuing and widely recognised need for a more effective and comprehensive protection monitoring and response. In meetings with the inter-agency Protection Core Group (PCG), the mission agreed to assist with the development of a unified protection framework with a view to meeting this need for a more comprehensive system of monitoring and response. In this connection, UNHCR agreed to assume the principal role in the planning and implementation of the overall protection response for IDPs."

IDD, 10 October 2004

"In the IDP camps, rape of young girls and other forms of gender-based violence and abuse remains rampant. Forty cases of rape in the camps have been reported to the UNMIL Human Rights and Protection Section since July, of which the oldest victim was 13 years old. The actual number of rape cases is considered to be much higher, as most cases are never officially reported. While this is a widespread problem in Liberia, it is particularly bad in the camps because of the crowded living conditions (most rape is committed by members of the family or extended family) and as a consequence of the distribution of aid (leading to abuse of power).

The response to the problem of gender-based violence and abuse in the camps remains inadequate, as is widely acknowledged by humanitarian agencies that have a presence in the camps. Local community-watch teams (comprised of IDPs and trained by NGOs and UNHCR) have been used in some camps and have proven useful. More such teams, linked with women's groups, are needed. They can ensure that some type of monitoring and policing system is in place where the government authorities do not have the capacity. Important work is also being done in some camps by IRC and Save

the Children – with UNICEF support – to sensitize camp populations and to respond to the medical and psycho-social needs of victims of gender based violence and abuse. Such activities should be strengthened and extended to all IDP camps. More resources are also needed to improve the capacity of the national police and judiciary to investigate allegations of violence and abuse and to bring perpetrators to justice.

A number of interlocutors felt that more could be done to strengthen the UN's management of protection in general. They complained that in cases where protection problems are brought to the attention of UNMIL, either directly or through the Protection Core Group (the main inter-agency forum dealing with protection issues), there is often inadequate follow up, or there is a lack of feedback on action taken which only serves to undermine confidence in its effectiveness."

NRC, 8 September 2004

“Providing assistance and protection to all the displaced in IDP camps is difficult given the limited human and economic resources available. While there are a substantial number of displaced persons in the IDP camps managed by NRC who have developed a dependency on external aid, most of the displaced know that they cannot “trust” external actors to provide sufficient food, shelter and education. Indeed, they would be extremely vulnerable if they had to depend solely on fluctuating levels of international and the presence of international NGOs in the camps. Therefore, many displaced persons in the IDP camps have developed strategies to survive independently.

It is now widely known that prostitution has become an important survival mechanism for many displaced women; however, it is difficult to discuss the issue with the displaced communities. Some IDPs in the camps managed by NRC acknowledged that young women and widows turned to prostitution to make living. Sometimes sexual services were not sold explicitly but were exchanged for food protection. This according to the IDPs explains why young women are relatively more self-reliant than other groups. However these practices have adverse effects on health, as they spread sexually transmitted diseases: and many young women become single mothers, which tends to make them more vulnerable than other displaced persons. And finally, teenage pregnancy in all camps and commercial sex among teenage girls due to poverty remains as a challenge to camp management.”

SUBSISTENCE NEEDS

General

Dire lack of services in key areas of return, 2005-2006

- There is a dire lack of shelter and basic services in key areas of return - such as Lofa county which was once home for many of Liberia's IDPs
- Food supplies, as well health, water/ sanitation and education facilities are all lacking
- The absence of seeds and farm tools in return packages further exacerbates situation of food insecurity
- Most returnees interviewed feel that they were better off in the camps

ACF, March 2005

"The displaced from Montserrado IDP camps started to spontaneously return to Cape Mount in August 2004, before the repatriation exercise had started. According to some of the displaced interviewed, this was mainly due to the fact that few of them were not receiving food aid because their names were omitted from WFP feeding log. This pushing factor was complemented with the disarmament that was completed in the area.

A large majority of IDPs returned to Cape Mount between November 2004 and February 2005; majority arrived in Bomi between January and February 2005.

Since the returnees returned into their communities, they have faced such problems as lack of shelter, means of accessing food, safe water, health facilities and schools.

At the place of origin new returnees have joined other family members or friends in their shelter, until they can construct their own. For the IDPs that have transported the food package, it is their main source of food along with purchased items. The food package is also shared with other families and friends in exchange for the use of their shelters.

In the towns visited, there are some basic facilities lacking such as health posts, schools and protected water points. The team noticed that when there is a clinic, sometimes there are no drugs for treatment or physicians for diagnosis.

Generally, when comparing the situation in camps with the present situation in the areas of return, the returnees feel that their present situation is now worse than when they were in the camps. They have to start a new life with limited means and appeal to UN organisations and NGOs to render them some assistance in terms of seeds and tools to enable them to restart their farming activities. The returned

population fears that in the next few months the food received will be exhausted and the access to food made more difficult.

It was reported by some of the returned population of Grand Cape Mount County that since their arrival in November 2004 they have not received their second round of food distributions promised by WFP. They expressed that they have gone to the transit centre two or three times to receive their food items but to no avail. Some problems have also been observed in Bomi County when exfighters who have taken over abandoned shelters are not so prompt to return the houses to their former owner.”

IRIN, 25 March 2005

“War-scarred Lofa County, which was once home for many of Liberia's internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, is still desperately short of shelter, food and health services as people start heading back, aid agencies have said.

A joint survey by the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), the Liberian government and other aid agencies operating in the northern county, found that less than 20 percent of the almost 100,000 people sampled had enough food and remained highly dependent on aid distributions.

Lofa County was Liberia's breadbasket until it was taken over by the main rebel army, the Liberians United for Democracy (LURD), and became the scene of much of the fighting in the latter stages of the 14 year long civil war, which ended with a peace deal in August 2003.

[...]

In a briefing note last month, the UN refugee agency UNHCR said about a third of the 350,000 Liberian refugees who fled abroad were expected to return to Lofa County along with the majority of the half million people displaced within the country.

UNHCR officially began repatriating refugees back to Lofa in mid-February after the county was finally declared safe, although thousands had already returned spontaneously.

People may be heading back home but that is not the end of their woes. Many returnees do not even have homes to live in.

‘You have a situation where most of the houses are destroyed and the ordinary residents do not have incomes to repair their homes,’ a relief worker with the Japanese aid organisation Peace Wind Japan, told IRIN.

He warned that the perilous state of facilities in the country, which is sandwiched between Guinea and Sierra Leone, might slow down the pace at which residents returned.

‘The shortages of infrastructure provision are slowing down the rate at which we can operate the repatriation project,’ said the aid worker, who declined to be identified.

And the joint report, based on a survey carried out between January 22 and 3 February, agreed. ‘Communities point out that shortage of housing may hinder the resettlement of refugees and IDPs in their original areas of residence,’ it said.

With the first post-war elections just a little over six months away, as many people as possible must be repatriated before 21 May when voter registration is slated to finish. So a slowing down of the repatriation effort could have wider ramifications.

[...]

Food supplies, health and education are all in poor shape.

For those that have already ventured back to Lofa, food supplies are a worry.

'Although communities are resettling in their villages, seeds and farm tools are not readily available and they do not have the capacity to purchase the necessary tools,' Abdirahman Meygag, the head of WFP in Liberia, said in a statement earlier this week. 'Thus, they will continue to rely on external support to undertake farming activities.'

Health services are also lacking. According to the joint survey, the 53 health centres, 43 clinics and four hospitals that stood in Lofa before Liberia's civil war broke out in 1989, were all destroyed in the fighting.

There is still no hospital serving the county and two districts -- Vahun and Salayea -- have no operational facility at all.

Elsewhere 14 clinics or health centres have been renovated and are now functional but the limited number means that people have to walk long distances for basic treatment, whereas in the IDP and refugee camps, health services were available on site and free of charge.

Health issues are pressing. Heavy rains generally begin in April, bringing with them fertile conditions for water-borne diseases to spread, and making many of Liberia's dirt roads treacherous or impassable. And aid agencies are also concerned about access to drinking water.

'Boreholes with pump, unprotected well, stream and ponds are the main sources of drinking water,' the joint survey said.

Education fares no better. Many of Lofa's schools were used as barracks and bases for the warring factions and all 260 ended up razed to ground by the time peace finally arrived.

'In total 32 schools are either already rehabilitated or earmarked for rehabilitation within the first quarter of 2005. Schools have opened in about 65-80% of the communities, although most of them are being operated at the primary level,' the report said.

However, it warned that even where schools are open, children were not being enrolled because parents didn't have the money to pay school fees."

Health

Monrovia is faced with widespread public health threats (2007)

- Solid waste management constitutes the greatest public health threat in Monrovia
- There is no comprehensive system for dealing with trash collection in Liberia
- The influx of IDPs has worsened the situation in the city leading to the breakdown of environmental sanitation services

IRIN, 3 July 2007

"As mountains of garbage expand in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, the UN Environment Programme has called on the government and private sector to repair the country's broken system for collecting trash.

"Solid waste management is arguably the greatest public health threat in Monrovia," UNEP's Michael Cowing told IRIN. "There is virtually no waste management sector."

Virtually no waste management sector, along with a lack of proper toilets, means household trash, human feces, and hazardous medical waste is randomly disposed throughout the city, in some areas swelling to piles large enough to block roads. Children walk barefoot through trash heaps, picking through piles that can contain used syringes and bloodied bandages.

"There is a serious problem of hygiene in Monrovia as residents throw waste, including feces, in the streets," said Dehwehn Yeabah, director of environmental health in the Liberian health ministry. He said water accumulating at dumpsites is spilling into uncovered wells throughout the city.

Cowing, who has studied the environment and sanitation challenges in Liberia, recently met with hundreds of members of the public and private sectors, urging them to collaborate to tackle the problem of waste. "We suggest they start a national task force in part to map out a strategy for dealing with waste management in a sustainable fashion."

Since the end of its 13-year civil war 2003, Liberia has had no comprehensive system for dealing with trash, Cowing said. "There have been a lot of short-term activities but no one has developed a cohesive, long-term strategy."

ILO-UNHCR, December 2006, pp. 20-21

"The influx of internally displaced people (IDP) during and after the war to seek safe haven has resulted in overwhelming increase in the Monrovia's population thereby putting immense pressure on the limited infrastructure, and also contributing to massive unemployment. This coupled with lack of maintenance has led to the breakdown of environmental sanitation services to the extent that the city is currently engulfed with wide spread unsanitary conditions. Less than 5% of solid waste generated each day is collected and disposed by the City Council and a number of war-affected people, most of whom live in make shift shelter and do not have proper means of disposing waste. The heaps of garbage found in most parts of Monrovia continue to pose environmental and health problems to the citizens as they are constantly exposed to communicable diseases caused by the bio degradation of the waste. Solid waste management has hence been identified a key priority within the city. Solid waste collection is a major concern being essential for access, drainage and public health."

Health care system in Liberia remains in emergency phase, 2006

- New "cluster approach" with designated agencies taking sectoral leads aims to improve response coordination
- Agencies and NGOs implement more than 90 per cent of health service delivery throughout Liberia
- Infant and maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the world
- Growing HIV/AIDS rate is at least 8.2 per cent

UN, 18 July 2006

"Health Cluster lead: World Health Organization (WHO)

Though Liberia is moving along the path of recovery and reconstruction, it remains in a critical state, where many emergency health needs remain unmet. This is particularly the case in the south-eastern counties of Grand Kru, River Cess, River Gee and Sinoe. In addition, health

services are overstretched in counties where the majority of the returnees and IDPs have resettled, i.e. in the north-western counties of Bomi, Bong, and Lofa.

Present activities in the Health Cluster, are aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality and morbidity and, particularly, under-five mortality, through the provision of basic health services. During the emergency, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) assisted NGOs and health facilities to improve Reproductive Health of women and young girls, and to meet the emergency reproductive health (RH) needs of refugees, IDPs, and other war affected populations. Many organizations providing health services with an emergency focus are, however, planning to leave or have already scaled down their activities. When this happens, the Government and other NGOs are, more often than not, unable to fill the gaps that subsequently occur in service delivery. Likewise, many organisations working in the health sector is finding it increasingly difficult to attract donor funding.

There is no comprehensive integrated information and management system to measure performance indicators of the health initiatives. Recently WFP and UNICEF, supported by the WHO, have carried out an integrated Food Security and Nutrition survey, which includes maternal and child mortality data.

At the same time, the WHO supported the MoH and Social Welfare (MoHSW) to conduct a rapid health assessment aimed at the development of a National Health Policy and a National Health Development Plan. The results of the two assessments are still being analysed to measure the impact of the health initiatives by the humanitarian community.

The MoHSW with the support of the UN and humanitarian partners have rehabilitated many health facilities. Some the essential basic health initiatives including, immunisation are being offered in more than 250 health facilities across the country.

The routine epidemiological surveillance and early warning systems have been improved. The integrated disease surveillance and response system of the MoHSW has been expanded to nine counties. The EPI surveillance systems are functional in all 15 counties focusing on all priority communicable diseases. More than 1,200 community focal persons for the reporting of priority communicable diseases including avian influenza have been selected and trained. All priority communicable diseases are being reported, investigated and samples analysed in Monrovia or referred to institutions abroad. The estimated number of health facilities reporting weekly surveillance information is 65%.

Statistics from the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) estimate Human Immuno-deficiency

Virus (HIV) sero-prevalence to be 8.2% in the general population, indicating a doubling of the infection from 4.2% in 1994. According to the report, females account for three times more cases than males, while the youth account for over half of all reported sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In addition, female youths of ages between 15-29 years have HIV infection rate three times higher than male youths in the same age group. Males between 30-49 years of age have a higher infection rate than females within the same age group. The report also revealed that the number of children who have been orphaned as a result of HIV/Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) increased by 40% from 1,500 in 1997 to 2,100 in 2002. However, these are only estimates since, to date, there has not been any sentinel surveillance survey conducted among the general population to corroborate the data.

WHO has supported the MoHSW's identification of sentinel sites, trained officers for HIV/AIDS surveillance and for HIV/AIDS diagnose. The HIV prevalence rate among women attending antenatal

care will be measured when all necessary infrastructures are put in place by the end of the year.

The implementation of the health cluster approach in Liberia late 2005, in the context of post conflict transition and recovery, poses special challenges requiring more intensive coordination efforts than that during the acute emergency period.

The common goal of the Health Cluster in Liberia is to save lives and reduce avoidable morbidity through coordinated public health initiatives, at national and peripheral level, better targeted and cost effective actions, information management and strengthened disease surveillance and response.”

[...]

Nutrition Cluster Lead: UNICEF

Liberia has the world's fifth highest rates of under-five, infant, and maternal mortality. The under-five

mortality rate for Liberia is as high as 235 per 1,000 live births. In order to address this issue, it is necessary to view nutrition through a holistic approach, recognising the strong links between nutrition,

health and food security. Over the last six months, significant progress has been made towards increasing Vitamin A coverage and de-worming activities nationwide, and in providing targeted actions

for Therapeutic Feeding Centres (TFC) and Supplementary Feeding Centres (SFC).

Liberia is in an early recovery phase and remains vulnerable to external shocks, such as regional insecurity, large-scale population movements or outbreak of disease such as avian influenza. Any such development could severely impact upon food security, thus having dramatic implications for the nutritional status of women and children in particular.

The importance of addressing vulnerable populations' nutritional needs, while ensuring emergency preparedness and response capacity utilising the Cluster Approach is a paramount concern. In addition, the Nutrition Cluster will foster strong linkages between the Health and Food Security Clusters in order to create a holistic approach to tackling the nutritional needs of Liberia.”

UN, 30 November 2005

“Fourteen years of conflict have contributed to the deterioration of health care services in Liberia. In the last two years there has been a gradual expansion in humanitarian emergency health actions to accessible areas of the country. However, the health care delivery system is still in the emergency phase and is heavily reliant on additional external resources in order to increase primary health care coverage and build human and institutional capacity.

The health care system in Liberia is highly dependent on support from Agencies and NGOs, which currently implement more than 90% of health service delivery. Access to basic and secondary health care services is still a major problem as more than 75% of the population has no access to referral care services such as essential and emergency obstetric care. This situation has resulted in some of the highest infant (157/1,000 live births) and maternal (580/100,000 live births) mortality rates in the world. Childhood malnutrition is high with 39% of children under five stunted, 86% of children 6 – 23 months anaemic and 53% deficient in vitamin A.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is conservatively estimated to be around 8.2% and lack of information and services such as care, support and counselling needs to be addressed urgently if the epidemic is to be controlled. Other factors such as growth in the commercial sex work industry, limited condom use, stigma and misconceptions, is further contributing to the rapid spread of the disease. Presently there is no national procurement policy for medical drugs and supplies, which would ensure their uninterrupted provision. In addition, the lack of a functioning comprehensive surveillance of vaccine preventable and other diseases creates a difficult health care environment.

The possible implications of a lack of action in the Health Sector would mean the continuance and potential increase in gaps in the provision of services, especially among vulnerable and isolated communities. Lack of coordination and information sharing between humanitarian actors will result in geographical and thematic gaps in the provision of basic services, as well as the potential duplication of services. The implications of not addressing the high rates of preventable disease, early mortality and poor nutrition, are multifarious and wide-reaching and include hindering economic growth and development and severely affecting the possibilities for community rehabilitation and revitalisation. The top priorities in the sector are to support basic community health care services, to improve coordination and surveillance mechanisms, to rehabilitate health infrastructure, through local capacity building and to improve drugs supply and nutrition.”

Food

Food insecurity remains rife across country, particularly in key areas of return (2006)

- Households more at risk of being food insecure are those recently returned
- Massive displacement of farming communities is one factor making Liberia one of the most food insecure countries in the world
- Food security and nutritional statistics in rural Liberia are alarming
- Food production is very limited, resulting in high dependence on external assistance

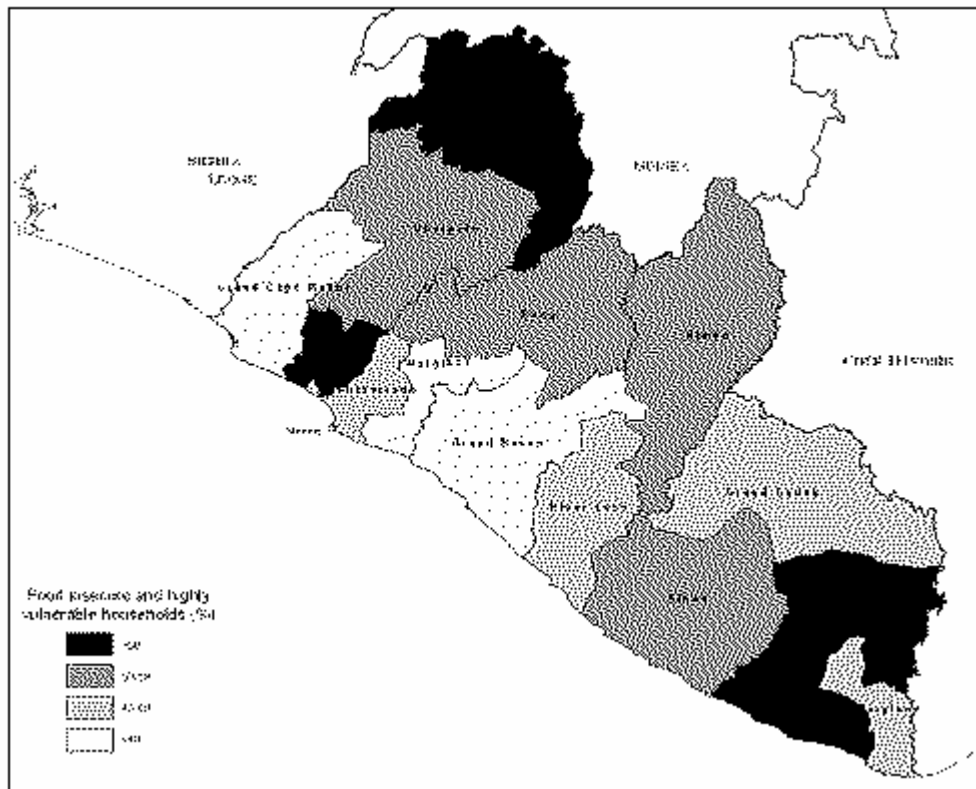
Republic of Liberia, October 2006, pp.xvi-xvii

"Who are the food-insecure people and where do they live?"

Households are more likely to be food insecure if they recently returned to their homes where they have to rebuild their livelihoods. Households that mainly rely on palm oil production, hunting and contract work are more likely to be food insecure. Households headed by women are more likely to have weak access to food. Households are more likely to be food secure if they had cultivated crops in 2005, own a vegetable garden and hunger farm. Households that rely on petty trade, charcoal production, fishing and regular salaries and those who receive remittances are more likely to be food secure.

Households that are food insecure or highly vulnerable to food insecurity are concentrated in Lofa, Grand Kru, River Gee, Bomi, Gbarpolu, Nimba and Sinoe counties. However, pockets of highly food-insecure areas may also exist in other counties as the survey is only representative at county level. In the north-west of Liberia, food insecurity can be characterised as transitory or temporary as food deficits are directly related to the consequences of the civil war. In the south-east, food insecurity is more chronic due to a longer-term inability to meet minimum food consumption requirements. Counties that are generally more food secure are Grand Cape Mount, Margibi and Grand Bassa.

Map 2: Food Security Overview Map



For a comparison with areas of return, see ["Reintegration of displaced populations remains a key challenge"](#)

United Nations, 18 July 2006

"Food Security Sector Lead: WFP"

Liberia remains among the most food insecure countries in the world with less than 10% of the arable land being cultivated and a very low yield per hectare (0.4 Metric Tonnes (MT)). The FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment for Liberia conducted in January and February of this year concluded that the causes of food insecurity were:

- Agricultural production constraints, mainly caused by the limited availability of quality seed rice and heavy attacks of pests, mainly grass cutters (a local rodent) and birds, as well as endemic infection of Mosaic virus disease. (High level of losses to be addressed through support to extension services and training on crop husbandry practices, small scale post harvest technologies, equipment, processing, storage and marketing);
- Utilisation issues caused by a poor transportation network, inadequate community-level water and sanitation, and women's lack of knowledge about household hygiene, food preparation and child feeding practices.

The primary goal of the food assistance strategy proposed for Liberia is to reduce food insecurity for vulnerable households and strengthen their resilience through increased agriculture production and access to food including food aid.

[...]

The average rural household size in Liberia is 5.6 with 87% male and 13% female headed. Of note is that 8% of households are headed by the elderly. Currently 30% of males and 37% of females of school age are not enrolled in schools – namely due to not having enough money to pay for school fees, or not having a school in the community. 48% of adults have no schooling and only 5% have completed high school – with none having attended or completed university.

Food security and nutritional statistics in rural Liberia show alarming figures. A comprehensive survey in Liberia was recently conducted, where access to food through the ability to purchase or produce, and actual frequency and diversity of food intake, were studied. 28% of some families were found to be completely ‘food insecure’ in one county – with 11% as the national rural average. Up to 58% are considered highly vulnerable in some counties with 40% of Liberia falling into this category overall and another 41% ‘moderately vulnerable’. Only 9% of Liberia’s rural population today can be considered to be ‘food secure’ – dropping to none in at least five of Liberia’s 15 counties.

In three districts more than 10% of children are wasted (6.9% average) and up to 47% in some counties are stunted – with a massive national 39% rural average. 25% of under fives in Liberia are underweight - 34% in some counties. 13.4% of women have a low body mass index. Indicative crude mortality rates are showing alarmingly high figures especially in remote rural areas of Liberia.

Source: Government of Liberia in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC), UNICEF, UNMIL, WFP, WHO, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), World Vision (WV), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) and LINNK: Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (preliminary results), Monrovia

United Nations, 30 November 2005

“Food insecurity in Liberia is the result of a number of factors, which include continued disruption of agricultural systems due to the displacement of farming communities, limited access to food due to absence of market mechanisms, high unemployment and lack of economic opportunities, socioeconomic dislocation and the breakdown of family and community coping mechanisms especially among IDPs who have been displaced, in some cases, up to seven times since April 1999.

While there has been no country-wide assessment of food insecurity, a number of surveys in the most recent past have proven that access to food is limited and there are greater numbers of people who can only afford one meal a day. In March 2004, WFP carried out a rapid vulnerability survey of 10 spontaneous IDP settlements confirming the urgent food needs of the IDP population. A study in February 2005 indicated that the food security situation was uncertain in Lofa County which will host the largest number of returning IDPs and refugees as well as ex-combatants. The study also revealed that less than 20% of the population consumes adequate levels of food. The majority (>70%) of the surveyed households have unsatisfactory consumption patterns characterised by less food diversity, high (over 60%) expenditures on food items at the expense of other basic needs, low frequency of daily food intake, low household asset holdings (mainly limited to utensils and other relatively less valued household goods), less reliable income sources etc. There is high dependency on food purchases and other relief sources with limited own production reported by the communities.

Government resources are very limited since the 14 years of war has ravaged the country of human and material assets to design, implement and monitor projects at the central level. At the local level, the situation is much worse since the presence of the government is still remote and the structures and institutions are yet to be revitalised."

Shelter

Shelter needs are most acute in key areas of return (2007)

- Basic infrastructure was found to be insufficient in areas of return
- The Rural Shelter Assistance Project (RSAP) was piloted in four settings taking into account basic environmental considerations
- Destruction of shelter during the conflict was worst in key areas of return such as Lofa county
- Land tenure

UN, 12 February 2007, p. 14

"Poverty in rural areas is exacerbated by the lack of basic services and adequate shelter and very limited opportunities for any monetary income as they survive by subsistence farming."

NRC, January 2007, p. 10

"When documenting "families without shelter" NRC monitors look for those whose homes were damaged and who are currently housed by others on temporary bases. The majority of those affected are returnees. Approximately 80 000 families are without shelter and most affected is Lofa County. NRC is currently carrying out shelter projects in Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu Counties and the target group are elderly, chronically ill persons, physical disabled persons and single mothers. Other shelter programmes are funded in Lofa by UNHCR and in other parts of the country by UN Habitat."

UNEP, 6 October 2006, p.63

"After the start of the return process in late 2004, it became clear that the capacity of receiving communities to deal with the large number of returning populations (refugees, IDPs and ex-combatants), was going to be inadequate. The lack of basic infrastructure and social services was found to be insufficient and prospects for proper reintegration within local communities were threatened.

To address this issue a pilot project, the Rural Shelter Assistance Project (RSAP) was initiated with pilot housing arrangements planned for four settings. Basic environmental considerations such as the slope of the land, use of mud bricks and ensuring that the sites are not close to ecologically sensitive areas, have at least been factored into the location and design of these sites."

UNHCR, 30 September 2006, p. 10

"The focus of the emergency shelter cluster was thus placed in areas of return where humanitarian considerations dictated that vulnerable persons (elderly, single parent families, chronically ill, physically or mentally disabled, etc.) should benefit from targeted assistance, since homes were destroyed during the civil war alongside community infrastructure and farmland.

The Norwegian Refugee Council and Peace Winds Japan are providing shelter for vulnerable groups in Lofa and Bomi Counties; similar assistance is provided in other counties on a smaller scale. The agencies work with village chiefs to ascertain the vulnerability and living conditions of

the identified families. They distribute kits in accordance with family size and assist with construction if warranted by the family's specific vulnerability. This type of reintegration support is consistent with that provided for vulnerable groups among returning refugees"

UN, 18 July 2006

"Shelter and Non-Food Items Cluster Lead: UNHCR

The condition of shelters and living spaces is still deplorable throughout the country and particularly so in rural areas. The international minimum standard of 3.5 m²/person is far from met; basic domestic sanitary and hygiene facilities are not available in most localities. In the absence of a viable legal and judicial structure, land tenure and access, as well as property rights, remain major challenges, especially for returnees. As increasing numbers of internally displaced people have returned, or are returning home, these issues are becoming more critical if the sustainable reintegration of returnees is to be achieved. To address such multi-faceted community needs, it is imperative to further reinforce cross-cluster coordination among all stakeholders. In particular, the Shelter Cluster will liaise closely with the Early Recovery's Transitional Justice sub-working group that will focus on land tenure issues. In April 2006, the return movement of registered IDPs was concluded, but voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees from asylum countries have continued. Shelter support implemented in various parts of the country has had a positive impact on the protection of the livelihoods of beneficiary communities. The gap in the overall shelter needs in the country remains enormous."

Water and Sanitation

Access to safe water and sanitation facilities is extremely limited in both rural and urban areas (2006)

- Only 31% (55% urban and 10% rural) of the population have access to safe water and less than 25% of Liberians have access to adequate sanitation.
- Poor water and sanitation facilities contribute to a high incidence of waterborne diseases, with diarrhoea responsible for 22 per cent of deaths among children

UN, 18 July 2006

"Water and Sanitation Cluster Lead: UNICEF

The needs of the Water and Sanitation (WatSan) Cluster continue to be substantial and urgent. While progress has been made in the first half of 2006, it is clear that the activities for the rest of the year and beyond need to be better coordinated and based on reliable assessments and surveys. The substandard

quality of actions has resulted in a large number of non-functional wells and pumps, leaving numerous communities vulnerable, this at a time when populations are returning to their counties of origin, putting a major strain on the existing facilities in communities.

The effective response of the humanitarian community to the WatSan needs of the people depends on well-targeted actions using sound technical expertise and according to agreed standards, building on community knowledge and local management in order to sustain the actions. Building the capacity of government to monitor and evaluate the sector activities is crucial, as is forming solid linkages with the health cluster.

Liberia is in an early recovery phase and the threat of regional insecurity and subsequent cross-border influx is still very high. Such events would have serious implications for the availability of safe water.

Furthermore the looming threat of avian influenza could potentially increase the need for emergency

WatSan actions, especially in the area of awareness-raising and hygiene promotion. These are actions that could significantly reduce the spread of the disease. The importance of ensuring emergency preparedness and response capacity within the sector is paramount at this juncture.”

UN, 30 November 2005

“Liberia has very low coverage of safe water and hygienic sanitation in both rural and urban settings. Additionally, there are relatively few agencies with sufficient technical and/or logistical capacity operating in this sector. According to current estimates, only 31% (55% urban and 10% rural) of the population have access to safe water and less than 25% of Liberians have access to adequate sanitation. Between 45% and 65% of the water facilities are not functional since they were vandalised during the war as a result of lack of spare parts, and the lack of technical knowledge, have not been repaired. A 2004, assessment conducted in 60 districts of 10 Counties showed that an estimated population of 1,386,000 could regain access to safe water if non-functional and looted hand pumps are repaired or replaced across the country. Apart from some parts of Monrovia (which has retained some low-level capacity), urban centres are without access to piped water, with looted and destroyed distribution systems still not repaired or restored. Urban poor communities are faced with challenges for excreta disposal, and manholes in Monrovia are being abused for dumping excreta and garbage.

Many latrine facilities are lacking, and do not cater satisfactorily to the needs of the different groups

within the community, in particular women and girls, and the elderly. Adolescent girls in schools may

skip school due to lack of suitable toilets and water to address their sanitary needs including cleanliness and comfort. Girls may be further disadvantaged as they help to provide secondary care to sick family and community members. Besides the lack of basic social services access to safe water, there is also a striking lack of basic health and hygiene awareness amongst the population, despite the efforts of several NGOs in camps as well as in rural Liberia, the results are very limited. Part of the problem is existing traditional beliefs, and the resulting lack of awareness regarding safe hygiene practices, contributes to high rates of water-borne disease. Diarrhoea, for example, is endemic and responsible for 22% of the deaths among children. The government and local authorities are at present limited in their capacity to actively engage in addressing these issues.

The implications of not activating this plan include lack of adequate basic water and sanitation facilities

in communities, contributing to disease and ill-health; communities continuing to practice poor hygiene, so that water-borne and sanitation related diseases such as cholera, typhoid and diarrhoea will continue to contribute to high child mortality rates; schools will experience reduction in attendance due to illnesses; communities and civil society actors, including local authorities, will continue to lack the capacity to deal with water and sanitation issues themselves and thus continue to be dependent on outside aid and assistance.”

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

General

Access to education in Liberia is dire, particularly for IDPs, returnees and other vulnerable groups (2006)

- During 14 years of conflict, refugees received better education than IDPs
- Lack of access to education in home areas has been a deterrent to return
- Returnee children and those still displaced are one of the groups of particular concern
- The majority of IDPs in camps did not attend school especially since the NGO-sponsored camp schools closed down
- School drop-out rate is extremely high, with the situation for girls exacerbated by pregnancy, early marriage and domestic work
- Access has been hindered by numerous factors, including destruction of schools, lack of materials and a shortage of qualified teachers

JRS, 21 December 2006, p.21

"Education is also a great matter of concern in former IDP camps. Most IDP children have not attended classes since the NGO-sponsored camp schools closed down. Parents, in almost all cases, cannot afford school fees as they are already struggling to make ends meet. Teachers receive poor pay and irregular payments, if they receive any at all. While the plight of children is certainly difficult, the problems facing teachers are the most critical issues for education in Liberia today.

To that extent, the UNHCR report's recommendation to build three schools is welcome. However, it is just a beginning. There will not be any durable solution for IDPs without further investment by the Liberian government and humanitarian organisations in the rebuilding of the education system in areas where former IDP camps were located. Of particular importance are the following areas: efforts to support ways for teachers to sustain themselves (i.e. school agriculture projects), maintenance of existing schools (i.e. supplying materials), and reduction of school fees to allow more IDP and local community children to attend school."

Women's Commission, March 2006

"Due to the prolonged and sporadic nature of the conflict in Liberia, it is difficult to distinguish clearly between the education systems before, during and after the wars. Certain macro trends are evident, however. The education system in Liberia was more effective prior to the conflict than during, and was more fully functional 25 years ago than it is now, in the wake of the wars. One indication of this is the fact that Liberia has a higher adult literacy rate than child literacy rate.

Another broad generalization is that during the last 14 years of conflict refugees received better education than internally displaced persons as a result of the discrepancy in access to humanitarian relief and funding sources for the two populations. Many of the international NGOs set up schools and provided teacher training, one example of which was the IRC's programs in Guinea.

Charles Taylor forbade IDP camps to establish schools on the grounds that he did not want to encourage dependency. However, schools that were without any obvious infrastructure could sometimes survive; one example was the Combat Stress Liberia school that held classes under a tree in an IDP camp. The Combat Stress school was taught by IDPs and was open to both IDP and community children; this system prevented stigmatization and helped create lasting friendships.

PROVISION FOR RETURN

Both refugees and IDPs are reluctant to leave the camps because of access to school in the camps and lack of access to education for their children back at home. This has resulted in the separation of families. Refugee children have been left in Guinea where they are able to attend secondary school, while the rest of the family returns to Liberia, where there are very few secondary schools. To encourage repatriation, schooling needs to be available in the areas of origin, and schools in the camps need to be closed.

Through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), USAID and the European Commission (EC), international NGOs (INGOs) are funding the renovation of schools in Liberia in the hope that this will encourage refugees and IDPs to resettle. Thus far, the aid organizations are concentrating on either refurbishing existing schools or contributing to community efforts to build new schools; new public schools are not entirely funded by INGOs because school construction is ultimately the government's responsibility.

Efforts are being made to attract teachers to rural areas. UNHCR is trying to persuade teachers to return to rural areas by providing housing for them on school grounds. Specifically, UNHCR is working to attract teachers from refugee camps in Guinea, where training was provided to them by the IRC.

Decommissioning of schools (stopping education), the second necessary step, is a decision made by host country governments in conjunction with UNHCR, and is outside of Liberian control. With respect to IDP camp schools, the Liberia Refugee Repatriation Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) decided, after consulting with representatives from the government-recognized IDP camps, that in some cases the local camp schools would stay open until the end of the school year. Families may stay in the camps until that time, but at the end of the school year (March 2006), all services will be withdrawn and people will have to begin paying rent if they choose to stay on the land.

UNICEF is aware that they need to begin allocating their resources to village schools away from the IDP and refugee camps, in order to encourage relocation. However, housing has also been an inhibiting factor in return because when people return, they often find their houses razed or inhabited by others. Some ex-combatants are reluctant to go back to their home areas regardless of the infrastructure because they are afraid of reprisals.

Nonetheless, many thousands of people are beginning to repatriate to Liberia. In Lofa, as of November 2005, 60,000 people had returned, most of whom were IDPs. In the next six months, Lofa County is expecting another 100,000 IDPs and 60,000 refugees to return.

In order to receive a return package, individuals must be registered with UNHCR or the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Once registered, returnees receive a two-month supply of food and non-food items; IDPs receive this at the time of their departure from the IDP camps and refugees receive it when they arrive at the UNHCR transit centers in Lofa. All registered people receive a second installment of supplies two months later. The World Food Program (WFP) began to distribute food in the schools in early 2005, as an additional incentive to get children to school.

In the Barkedu public school in Lofa County, it was clear that real efforts were being made to reintegrate students into the education system. When children first show up for school, they are placed either according to education certificates, report cards or other information that they have brought with them, or they are tested to determine the appropriate grade level. Children can enroll in the Barkedu public school whenever they return to the area; they do not have to wait until the next semester or school year to join a class.

COORDINATION OF RETURN AND EDUCATION

One of the problems in the exchange of data between countries has stemmed from the structure of UNHCR. UNHCR is organized and funded according to individual country programs, rather than an overall situational approach. This results in administrative and financial barriers to the effective sharing of information, despite the fact that the data gathered in each country is pertinent to the situation regionally. An integrated approach would make it more likely that members of a community, who were often relocated to the same camps, could move back to their original area together and maintain a coherent education structure.

It is possible to conclude that the transition of Liberian refugees and IDPs from conflict to postconflict education systems has suffered from insufficient coordination, a shortfall in available data and limited funding, mainly due to corruption in former governments. This is true despite the evident and significant international involvement in Liberia, including the United Nations, the EC, several national governmental funding programs and an abundance of NGOs and INGOs."

UN, 30 November 2005

"Despite the introduction of the Free and Compulsory Primary Education in Liberia Policy, access to education by the children of Liberia is still very poor. The Rapid Assessment of Learning Space (RALS) conducted by UNICEF in 2004 found only a quarter of primary school-age children in school. Moreover, only 35% of the boys and 27% of girls who enrol in Grade One complete Grade Five, an indication that that many more girls drop out of schools than boys. One effect of the prolonged conflict in Liberia and the region is the burgeoning number of children, now projected at over 500,000, who missed the opportunity to attend school and are now too old to be in the class they are expected to rejoin. Children under five years do not have opportunity for cognitive stimulation through early childhood development programmes in preparation for primary schooling.

Acute shortage and poor geographical distribution of child-friendly learning spaces and qualified teachers continue to undermine access to quality education by the children of Liberia. Three quarters of schools in Liberia were damaged during the recent conflict. At least 250 schools still require reconstruction of major rehabilitation. Only 20% of teachers in public primary schools are qualified. Poor remuneration continues to discourage teachers, particularly those displaced from schools located in rural or remote areas from returning to their respective schools. Books and other scholastic materials were also looted or destroyed. Children traumatised as a result of the armed conflict are not receiving adequate psychosocial support. In addition, HIV/AIDS education is currently not given the emphasis and amount of time needed by children and teachers to effectively curb the spread of the disease. The capacity of the Ministry of Education to effectively administer and support provision of education is still grossly inadequate.

Adult literacy rate is estimated at 37% (male 50%, female 24%). The low primary school enrolment rates coupled with poor quality of education puts, Liberia (with a pyramidal population structure) amongst a select group of countries where there are more literate adults than children.

Over the last two years, humanitarian actions supported 68% (2,620) of schools to reopen through emergency rehabilitation of learning spaces, provision of water and sanitation facilities, provision of school furniture and, implementation of the *back-to-school* programme and implementation of the emergency school feeding programme. These actions enabled at least 963,000 children (47% girls) to enrol in school, supported orientation of 13,000 teachers and training of at least 620 teachers to “C” Certificate level. In addition, a total of 48,095 children (45% girls) from eight Counties had, by March 2005, enrolled in the accelerated learning programme (ALP) – a catch-up programme designed to support overage children complete primary level education. UNICEF supported Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes in which 10,000 children from the largest IDP camps have so far benefited.

Specific concerns that hinder increased access to quality education therefore, include shortage of qualified, trained and committed teachers; inadequate and poor state of educational facilities such as furniture, water and sanitation facilities, textbooks, recreational and other scholastic materials; inadequate curriculum to provide HIV/AIDS education, life skills and psychosocial support programmes for children and teachers. The majority of parents and guardians cannot afford to meet the cost of educating their children, including providing the child with a nutritious meal per day while in school. Girl's education has been greatly affected by pregnancy, early marriage and preference by some parents to keep the girls at home to undertake household chores. The capacity of the education management information system (EMIS) to provide quality of education statistics is lacking. The capacity of the Ministry of Education, County and District Education Offices to effectively coordinate, administer and supervise the education sector and ensure that funding and other resources reach the target schools, children and teacher is insufficient.

Three categories of children are of particular concern: children who missed the opportunity to attend school and are still out of the education system; children who are currently displaced or are returning to their respective communities where there are limited or no educational facilities; and the girl child.

Emergency support to the education sector is critical not only to effectively occupy the large number of children and youth who are currently idle thus, reducing their likelihood of a return to conflict, but also to prepare ground for medium and long term development of the country through development of educated and versatile human resource base.”

ACF, March 2005

“There are 47 primary schools within all of the camps but there are 5 camps in Montserrado (VOA, Indigent Children Home, Newland, Cat- Lek and Sinje 3) and 3 camps in Margibi (15 Gate, Brown's Town, & Kingsville) where there is no school functioning. The IDP children of these camps have to go into communities or other camps to attend school.

From observation, it seems that few displaced children are attending school while majority of them are not. The reasons given are the lack of schools in camps, the distances and the lack of money to pay the fees for children to attend other schools.”

ISSUES OF SELF-RELIANCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Self-reliance

Returnee youth will have to find employment in the informal economy (2006)

- Returnee adolescents and youth will find more employment opportunities in the informal economy especially in Lofa County
- The informal economy, however, lacks the necessary policies and strategies to support returnees
- Agriculture is the most promising sector in terms of job creation

ILO-UNHCR, December 2006, pp. 11-12

"Wage employment is limited and the majority of returnees adolescents and youth will have to get employment in the informal economy especially in Lofa County where hostilities were fiercest with total destruction of infrastructure. Apart from government employment there is not a single modern sector business. The majority of people are engaged in low income low productivity petty trading which have been started by assistance of various aid agencies as can be see in annex.3 Furthermore these are sole owner operations without any possibility of creating employment for others. The informal economy lacks the necessary enabling policies, strategies and programmes that can support their activities in a sustainable way. The income generating activities which have been provided by GTZ through UNHCR support have created the necessary foundation to build on through the provision of adequate levels of technical and entrepreneurial skills, credit, marketing, appropriate technology and post training support services needed to sustain their operations.

Agriculture is the most promising sector to create jobs, and contrary to the popular belief that the youth do not want to participate in agriculture many of them interviewed expressed their interest after participating in programmes organized by GTZ. As it may take a long time for the economy to pick up to the pre-war levels, the informal economy will continue to be the main provider of employment and services and goods in the country. It is therefore important to have deliberated policy on the sector that will enable it to be more productive and for some of the activities to graduate into formal sector. The Ministry of Trade and Industry is in the process of formulating strategies and programmes under LEEP/LEAP [Liberia Employment Emergency Programme/Liberia Employment Action Programme] but a lot still needs to be done."

For an analysis on how to address unemployment within the broader context of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding in the Mano River Union, see also UNIDO's ["Productive and decent work for youth in the Mano River Union: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and in Côte d'Ivoire"](#) (February 2007)

Skills trainings obtain 'mixed' results (2006)

- Private institutes provide trainings for returnees IDPs and ex-combatants which do not always lead to recognized qualifications nor gainful employment
- Skills trainings are unanimously judged as beneficial by IDPs

- Some IDPs could not make use of the trainings received in the camps as the materials received were not sufficient
- Some IDPs sold their materials to survive
- Some IDPs managed to launch small businesses after the trainings

ILO-UNHCR, December 2006, p. 11

"The prolonged civil conflict created a short fall in the establishment of numerous private vocational training institutions as a result, there are many unregistered TVET [Technical Vocational Education and Training] institutions that have mushroomed all over the country that are providing training for returnees IDPs and x-combatants. There are a lot training local training providers in the district offered by various UN agencies and private training providers, (see annex4). The quality of training being offered varies and some do not lead to any recognized qualification nor into sustainable gainful employment."

JRS, 21 December 2006, p.47

"Interviewed returnees unanimously acknowledged the benefit of the skills training they received in IDP camps. This was in most cases the first aspect that returnees mentioned when asked about their IDP camp experience. According to the recent UNHCR assessment exercise at the sites of the former camps, most of the remaining IDPs are unskilled. This may suggest that helping IDPs to develop skills encourages them to go back home. If verified, skills training could be seen to directly contribute to the success of the return process."

Some returnees however complained that they could not put their skills into practice as the materials they received at the end of the training were not sufficient by themselves to start any activity. In addition, there are some IDPs who sold the materials they received in order to make ends meet. On the contrary, other IDPs managed to launch small businesses with their items. Some started businesses like baking or soap-making when they were still in the camps, in the hope of earning money for their resettlement."

UNEP, 6 October 2006, p. 94

"Environmentally sound income-generating activities in refugee and IDP camps in Liberia included mat making (from bamboo), soap making, crop production, milling and petty trading. Raw materials for the production of mats were harvested from swamps, and the mats were then sold in the camps to supplement plastic sheets provided by the relief agencies."

Other refugees were trained in soap making and given grants to start the production and sale of soap in the camp. According to CONCERN-Liberia, IDPs who have since returned to their areas of origin in Lofa County are still engaged in soap making as a means of generating income. Others are engaged in carpentry (a skill they learned in the camps) to earn income."

Key findings of IDP return survey: skills (May 2004)

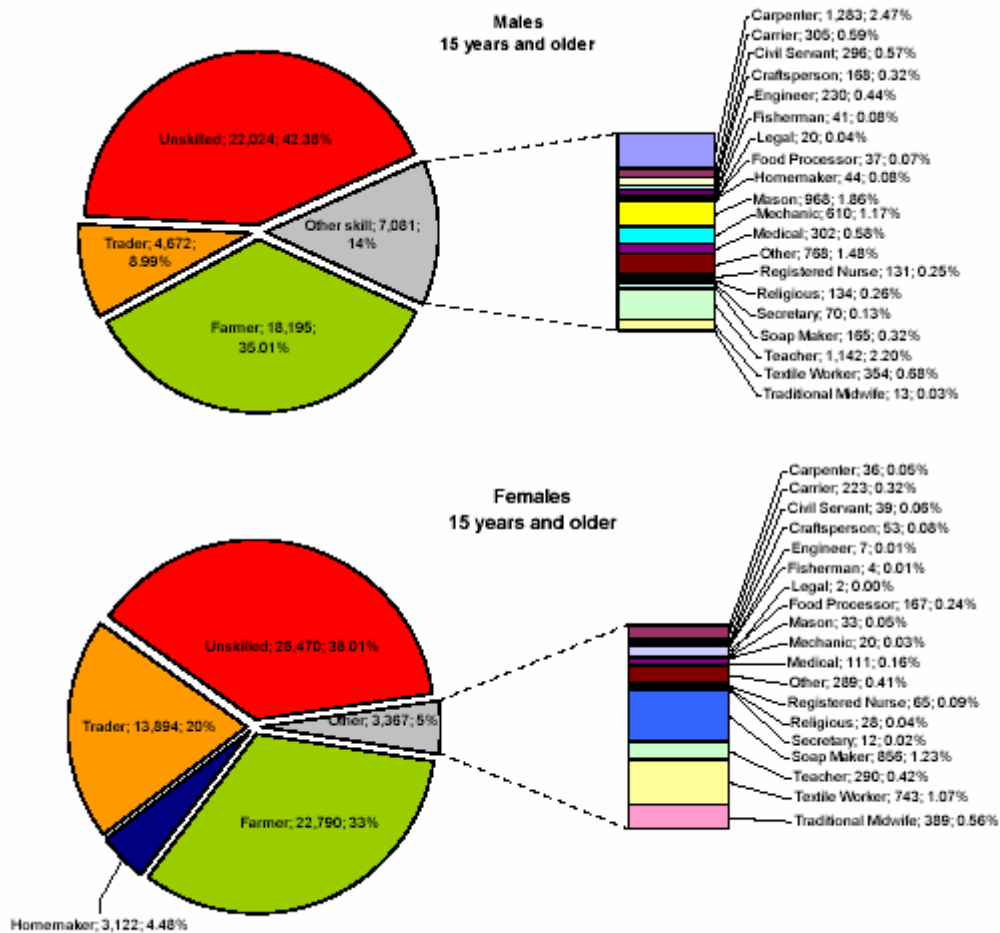
OCHA/UNHCR, 18 May 2004

"When respondents were asked what type of skills they had, what they planned to do when they left the camps, some had difficulty answering the question. Those with specific skills, i.e. carpenter, mechanic, answered quite easily but many of those surveyed did not seem to consider farming or homemaking as skills and thus no skill was listed. Figure 7 shows the skills of the IDPs surveyed that were 15 years or older."

Key Findings- Skills

- Over 42 percent of the males listed no skills whereas 38 percent of the females listed no skill.

- The majority in both sexes were farmers (male 35 percent, female 33 percent).
- Twice as many women were traders (20 percent) than men (9 percent).
- Less than 5 percent of women listed one of their skills as a homemaker.
- Fourteen percent of the males had skills other than farmer or trader. Of those with “other” skills 2.5 percent were carpenters and just over 1 percent were mechanics.
- Five percent of the females had skills other than farmer or trader. Of those with “other” skills 1.2 percent were soapmakers.



IDPs in camps have developed strong coping mechanisms (2005)

- The majority of the population now displaced used to be engaged in farming, as well as mining and trade
- Currently, IDPs attempt to address their needs through contract labour and petty trade
- According to IDPs in camps, their average monthly earnings before the crisis were 15 times more than what they can earn now

ACF, February 2005

“Prior to the last crisis, majority of the population that is now displaced was mainly involved in 4 types of activities: farming, business, mining

and salaried positions. Farming was, by far, the largest sector of activity.

Currently, due to their specific situation and the location of the camps, the displaced have adapted their behaviour and developed strong coping mechanisms.

Contract labour (field brushing, collect and bagging of charcoal, tapping and slicing of rubber, etc.) and petty trade (food, dry goods, etc.) are the main means for the population to address their needs and access cash. Some of them also stated they sell part of their food ration to access cash.

Incomes obtained from these activities are used mainly to purchase food, household items and hygienic products.

According to the displaced, the average amount of money they earned monthly by the displaced before the crisis was 15 times more than what they earn now (250 LD). Despite the assistance provided, they face many difficulties to save money in expectation of their return.”

IDPs in “spontaneous settlements” adopt a variety of coping mechanisms to survive (January 2004)

- Unofficial IDPs in spontaneous settlements have developed a range of risk management and livelihood strategies similar to those adopted in villages across the country, but on a more limited scale
- In some areas tensions exist between host communities and spontaneous settlements of IDPs for various community resources

OCHA Liberia, 20 January 2004

“With no income, very little food, no assets, bad housing, extremely limited access to land, health, water and sanitation services, these unofficial IDPs have developed a range of risk management and livelihood strategies very similar to those adopted in villages across the country (fishing, making palm oil, cutting palm nuts, collecting wild foods, palm wine tapping, gardening, collecting firewood etc) but on a more limited scale. Productive household assets are few. Nevertheless, the general notion of not putting all of one’s eggs in one basket remains the guiding principle for managing risks and difficult periods. Thus, the practice of additional strategies rather than improving existing ones. This may well explain why the request for food distribution is such a high item on these settlements’ agenda rather than means to support existing productive livelihood strategies. This is not to say that there is not a need for food distribution and one should certainly be mindful that availability and accessibility of community resources are limiting factors to livelihood development and risk management in these communities.

For example, in Bensonville, the city has permitted the IDPs to farm on 180 acres of land. But with limited time and no resources for preparing for farming this may represent a missed opportunity for the entire farming season. In Massaquoi and Horton Farm settlements tensions exist between the host communities and these spontaneous settlements for thatch, land to farm and palm wine tapping and other community resources. Residents spoke of declining opportunities for contracts on community people farms and charcoal pits. The settlement in Pipeline, Paynesville, also has its share of tension between the Catholic parish who owns the

land and wants to put it back to its original use as a recreational and sports facility for the school that has since been reopened.”

Public participation

Concern over disenfranchisement of IDPs in October 2005 elections (2005)

- While some 1.2 million people registered to vote in the October 2005 elections, only 5 per cent of those were IDPs
- Some 70 per cent of IDPs who had registered to vote chose to cast their ballot in their home areas
- Since the return process is fraught with problems, many IDPs may not be able to return in time to cast their vote
- Political candidates have tried to take advantage of the situation, promising assistance to return home in exchange for votes

IRIN, 24 May 2005

“More than one million Liberians have registered to vote in presidential elections in October which are designed to seal the West African nation's return to peace. But officials said on Tuesday that the number of displaced people who had signed up for a ballot paper was disappointingly low.

David Singh, a spokesman for the electoral division of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), said preliminary results from the four-week voter registration campaign showed that 1.2 million people had put their names down to take part in the 11 October poll.

However there was little appetite for the upcoming elections among internally displaced people (IDP) still living in camps almost two years after Liberia's brutal civil war ended. They accounted for just five percent of those registering for a vote by the time the exercise finished last Friday.

[...]

Of those IDPs that have registered to vote, seventy percent have chosen to return to their county of origin to cast their ballot, while the remainder will vote either in the camps or nearby, Singh of UNMIL said.

Despite the low turnout among IDPs and court appeals by two human rights activists for Liberians to be given more time to put their names on the electoral register, the National Elections Commission (NEC) is adamant the registration period is over.”

RI, 22 July 2005

“As for the internally displaced, nearly 150,000 of them were still in camps during the registration period. They were able to register in the camps, but they had to decide at the time of registration whether they were going to vote in the camps or in their home counties come October. An overwhelming 70% of those who registered chose to vote back home. IDP return, however, has not proceeded as quickly as hoped due to a number of factors: coordination problems, logistical setbacks, an emphasis by UNMIL on delivering return packages in camps as opposed to in areas of return, security fears, the onset of the rainy season, and a lack of infrastructure in home villages. While donors and implementing NGOs believe that IDP returns will not be complete until some time in 2006, a senior UNMIL official insisted that ‘everyone would be back before October.’

There is now a real concern that many IDPs that registered to vote in their home counties will not be able to do so. IDPs interviewed by Refugees International in Bong county camps stated that they registered to vote in their home counties because they were “promised” by National Elections Commission (NEC) officials that they would be home in time for the elections. They are still waiting in camps for their return packages and transport. RI spoke with a senior UNMIL official responsible for elections who stated categorically that there was no “Plan B” for absentee voting by internally displaced persons who would not be able to return to their home counties in time to vote.

Political candidates have tried to take advantage of this situation, promising the displaced rice and transport home in exchange for votes. RI witnessed a bus heading from Maimu 1 camp in Bong County to Salayea district in Lofa County covered in campaign banners. While this is a potential solution to IDP transportation problems, it reinforces a prevalent ‘vote buying’ mentality. To combat this mentality, and to assist all Liberians in understanding the complicated political landscape, intensive voter and civic education projects in the rural areas must be reinforced. With over 50 presidential candidates, many Liberians simply don’t know who they should vote for, and how they should decide.”

ISSUES OF FAMILY UNITY, IDENTITY AND CULTURE

General

IDP camp management dominated by men (January 2004)

- In spontaneous settlements of IDPs, more households are headed by women than by men
- Settlements are however organised around a chairman, who is usually involved in organising the migration and negotiating access for squatting

OCHA Liberia, 20 January 2004

“The issue of female-headed households is significant. In just about every settlement the assessment reported that there were more women as household heads than men. Not in one camp was a woman camp chairperson found. There were however chairladies for women whose versions of community realities reinforced those of the chairmen. The reported increase in female-headed households may suggest an increase in vulnerability and poverty given the roles of women in traditional societies. Many women are reported as widows. Several female respondents that reported their husbands killed, wondered how they would make it when they go back to their villages.

[...]

These spontaneous settlements are organized around a *chairman* who most likely was instrumental in organizing the migration and negotiating access for squatting. There is an attempt to organize these settlements within the framework of existing official IDP camps management structure most likely to attract assistance. A resident of Brown's Town remarked, 'White man nah come, you must know.' This is an expression of heightened expectations that is symptomatic of humanitarianism in Liberia. The logic goes like this: white man represents ingos [international NGOs] and ingos have come to mean humanitarian assistance.”

PROPERTY ISSUES

General

Property disputes between returning Mandingos and other ethnic groups in some areas (2007)

- Mano and Gio ethnic groups have attacked returning Mandingos particularly in Nimba county
- Property disputes between returning Mandingos and Lorma ethnic groups have also arisen in Lofa and Nimba counties

IRIN, 8 February 2007

"Mounting ethnic tension in Liberia's eastern Nimba County could spark a new round of fighting as members of the minority Mandingo ethnic group claim to be struggling to recover their lands and properties upon return from refugee camps in Guinea, Liberian analysts warn.

Some of the thousands of former refugees who have returned there from Guinea over the last two years said to IRIN that they were encountering problems reclaiming land and buildings seized by members of the larger Gio and Mano ethnic groups during and after the Liberian civil war.

"I just returned from Guinea during the Christmas season and I am intending to stay in Ganta, but all of the three houses I inherited from my father after he died in a refugee camp are now being occupied by some brothers and sisters of the Mano tribe," said Sidiki Donzo. "They are refusing to leave, demanding that I should present valid documentation proving ownership."

Tension over land ownership among the three ethnic groups led to riots in Ganta, a bustling commercial town, mid-last year and forced hundreds of civilians to again flee into the forest, locals say."

IRIN, 22 May 2006

"The return of thousands of Liberians from camps across West Africa is fuelling ethnic tension over the ownership of land and homes in northern Nimba county, which saw some of the worst fighting in the civil war.

Hundreds of machete-armed youths from the Mano and Gio ethnic groups took to the streets of Nimba's second largest commercial city Ganta last week after rumours circulated that ethnic Mandingos, who have been living in refugee camps in Guinea, were about to attack the city to reclaim their land.

UN peacekeepers and newly trained police officers rapidly contained the trouble, making four arrests. But frightened residents, still reeling from 14 years of violent warfare, scuttled into the bush for safety.

The advance in the 1990s of Charles Taylor, the rebel leader who would become president in 1997, ended the peaceful coexistence of Mandingos with their Gio and Mano neighbours.

Taylor launched a war in the late 1980s on then president, Samuel Doe, in Nimba from bases in neighbouring Cote d'Ivoire. Taylor's fighters were mostly Gios and Manos. They accused the

Mandingos of supporting Doe and his ethnic Krahns, and chased them from their homes, and often, out of Liberia all together.

A decade and a half later, Liberia is at peace and the colossal task of rebuilding the entire infrastructure - from roads to schools, power lines and hospitals - has begun. The refugee camps that sheltered tens of thousands of Liberians are closing and UN agencies are transporting families home.

But many Mandingos are returning to Nimba to find that their homes are now occupied by the Mano and Gio neighbours that chased them away.

[...]

But some Gios and Manos contend that they are just taking back what was theirs before Mandingos - mostly Muslims who trace their roots to territory beyond Liberia's northern border - moved into the area in the 1960s.

'The houses and lands that most of our Mandingo brothers are saying we are illegally occupying were owned by our grandparents. [The Mandingos] took it from them because those Mandingos had money at the time,' said Mathews Saye, a Mano. 'Any attempt by anybody to forcibly take our land will be resisted.'

Others say that the occupation of Mandingo homes and land is a simple act of 'revenge' against Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), the largest force fighting to oust Taylor from 1999 onwards, which also attracted many Krahns formerly linked to Doe.

'LURD fighters were mainly Mandingos who, from bases in Guinea, used heavy artillery right across the border to bomb Mano and Gio houses... Now, we cannot be homeless because of their actions, so we are occupying their houses,' said Benedict Gonleh, a Gio.

John Saye Gbatu, a traditional leader and Mano, said that owners could get back what was theirs with the presentation of a land deed.

'I have told my people, Manos, Gios and Mandingos, that anyone making title ownership of any land in Nimba must bring forward supporting documents... Everybody has the right to live in this county. We lived together before and there is no need for us to be at conflict over properties,' Gbatu said.

However, Donzo said most of his kinsmen lost their land deeds during the war.

[...]

The argument over property and land is creating a climate of fear in Nimba, a region that was ravaged by marauding rebels in a civil war that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives."

UN, 30 November 2005

"Ethnic tensions and property disputes continue to simmer in some areas, particularly as internally displaced persons and refugees return to their homes. At Voinjama, in Lofa County, the Mandingo and Lorma ethnic groups are contesting ownership of and other property which returning Mandingos claim they left behind when they fled during the war. Similar disputes have been reported in Nimba County. UNMIL is working with traditional leaders and the local authorities on reconciliation efforts, including the establishment of property dispute committees in an effort to resolve the problems peacefully."

Relationships between IDPs and the landowners of the camps are generally cordial (2006)

- In three camps IDPs were forbidden to cultivate land while in other camps relationships with landowners were generally cordial
- In Maimu II camp a formal agreement for the use of land was implemented
- Where IDPs want to stay around the former camps bilateral negotiations for the use of the land have started
- Landowners did not receive compensation for the public use of their lands but benefited rather from the services provided in the IDP camps

JRS, 21 December 2006, pp.18-19

"In general, IDPs mentioned good or cordial relationships with the landowners of the camps. However, in Maimu I and II, E.J. Yancee, Plumkor and Wilson, relationships were reported to be difficult. In three camps, Konola, Ricks, and Wilson, IDPs said that landowners forbid them to cultivate land. In these last cases, landowners see the presence of IDPs on their land as only being temporary. The end of the rainy season was frequently mentioned by landowners as the anticipated period of departure for the IDPs. If IDPs were to decide to remain on the land though, even after the rainy season, it is likely that tensions would grow between the owners and them.

Only in one camp, Maimu III, did IDPs speak of a formal agreement with the landlord allowing them to remain at the camp site. In the other camps visited, such agreements were made informally and typically went only so far as to grant IDPs the right to stay on the owners' land until they received assistance to go home. According to UNHCR, "The period for which people have been allowed to remain was generally unclear, as landlords appeared to be making plans for future use of their land."

In many camps, IDPs interested in settling locally initiated negotiations with landowners, and owners have reportedly been open to making agreements with them. However, as noted by UNHCR, "The inclusion of persons with special needs in arrangements with landowners [is] not systematic. In some areas, this group was part of the negotiations and individuals were well-informed, yet in other locations individuals with special needs were observed to be unsure about arrangements being made for the land." This finding raises concerns about the future of this population.

Landowners may find it in their own interest to accept IDPs settling on their land, as seen in the case of Baysah Farm located few kilometres outside Tottota town, Salala District. First, assuming responsibility for a tenant population of any size involves coordination of resources, decision-making and investments in the community. From simple farmers, they may become community leaders. Close involvement with IDPs may also bring opportunities to develop services on their land. As can be seen throughout Liberia today, humanitarian organisations may show an interest in building water and sanitation systems, clinics or schools in order to assist former IDPs in their reintegration. Furthermore, in some instances landlords may use IDPs as a labour force. While these services are not always rewarded monetarily, owners are not typically known to ask IDPs for such compensation, if any at all, in return for the right to remain on the land.

In fact, landowners who hosted camps did not receive compensation for the public use of their lands despite the many years of displaced peoples' presence. They did however benefit from the infrastructure installed by UN agencies or NGOs. Sometimes this contributes to tensions between IDPs who remain and owners, as owners may be eager to begin to use the infrastructure left behind on their land. For example, in some former camps, remaining IDPs accused landlords of stealing parts off of the hand water pumps for their private use and in an effort to force the IDPs to leave."

Women returnees hampered by discriminatory inheritance rights (2004)

- Inheritance rights were traditionally denied to women from "customary marriages" performed according to tribal traditions rather than a civil law ceremony
- Although the law was amended in 2003 establishing equal inheritance rights for widowed women of customary as well as statutory marriages, efforts must be made to raise awareness of this law, particularly among refugee and IDP women
- Further revisions of the law are still needed to ensure full protection of women's inheritance rights in Liberia

Mooney, May 2004

"Restrictions on women's ability to inherit land and property impede reintegration, in particular for widowed refugee and IDP women returning to their areas of origin. In Liberia, a woman's right to inherit land and property from her deceased husband had long been reserved only for those women who had been married in a civil law ceremony. Inheritance rights were therefore denied to women from "customary marriages" performed according to tribal traditions; these women also were not entitled to access land without permission from their deceased husband's family. This discriminatory provision had previously drawn the concern of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and local women's groups were active in advocating for its repeal. Indeed, the provision was out of step not only with international human rights instruments but also with the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa adopted by the African Union in July 2003.

In an important development, an amendment to the law was passed in October 2003 that established equal inheritance rights for widowed women of customary as well as statutory marriages. This legislative reform marked a significant victory for women's rights in Liberia and is to be commended. As Liberian women groups were quick to point out, however, the successful adoption of the amendment is only the first step. Critical now is to ensure awareness of this important development, so that women are aware of their rights and in fact able to access land and property. Programs are needed to raise awareness of this law, in particular among IDP and refugee women, most of whom are from rural areas where traditional marriages are most common, and among their communities. Special dissemination efforts, such as through radio programming and drama, will be needed to reach the large numbers of women who cannot read, and to reach women in IDP and refugee camps. Civil society, in particular local women's groups, should be supported to undertake such dissemination and awareness-raising efforts and to monitor implementation of the law. Moreover, enabling legislation still needs to be developed.

Finally, although the amendment ends the difference in the enjoyment of property rights between those women married under civil law and those under customary law, close reading of the law indicates that widowed women are still not accorded full inheritance rights in Liberia. Upon the husband's death, the widow or multiple widows are entitled to only one-third of their late husband's property, the balance of which shall go to his children. Further, should the widow remarry, she loses these rights to remain on the property of her late husband and administer his estate, and the inherited property must return to the heirs or children of the deceased husband. These provisions suggest that further revision of the law still is needed to ensure full protection of women's inheritance rights in Liberia."

Property rights issues for returnees do not appear to be a major concern, reports Oxfam (March 2004)

- In November 2003, civilians started returning home to find other IDPs or soldiers living there - but civil authorities encouraged them to allow combatants to stay until they were disarmed
- Problem could potentially arise if rate of return exceeds rate of demobilisation

Oxfam, 26 March 2004

“As in Sierra Leone, property rights issues, especially for returnees, do not appear to be a major concern in Liberia. Of the places we visited, tensions around property arose only in Tubmanburg, where a large number of LURD fighters are waiting for demobilization. During the war, LURD forces commonly took over abandoned homes and public buildings. As early as November, however, civilians started returning home to find their shelters occupied by other displaced people or soldiers. The “civil authorities” encourage returnees to allow the combatants to stay until the disarmament process begins and they can move to the barracks. This could be a more serious problem if the rate of return exceeds the pace of the demobilization process. In Sierra Leone, where a similar situation prevailed, property owners did finally request rent payment from XCs and “gaining access to short term temporary employment (through donor funded labour intensive work programmes) was cited repeatedly by XCs as being vital for them to access the necessary cash to pay this rent”.

Elsewhere, community structures alleviate some of the reconstruction burden. In Cape Mount, the villages we visited have established shelter-building committees that provide free labor to vulnerable people. In Gbarpolu, voluntary organizations called “Ku” rebuild homes for women, the elderly and the disabled. From information gathered during an Oxfam assessment in Rivercess County, however, it appears that shelter construction is not considered a communal responsibility in parts of Southeastern Liberia.”

PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

General

Reintegration of displaced populations remains a key challenge (2007)

- Displaced Liberians have gone back to areas highly affected by the civil war
- With the lack of basic social services and high levels of social disruption, reintegration in communities of origin is particularly challenging

Republic of Liberia, October 2006, p. xiii

"The socio-economic analysis reveals that the Liberian population is still highly affected by the consequences of the 14 years of civil war that left the country with a destroyed infrastructure, a devastated economy and an impoverished, conflict-stricken population.

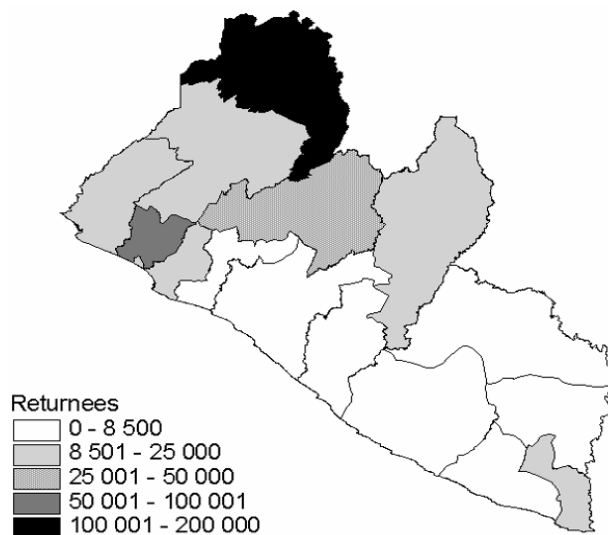
The survey reveals that 86% of households across the country have been displaced at least once since 1989 due to the fighting and looting. Most households returned between 2003 and 2004. In some counties in the north-west, return migration is still ongoing. These areas have been highly affected during the last years of the civil strife; therefore families have to start from scratch to rebuild their livelihoods."

United Nations, 12 February, 2007, pp. 8-10

"The levels of social disruption in Liberia resulting from the war are profound. The vast majority of Liberians were affected one way or another. The combined total of registered displaced persons amounted to 554,264 people, of which 233,264 were refugees and 321,000 IDPs respectively. The CFSNS, however, indicated that up to 80% of the rural population had been displaced at some stage of the 14-year conflict.

Figure 1: Returnee Areas (Numbers of returnees as of 15 November 2006)

County	Returnees
Bomi	95,771
Bong	47,133
Gbarpolu	20,545
Grand Bassa	8,221
Grand Cape Mount	23,801
Grand Gedeh	2,120
Grand Kru	683
Lofa	169,706
Margibi	2,596
Maryland	9,524
Montserrado	13,062
Nimba	12,300
River Cess	3,979
River Gee	286
Sinoe	3,853



A key challenge that remains is to successfully reintegrate displaced populations in communities in their areas of return and at the same time meeting the most urgent needs of these communities. The influx of the displaced back to their areas of return has already and will in the future strain the already inadequate basic social services provided in these areas. Unless basic social services are provided and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods are generated in areas of return, there is a strong possibility that returning populations will migrate towards urban centres."

Official UN line on progress of IDP return is positive, but NGOs remain critical (2005)

- According to UNHCR, the increasing IDP returns and camp closures are partly attributable to the increasing absorption capacity in areas of return
- However, IDPs remaining in camps have cited various reasons for not returning, including lack of transport, continuing violence and lack of infrastructure and services in home areas
- IDPs have also complained of demolition of huts in the camps and forced eviction
- The UN strategy of offering return packages to IDPs while still in camps has been criticised by NGOs for creating protection and logistical problems
- NGOs have also criticised the lack of information provided to IDPs, which has caused a lot of confusion about the return process

IRIN, 13 July 2005

"Amid improving conditions in Liberia, UNHCR started last October to help Liberian refugees and displaced people to return to their areas of origin. Those going home under the UNHCR-facilitated voluntary repatriation programme receive a return package that consists of a transport grant that ranges from US\$5-45 depending on the distance home, food such as wheat, oil and maize from WFP, as well as relief items such as kerosene, lanterns, plastic sheets, sleeping mats, blankets and kitchen sets.

[...]

Perry Town returnee camp closed in late June after its last inhabitants left for home. The structures were dismantled and the land returned to its owner. It was the sixth such camp to close

in the Liberian capital, with another 27 returnee camps and irregular settlements emptying out as well.

'This is a significant step towards Liberia's recovery as formerly uprooted Liberians can begin the process to rebuild their lives and their country as they engage in productive activities such as farming to help feed themselves and restore the dignity of this country that has so much potential,' said UNHCR's Outgoing Representative in Liberia, Moses Okello.

He added, 'It is also a demonstration of Liberians' confidence in the peace process that there is security to restart normal living once again.'

Increasing returns are also attributable to projects by UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to increase the absorption capacity in areas of return. Okello noted that community-driven initiatives can be supported with the participation of the community members.

UNHCR is implementing over 1,500 community empowerment programmes like the building or repair of schools, clinics, roads, bridges, water points and sanitation facilities. Other projects involve developing facilities to increase the absorption capacity of communities and building their capacity to participate in development initiatives and manage programmes.

The UN refugee agency, together with the Liberian government and its partners, has embarked on a new scheme to attract teachers and medical personnel with incentives to return home to provide much-needed services."

RI, 18 July 2005

"The United Nations has stepped up efforts to return Liberians displaced by fourteen years of conflict to their home counties. As of June 3rd, the UN had provided final assistance and return packages home to 187,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) out of the 280,000 in formal camps. One of the first IDP camps to be 'closed' was EJ Yancy in Bong County. Although technically the camp is not closed, all of the displaced who were registered with the World Food Program have received their final food distribution in camp, accepted a return package including a transportation allowance, and agreed to demolish their huts. Yet more than 1,200 residents remain in the camp and would like to stay, preferably with international assistance.

Refugees International visited the camp in June and spoke to representatives of the 1,200 IDPs still living in the camp to find out why they were intent on staying there despite efforts to send them home. James, a father of three, explained, 'We did accept the return packages. It seemed pretty clear that if we did not accept the packages now, we would never receive them. We were also told that if we did not destroy our huts, our neighbors would not be provided with return packages and they would stop the distribution. The two houses next to ours were destroyed by force to encourage everyone to leave. We were pretty afraid ours would be next.'

Most of the displaced persons remaining at EJ Yancy are from Gbarpolu County. Although the border of the county is only a few minutes drive away from the camp, the trip home can take several days on foot and involves crossing a river. Poor road conditions and the lack of a bridge crossing the river at the closest access point to Bong County mean that the county is inaccessible to transport from that route. Even for vulnerable individuals, transportation by the International Organization for Migration is only provided by canoe to the opposite side of the river. From there, the elderly, ill, handicapped and pregnant are expected to find their own way home on foot carrying their possessions with them.

The UN has declared Gbarpolu County 'ready to receive.' Disarmament of ex-combatants has taken place, but IDPs warn of continued violence. According to a June 15 press briefing by the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Maj. General Tahir had received reports of shootings in the

county, but investigations by the transitional government did not confirm the reports. Even if the county is declared safe, it is not necessarily ready for return in terms of availability of basic infrastructure, shelter, water pumps, schools and health posts. Several high school students at EJ Yancy told RI, 'We want to stay here until the end of the term. If we leave now, we will lose an entire year of school, and for those of us about to graduate, we would not receive our diplomas. An exception should be made for students. In Gbarpolu there are no high schools.'

RI raised the concerns of the displaced persons living in EJ Yancy with members of the Humanitarian Coordination Section (HCS) of UNMIL. IDPs had reported threats from local Liberian authorities that they would be evicted. The local landowner had already dismantled the latrines and water pumps, and all international organizations had left the camp. IDPs reported thefts of zinc roofing and general insecurity.

The HCS was able to confirm with local authorities that IDPs would not be evicted, but HCS staff did not have a plan for the consolidation or integration of IDPs left in the camp. Instead they referred RI to the work of a Task Force on Camp Closure and Consolidation, established after an assessment by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Internal Displacement Division. The Task Force recently reported its initial findings to UNMIL's IDP Consultative Forum and a final report detailing its recommendations will be available within the next few weeks.

In the meantime, 300 internally displaced persons from EJ Yancy, afraid of evictions and forced hut demolitions, moved a few hundred yards down the road to a farm owned by a local school board member, Mr. Beysah, who was enlisting support from international humanitarian organizations to provide water pumps and sanitation. Clearly a pre-existing plan for camp consolidation and closure would have prevented the doubling of efforts to serve the same community. The work of the camp closure Task Force should be expedited and solutions found for locally integrating displaced persons who may not be able to return home at this time or are unwilling to do so."

RI, 24 June 2005

"The return of the displaced to their homes in Liberia is encouraging, and donors and international agencies need to support the process of community rebuilding in areas of origin. Such support would involve concentrating on improving services in communities of return and providing basic items, such as plastic sheeting, cooking utensils, and blankets, in transit centers located close to the areas of origin.

The approach of the United Nations, however, as mandated by the Humanitarian Coordinator, has been to favor the strategy of offering return packages, including money for transportation, to displaced persons while they remain in camps. Camp-based distribution is easier logistically and donor representatives interviewed by RI insisted that this consideration was the main rationale. Staff of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) justify the preference for camp-based distribution by citing the desire of the displaced themselves to receive the materials prior to return, as well as pressure from the political side of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to accelerate the return process.

[...]

The effect of favoring the camp-based approach has been to create a situation in which IDPs are waiting for delivery of materials in camps, which has been a slow process, when they could instead be engaged in rebuilding homes in rural areas. It has also created protection and logistical problems for the displaced as they attempt to travel home with all of their newly acquired goods. Donor representatives and non-governmental agency staff have stated that this approach was not their preference.

[...]

No UN agency has been assigned the role of overseeing the process of return travel for the displaced. During a visit to a refugee transit center in Lofa county, RI was struck by the numbers of stranded trucks carrying IDP families. No one within the UN system was responsible for helping them. In many cases the displaced were forced to abandon vehicles and continue on foot. [...]

An initial return plan had included IOM transport for all registered internally displaced persons to their home counties, and the provision of food rations and basic supplies in these areas, but the Humanitarian Coordination Section of UNMIL decided that this process was too costly and time consuming. The chosen path, however, may prove to be even more costly, if a significant percentage of the displaced use their supplies while still in camps and spend their travel allowances without actually reaching their homes.

With so much emphasis on providing return packages in a timely manner to the displaced in camps, little is being done to ensure that areas of return are ready to receive returning people. Although UNHCR and their NGO partners have begun to reconstruct schools, health centers and build wells in some counties, shelter and sufficient agriculture remains a problem in all of the counties that RI visited. Except for UNHCR, UN agencies did not appear to have sub-offices outside of Monrovia. With Liberia entering into the reconstruction phase, it is vital that the entire UN humanitarian and development system step up efforts to transition from relief to development and ensure that communities are provided with the support they need to rebuild without making distinctions between the returning internally displaced, returning refugees, and those who stayed behind. Liberians at the village level all require support in rebuilding their own communities. In many cases the most vulnerable are not internally displaced persons or refugees, who have received at least some assistance, but Liberians who suffered in place and managed on their own without the benefit of international aid."

ACF, February 2005

"Generally, the displaced in all of the camps of Montserrado, Margibi and Bong counties expressed their willingness to return to their place of origin as soon as the agencies responsible for their repatriation can facilitate their return. Several factors influenced their decision to return as soon as possible:

- Ø The start of the farming season
- Ø The advantages of the dry season (easier shelter construction, road access, etc.)
- Ø The insufficient food ration distributed in the camps
- Ø The difficult access to natural resources and income generating opportunities
- Ø The reduction of humanitarian interventions in camps
- Ø The wish to benefit from the return assistance package

These reasons are shared by all the IDPs residing in camps, but gain importance with the displaced coming from areas where farming activities are predominant such as in Lofa, Bong, Gbarpolu and Nimba counties.

IDPs who originate from these counties are mostly farmers and expressed their desire to return earlier so as not to be late for the 2005 farming season.

Now that the repatriation has started the movements from camps to areas of return are not necessarily finite. Some members of the family, preferably the men, go and assess the situation at their place

of origin. Some of them prepare the shelter and/or the field in order to anticipate their household's definitive return. Very few directly resettle but they prefer to go back to camp in order to benefit from the repatriation assistance package.

Regarding the future priorities of returning households, farming remains the more important activity but the construction of new shelters is also a priority IDPs are taking into account.

[...]

The repatriation process is on its way and is starting to be slightly more effective. Nevertheless, the information provided to the IDPs seems to be deficient, as many of them do not know when they will be registered, repatriated, what the composition of the package is and where the assistance will be given (at the camps or at place of origin). Due to this lack of information, various "rumours" circulate in camps and IDPs are starting to be really confused. It has been noted, for instance, that some displaced from Lofa County expect to receive 50 US dollars per person as transport allowance while nothing had been officially decided.

Another concern has been raised by the IDPs regarding the transportation of the 'heavy' package. Due to the long distance to cover, often partly on foot, some of them prefer to sell it than to take it home. The resettlement package is then a source of cash instead of being an actual resettlement kit."

Disarmament is main prerequisite for IDP return, according to Oxfam assessment (March 2004)

- Every IDP interviewed said they would only return home with their families once combatants are disarmed
- IDPs also stressed the need for coordinating reconstruction support with return, due to tensions when IDPs are forced to share cramped spaces with host families

Oxfam, 26 March 2004

"Through focus group and individual interviews, displaced persons identified the following prerequisites to a sustainable return (listed in order of frequency mentioned):

- A. Effective disarmament (100%)
- B. UNMIL deployment
- C. Material support for return
 - * Reintegration packages – tools, seeds, pots, tarpaulin
 - * Shelter reconstruction materials
- D. Free and fair elections
- E. Functional schools
 - * To continue education themselves
 - * To ensure that services are in place to occupy former combatants

Every displaced person interviewed said that they would not want to return home (with their families) before combatants are disarmed.

Although many men in Bong, Grand Cape Mount and Bomi Counties have made trips back to their farms since the New Year to plant crops, women and children have generally remained behind.”

[...]

Reintegration of IDPs

Respondents highlighted the need for coordinating reconstruction support – especially of primary shelters- with returns. Both displaced persons and community residents expressed concern about the tensions created when families are forced to share cramped spaces. In villages in Saniquelle Ma, Nimba County, for example, hundreds of displaced persons have found refuge with generous residents, but economic strain contributes to a somewhat uneasy coexistence. This concern was echoed in Cape Mount, where residents also feared that returnees might suspect the ‘stayers’ of collaborating with LURD rebels and stealing the property of people who fled.

Vulnerable groups, such as single elderly women, persons with HIV/AIDS, or female-headed households, will require focused assistance. In Tubmanburg, women noted it is normal practice for returnee women to enter into sexual relationships with men simply to meet their basic needs. Although returnee women in particular have very few assets, all women in the community expressed interest in income generating activities.”

Return

Chronology of the IDP return process (2006)

- The Liberian IDP return and reintegration process commenced on 8 November 2004 after the counties of return were declared 'ready to receive' returnees
- The return process was declared by the Government of Liberia officially completed on 20th April 2006
- An IDP Camp Closure Assessment Report was issued in June 2006 recommending measures to repatriate the last IDPs

Jesuit Refugee Service, 21 December 2006, p.10

"After the signing of the Accra Peace Agreement in August 2003, UN peacekeepers were deployed throughout the country to re-establish order in the outlying areas. While waiting for the peace to return before heading back home, many Liberians moved into formal camps and spontaneous settlements along the two main roads leading to Monrovia. The World Food Programme (WFP) registered 323,827 Liberians, including 314,095 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 9,732 Liberian refugees who had returned spontaneously from Sierra Leone.

In the following year the security situation in the inner country seemed to be improving, most notably with the closure of the disarmament and demobilisation process at the end of October 2004. In November 2004, the return process of the IDP population began, which would assist displaced Liberians back to their counties of origin, mainly Lofa, Gparpolu and Bomi Counties. A strategy document known as the “Community Resettlement and Reintegration Strategy,” produced by the NTGL in collaboration with the international community, provided the basis for the beginning of the return process.”

UNMIL, 17 June 2006

"At the start of the process, there were 314,095 IDPs in 35 formal camps and spontaneous settlements. The process which was originally planned to take three years has been completed within 18 months. This was largely due to the intense desire of the IDPs in the various camps to

go home. The humanitarian community led by UNHCR, WFP and IOM had to put in place the necessary logistics so as to be able to meet the desire of the IDPs. [...] At the end of the process, 321,7451 IDPs were provided with the humanitarian return assistance composed of food, NFI and transportation grant. Over 272,000 or 80% of this number has collected their second food ration from WFP as of 10 May, 2006. This second ration is given in the areas of return, clearly indicating that these people have returned to their home Counties."

Jesuit Refugee Service, 21 December 2006, p.11

"Salala camp in December 2005

Following the promotion of the cluster approach as the new collaborative humanitarian response to IDP crisis on the international level, UNHCR assumed the principal role in July 2005 in coordinating and managing the protection services provided to IDPs in Liberia. On 1 January 2006, Liberia became one of only a few pilot countries testing the cluster approach's implementation, along with the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda.

On 20 April 2006, the Liberian Government and UNMIL representatives met in Salala camp to celebrate the official closure of the IDP return process in Liberia. From November 2004 to March 2006, 321,634 IDPs were deregistered and provided with a return package that contained food, non food items, and a cash transportation allowance.

Salala camp in July 2006

Acknowledging the continued presence of people still living at the site of the former camps, the IDP Consultative Forum (ICF), the inter-agency body in charge of repatriation and reintegration activities, agreed that UNHCR should conduct a multi-agency assessment exercise at the camp sites. Following the completion of this exercise in April-May 2006, an IDP Camp Closure Assessment Report was issued in June 2006, which recommended measures to repatriate the last IDPs and to clean-up the sites of the camps.

Between 15 and 17 August 2006, a three-day verification exercise was conducted in 29 former IDP camps. On 8 September 2006, the ICF agreed upon measures aiming to assist some of the individuals remaining at the camp sites, as well as some displaced people squatting in public and private buildings in Monrovia."

For an account of the first day of the return process, see also IRIN's ["LIBERIA: IDPs begin heading for home"](#) (8 November 2004)

The desire for a normal life is amongst main reasons for return (2006)

- Improvements in security in IDP's home region and the desire to return to a normal life are the main reasons for going back
- The difficulty of being in camps and their restricted freedom of movement contributed to the desire to return
- The timing of the return process coincided for many with the start of the farming season

JRS, 21 December 2006, pp. 27-29

"Reasons to Return

IDPs started going back home in 2005. Many waited until after the presidential elections in November 2005 before making the trip home. The great majority of them said that they were happy to be back. Improvements in security in their home region and the desire to return to normal life were the most frequently cited reasons for going back. "There is nowhere better than

home” is a sentence often heard in return communities. Many people interviewed expressed their satisfaction at again having full control over their life.

They especially enjoy their rediscovered freedom of movement. While in IDP camps, residents encountered frequent problems with members of the local community when going into the bush for ordinary tasks. Women incurred the risk of being harassed or raped every time they moved inside or around the camps.

Overall, returnees considered camp life to be difficult, even though they were provided with food and services. An often heard complaint was that IDPs had to pay camp managers to get housing materials that were supposed to be free. Those who could not pay were often homeless. Consequently, they would not be registered and would not be entitled to the return assistance to get back home. Some said that they came back home on foot.

In addition to these reasons, many returnees also came back before the 2005 rainy season (April-October) in order to start farming. The presence of relatives in return communities was also a strong draw for many to go back home. Contrary to expectations, assistance provided by UN agencies was never mentioned by returnees as a factor in the decision to return. Some IDPs even made the journey home without waiting to receive their promised return package."

Obstacles to return and potential sources of conflict (2006)

- Obstacles to return have included the inadequacy of both return packages and transportation assistance
- The lack of seeds and farming tools has deterred some IDPs from going back
- The amount for transportation assistance has not taken into account the increase in prices during the rainy season when most IDPs went back to their home region
- Child soldiers have tended to linger in temporary centre because too afraid to return home
- Lack of facilities to receive them has created an obstacle to their return
- Economic development in areas of return may spur tensions over access to natural resources as new settlers are not familiar with indigenous customary practices for managing natural resources

JRS, 21 December 2006, p.46

"(1) Return Package and Transportation Assistance

As already pointed out in this report, the lack of items necessary for reintegration in return areas, such as seeds and farming tools, deterred some IDPs from going back home and was a factor in drawing back to the camps some of those who had left. Without seeds and farming tools, reintegration in rural areas is not sustainable. In its Regional Multi-Year Operation Plan for the Repatriation and Reintegration of Liberian Refugees and IDPs for the years 2004-2007, UNHCR foresaw the need to provide IDPs returning home with "a package containing food, non-food items and agriculture seed and tools"⁸⁷. However, one of the main criticisms expressed by returnees about the way in which the return process was organised was the absence of these agricultural necessities. Without these items, returnees had to continue their reliance on humanitarian organisations since they had no other means of becoming self-sufficient. Some IDPs realised the implications of this situation and so did not bother to leave the camps. Some of the returnees, finding themselves in a difficult situation back home, preferred to return to the site of the former camps where they still had connections and opportunities to do small jobs to at least make ends meet.

Transportation assistance presented another obstacle for prospective returnees. IDPs complained about the small amount of transportation assistance received, after IOM stopped driving people back home. As mentioned, the amount of this assistance was calculated without taking into account the rise of transportation costs during the rainy season, even though most IDPs returned during this season. Additionally, transportation assistance did not take into account the fact that IDPs sometimes had many belongings with them. Some returnees were forced to leave a part of their belongings behind in the camps. Moreover, as mentioned, the majority of IDPs were obliged to do small jobs, and even sometimes to sell a part of the return package, in order to gather the amount of money necessary to go back home. Others could not reach home at all. They decided to resettle at the site of the former camps or in other parts of the country."

Obstacles for the return of child soldiers

IRIN, 8 June 2004

"Child soldiers, uprooted from their families and plunged into Liberia's civil war, are lingering in temporary camps because they are too scared to return home and insufficient facilities have been created to cater for them, child protection agencies and a government commission said.

After turning over their weapons, the young ex-combatants are entitled to a three-month stay in care centres, which offer medical aid, counselling, reading lessons and help tracing families. But the stop-gap is turning more permanent for many.

'Children spend more than the maximum period of 12 weeks in the interim care centres which should not be the case', said Allen Lincoln, the head of Roman Catholic child protection agency, Don Bosco. 'We are worried about reintegration and rehabilitation.'

Allen said former child soldiers were concerned about their personal safety if they went home and even if they did return, the lack of schools or other community structures meant readjusting would be difficult.

'There are no actual facilities in those communities to receive them. Children expressed fear of their security in counties where they come from. Those counties are either occupied by ex-fighters of their rival warring groups or inaccessible because there is no deployment of UN peacekeepers', Lincoln said.

Save The Children painted a similar picture, saying former child soldiers could not necessarily rely on their own families for support when they left the interim care centres (ICCs).

'Most children associated with fighting forces in ICCs fear getting back to their communities because of retaliation, stigmatisation and rejection by their families', said Christine McComnick, a disarmament advisor with the charity."

Potential sources of conflict

UNEP, 6 October 2006, p. 60

"In the absence of refugees or IDPs, and given Liberia's favourable climate, significant natural regeneration has taken place in many counties. Satellite images show that there is greater vegetation cover today than seven years ago. In addition, many of the earlier established plantations (oil palm, teak and rubber primarily) have now matured. Other changes have occurred:

- some land and buildings have been taken over by family/neighbours who remained;
- families have grown;

- livelihood coping strategies have changed considerably;
- non-residents have moved into certain areas and use different land-use practices;
- and
- refugees/IDPs have begun to return, spontaneously, and are exploiting natural resources.

In addition, other key trends are now visible. Given recent high mineral prices, the government sees a rapid expansion of mining in the area as a 'quick win' for generating much-needed foreign exchange, and as a lever for economic development. As a result of expectations of significant economic growth, induced development is starting to occur with increasing numbers of culturally distinct people moving into the area in preparation for expected gains. These people are not familiar with indigenous customary practices for managing natural resources and unauthorized activities such as setting fires, killing bushmeat, and ring barking of trees are increasingly occurring. Not surprisingly, tensions mount over access to houses, land and natural resources, and the use made of these assets. Conflict has so far been localized and small-scale, but the number and frequency of incidents is increasing weekly."

Modalities of the IDP return process (2006)

- In assessing whether an area is "safe" for resettlement, government/ inter-agency teams looked at security, basic facilities, rule of law and humanitarian coverage
- Teams from IDP camps were given the opportunity to see conditions in areas of return for themselves
- WFP provided four month return/ resettlement food package to returnees
- Non-food items such as plastic sheeting, blankets etc. were provided by UNHCR and ICRC (the latter to returnees and communities specifically in Lofa county)
- Protection monitoring was conducted both during the return process and in return areas

NRC, 8 September 2004

"In Liberia a committee called the County Resettlement Assessment Committee (CRAC) has developed a strategy. The principal task of the committee of which is to assess security, basic facilities, rule of law and humanitarian coverage and recommend to the National Resettlement Assessment Committee for declaring a county safe for resettlement for IDP return. In Bong County, the assessment team comprised NRC, Government authorities, UN agencies, other INGOs and local NGOs. In each village or town the team interviewed the communities about general security, establishment of the rule of law, basic social services and the humanitarian/relief presence. Many local leaders and traditional coping mechanisms are re-establishing themselves, but resolution systems will require strengthening to support a large number of returns. The overall rule of law situation is acceptable for return, but the state of basic social services in Districts visited are deplorable and not acceptable for return. Also, education, health and Watsan facilities are in need of massive reconstruction or rehabilitation.

Go and see Visits

In the light of the above mentioned activities, NRC camp Management programs saw it as a need to acquaint itself with the expected problems ahead and also for the IDPs to be part of the planning and return process. Teams were drawn up from the various camps to visit areas of possible return. The teams comprises of the camp management committee (CMC), the camp management team (CMT(NRC)) and LRRRC the government. The objective of the various visits were to give the IDPs a fair idea of how their areas of return look like in terms of security, infrastructure, livelihood, food security, health as well as civil authority and the presence of non-governmental organizations. Again, of all the areas visited, 95% of the residents depend on the WFP monthly food ration distributed in the IDP camps."

JPT, November 2004

"(a) Food

During the period 2004-2005, WFP has planned to provide food assistance to approximately 170,000 returnees (i.e., refugees and IDPs). In 2004, WFP plans to assist approximately 50,000 returnees, 120,000 returnees in 2005 and 80,000 in 2006. WFP also plans to assist approximately 300,000 IDPs presently residing in displaced settlements and who will also receive food commodities when they return to their respective towns/villages of origin. For each returning refugee and/or IDP, WFP will provide four months return/resettlement food package. This package, which amounts to 16.65 kilograms per person per month, is calculated on the basis of full ration (2100 kilocalories) per day per beneficiary. The food package will be composed of cereals, pulses, vegetable oil, corn-soya -blend, and salt. Food requirements and overall costs for the planned caseloads and categories are tabulated below:

Food Requirements and Overall Cost				
	2004	2005	2006	Total
Expected number of returnees	50,000	120,000	80,000	250,000
Food needs in Mt	3,330	7,992	5,328	16,650
Total WFP cost (USD)	2,157,035	5,446,767	3,631,178	11,234,980

WFP and its operational partners will provide the return/resettlement rations in two tranches: two months ration will be provided at the transit or distribution centre together with NFIs that will be made available and distributed by UNHCR and other humanitarian actors. The second tranche will be provided as close to the areas of origin as possible (i.e. district headquarters) to enable easy collection and transport.

(b) Non- Food Items

UNHCR has budgeted for NFIs for 100,000 IDPs up to February 2005. The distribution criterion for the NFI packages is shown below. ICRC is distributing NFI packages to families currently living in all communities in Lofa. This will continue into early 2005, with close coordination with UNHCR to avoid duplication as much as possible. ICRC distributions ensure that not only formal returnees, but also those residents who did not flee to formal displacement camps receive NFIs, as the conditions under which both groups live is equally deficient in basic household items.

NFIs per Person		NFIs per Family	
Items	Quantity	Items	Quantity
Blanket	1 piece	Kitchen set	1 set
Sleeping Mat	1 piece	Jerry can	1 piece
Soap	2 cakes	Lantern	1 piece
Empty travel bag	1 piece	Water bucket	1 piece
Sanitary kit	1 kit (females over 12)		
Plastic sheet	1 piece (adults over 18)		

(c) Shelter

As indicated, the NFI package includes provision for one plastic sheet or tarpaulin for each adult over 18. UNHCR has committed US\$1.6m for shelter kits, i.e., iron sheet and nails for 2004 to be distributed at the community level on the basis of assessed needs and not necessarily to all returning IDPs for whom shelter is a key concern."

UNMIL, 17 June 2006

"2. Protection monitoring during and after return

The IDP Unit field staff have been conducting protection monitoring in both the IDP camps and in the return areas since the beginning of the return process. This is to ensure that the process progressed in a safe and dignified manner for the IDPs. In all there were five International Field Protection staff as well as 15 National staff responsible for protection monitoring. The International staff were mainly based in the areas of high return where they monitored the conditions under which the IDP returnees were returning and reintegrating into. There were many instances where the Unit's staff provided direct protection support and also reported protection issues which were later followed up and addressed. After the completion of the return process in the camps, the IDP Unit staff concentrated their attention on monitoring in the return areas. During the last two months more than 40 communities in five counties were visited. The picture that has emerged from all these returnee community monitoring is quite encouraging. On the whole, the security situation was reported to be calm in almost all the communities visited. The vast majority of the returnees interviewed reported being happy to be back home and were thankful to all those who made their repatriation possible. It was also observed that there are several UN agencies and NGOs such as UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC, CCF etc. providing various services in some of the communities. Nevertheless several gaps in the provision of social amenities were also reported in most of the communities visited. Major concerns raised include: lack of WATSAN, health and educational facilities, lack of shelter materials, lack of seed rice, and lack of access roads and broken bridges etc."

For the key findings of the 2004 survey on return destinations and vulnerabilities, see also OCHA and UNHCR's ["IDP Return Survey of Official Camps - Liberia. Preliminary Report"](#) (May 2004)

Some IDPs are left out of the return process (2006)

- Some IDPs did not return home because they did not receive the return package or this was inadequate
- Some IDPs were not registered to receive the return package and thus were unable to return
- Some of the IDPs registered to obtain the return package did not receive because absent at the time of the distribution
- Some IDPs were unable to leave the camps due to insufficient transportation assistance

The IDP Camp Closure Assessment report determined that a total of 28,753 persons were living in the former camps as of 9 May 2006, including just over 16,000 who were part of the 314,000 listed on WFP's logs during the return process.

JRS, 21 December 2006, pp. 22-23

"Former IDPs who were not able to return to their communities of origin gave two main reasons to explain why they still live in the former IDP camps: not having received return assistance at all or having received return assistance that proved inadequate to get them home.

The Registration Process

The first category of persons who could not return home are those who did not receive the return package. In its study, UNHCR reported, "In a significant number of former camps, individuals told the team that they remain there because they did not receive a repatriation package," confirming the situation JRS encountered. The following various reasons shed light on why these individuals did not receive any assistance.

First, there are those who were not registered to receive the return package. To qualify for the return package, IDPs initially had to have been registered by the camp management committees between September 2003 and February 2004. It was during this period that the vast majority of IDPs moved to the camps, having come from Monrovia and the surroundings communities during the last phase of the war. For those IDPs arriving after February 2004, a second registration exercise was conducted the following August by the Liberian Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC), WFP and their implementing partners. This second exercise, which was also known as the "Consolidation of IDP Camps", was held between August and September 2004. As part of this exercise, a census based on the number of IDP shelters was carried out. Huts classified as "unoccupied", "damaged / abandoned", "under-construction" or "non-existent" were disqualified from the WFP feeding log. According to UNHCR, "Upon completion of the exercise a decrease of 13,918 beneficiaries was recorded".

Among the IDPs living at the site of the former camps today are those whose huts were withdrawn from the WFP log during that second registration period. Many of them spoke of the conditions under which that second registration exercise occurred. They described how the census coincided with the May-September rainy season, whose heavy rains damaged some shelters to the point that they appeared uninhabitable despite still housing displaced Liberians. According to those met for example in Wilson camp or in Perry camp, many houses were thus disqualified, resulting in the loss of access to services for residents who were technically IDPs.

In addition, interviewers encountered cases of people still living at the former camp sites, like in Maimu I, II and III, Salala, Tumutu, E.J Yancee or Blamasseh, who had been absent from the camps when the 'consolidation' exercises took place, as well as cases of those who had arrived in the IDP camps after the second registration process was completed. Consequently, neither of these two categories of residents were recognised as IDPs even though some originate from the main regions of displacement in Liberia. Like other IDPs, they reported not being able to return home due to a lack of means.

Distribution of the Return Package

Other IDPs remaining at the site of the former camps were registered on the WFP log but did not receive the return package. Some of these individuals claimed that they were not in the camps when the distribution took place.

There are also cases of displaced persons who, according to UNHCR, "allegedly received only part of the return assistance". This may be explained by the way in which the return packages were distributed. Occasional shortages of certain goods allegedly prevented WFP from distributing all the items in the return package at the same time.

Cost of Transportation

Finally, there is the category of IDPs who received the whole return package but who were unable to leave the area due to insufficient transportation assistance. According to them, the transportation allowance they received did not enable them to pay for the trip home. This is especially true for people who live far from the former camps and in counties difficult to access. "

Resettlement

Some IDPs decide to remain at the camp sites (2006)

- Some IDPs decided to stay at the camp sites for three main reasons
- Intermarriages encouraged the development of family ties with the local communities the camp sites
- Camps were close to services that are not otherwise available in the area of origin
- Some IDPs no longer had family ties in their community of origin
- Some IDPs returned to the former camp areas after having seen the difficulties of rebuilding their lives in their original home communities

JRS, 21 December 2006, pp. 16-18

"Reasons for Remaining at the Site of the Camps

Former IDPs offer three main reasons why they want either to stay at the camp sites or to integrate into nearby local communities: intermarriage, proximity to basic services, and absence of family ties in return areas.

Intermarriages

A small number of IDPs have developed family ties with the local surrounding communities through marriage. These IDPs preferred to stay with their spouse rather than return to their community of origin.

Proximity to Basic Services

One of the main reasons given by Liberians choosing to stay at the site of the former camps is their close proximity to services that are not available in their region of origin. The IDP camps were settled along the two main roads leading to Monrovia: the road coming from the North, which passes through Bong and Margibi Counties, and the road from the West going through Montserrado County. Staying in the camps is a way to remain connected to the capital, especially for IDPs coming from counties that have few means of communication, such as Grand Cape Mount, Lofa or Gbarpolu Counties. Monrovia, with its hospitals, universities, schools, and businesses, remains the center of attraction in a country¹⁶ where the little infrastructure that existed before the war has been all but destroyed.

Indeed, the lack or poor quality of basic services in the regions of return is widely reported by former IDPs as a reason to stay in the camps. Specifically, some families with school age children have decided to stay in the camps to allow their children to complete the school year. Many complained about repatriations that took place in the middle of the academic year. Some of them might have returned in August, after the closure of schools for the summer break. Other families have decided to integrate into local communities because of the lack of schools in their regions of origin. For instance, there are no secondary schools in the Suehn-Mecca District of Bomi County, one of the counties that is now home to most of the returnees in Liberia. Some of the families that were interviewed said they plan on staying at the former camp sites until their children finish school. Meanwhile, there are also families who have returned to their homes and have left behind children at the camps. The vast majority of these families have teenagers in higher school. The students typically stay with a relative or a friend and attend schools in the local community near the camp.

Former IDPs also cite the absence of appropriate health services in home regions as a reason to stay in the camps. Again, the proximity to Monrovia hospitals, or to Phebe Hospital in the case of people remaining in camps in Bong County, is a factor promoting the integration of former IDPs into the local host community.

A final group of Liberians have chosen to stay in the camps due to financial constraints, having learned from other returnees that their house back home is uninhabitable yet finding in their current situation that they have no means to rebuild.

Absence of Family Ties in Return Areas

Some IDPs chose to stay in former camp areas because they no longer have any relatives living in their home community. As UNHCR notes in its report, "These individuals considered themselves to be alone either in the camp, in the areas of return, or indeed in both locations." Family solidarity becomes particularly important for survival in rural areas that are dependent on a subsistence lifestyle. Without that guarantee of support, few are willing to risk going back. This is even more true for vulnerable people, i.e. the elderly, single mothers or the disabled, who prefer to stay in the former camps rather than return to a region where they have no one to assist them. At least in the camps, they remain close to the hospitals in Monrovia.

Cases of IDPs Who Came Back After Returning Home

Among the different profiles of individuals who still live in the former IDP camps are those who had gone back to their places of origin but who have since returned to the camps. People in this group, whom interviewers could meet for example in Salala and Perry camps, complained about difficulties in rebuilding their lives in the areas of return. These individuals were often critical of the return assistance they received, which they noted lacked farming tools and seeds. They would typically leave their families behind in the camps while they evaluated the situation in their community of origin. When they came back to the camp to collectively weigh their options, many decided to stay put in the camp. There they had grown used to a certain lifestyle, they knew how to make ends meet and they expected to be able to get approval from the landowner to build a house and start farming."

Bomi county is chosen as a resettlement option (2006)

JRS, 21 December 2006, pp.27-28

"In Bomi County, the situation is a bit different. For starters, there are more new residents in the local communities of Bomi than in Lofa. This is mainly due to Bomi's closer proximity to former camps. Some of those who could not afford to reach their areas of origin opted to settle in Bomi. Similarly, those who no longer had relatives in their places of birth or whose houses were seriously damaged in the war preferred to move to Bomi. Another compelling advantage over Lofa County was Bomi's shorter distance to Monrovia, which allows for easier access to the capital's many services.

There were some similarities between the two counties though. Most notably, relationships formed in the camps played a major role in decisions of resettling. For married couples originating from different communities, one spouse might end up returning to the other's community of origin. Likewise, friends or neighbors might invite those they met in the camps to continue their acquaintance back at their home town or village."

Policy

Sustained return requires protection and community recovery activities – UN Action Plan (November 2004)

- An Action Plan for the Return and Reintegration of IDPs in Liberia was formulated by the Joint Planning Team in November 2004, based on the Liberian government's resettlement and reintegration strategy
- The Action Plan outlines the support role of the UN and humanitarian partners in facilitating IDP return and reintegration between November 2004 and October 2005
- The Plan emphasises the need for both protection and community recovery activities in order to ensure confidence in the return process and its sustainability

JPT, November 2004

“The objective of this Action Plan is to outline the support to be provided by United Nations (UN) agencies and humanitarian partners in assisting the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) to facilitate the voluntary, safe and dignified return and reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) between November 2004 and October 2005. It is intended to identify in broad terms the priority needs to be addressed in the return and reintegration process; the response plans of UN agencies and humanitarian partners for meeting those needs; the gaps between the needs and response which require further elaboration or else additional capacity and resources.

This Action Plan is guided by the strategy and principles contained in the National Community Resettlement and Reintegration Strategy (hereinafter National Reintegration Strategy), adopted in June 2004 by the Results Focused Transitional Framework Working Committee (RWC3) for the Displaced Population. As such, it is based on the premise that the return of the internally displaced should occur in a manner that is voluntary, safe and dignified but also sustainable and conducive to the effective reintegration and recovery of other war-affected segments of the Liberian population including returning refugees, ex-combatants and those living in communities of return.

It is a working document that will be updated and revised by the Joint Planning Team (JPT) as the situation on the ground develops. Donors are urged to use this and future versions of the Action Plan to assist them in setting priorities and accelerating the disbursement of resources.

Fundamentals of Sustained Return in Liberia – Protection and Community Recovery

This Action Plan places particular emphasis on protection and community recovery activities. Security and safety are major concerns for the displaced and as such the establishment of a comprehensive nationwide system of monitoring and reporting, combined with timely and effective interventions when required, is fundamental to ensuring confidence in the return process and its sustainability. Furthermore, the Plan recognizes the pivotal role that Liberian authorities will play in ensuring that the return is durable. It calls for the International Community to support the Government of Liberia in the receiving communities and capacity building in key areas such as the judiciary, police, civil administration and other government organs that traditionally support a society.

Similarly, community-recovery activities that address the immediate needs of returnees, particularly in the counties of Lofa and Bomi from which most of the displaced originate, serve the same purpose in terms of ensuring sustained return. They also provide a much-needed incentive

for people to leave the camps, either with the assistance of the international community or spontaneously. Indeed, it is widely held that increased focus on community recovery activities in areas of return, particularly in the counties of Lofa and Bomi, will provide an important impetus for spontaneous returns.

Overview of the Target Population

After fourteen years of civil war, approximately 450,000 Liberians remain internally displaced. An estimated 280,000 IDPs live in 24 formal camps where, due to funding constraints, they receive some protection and decreasing levels of food and other assistance from UN agencies and NGOs. An additional 20,000 IDPs live in spontaneous settlements or informal camps where they receive minimal levels of assistance. A further 150,000 IDPs are believed to live in host communities around the country and are not directly assisted by the international community.

Facilitated Returns

On the basis of current and anticipated resources, preparations are being made to facilitate the voluntary return of approximately 100,000 IDPs during a first return phase from November 2004 to the end of the dry season in 2005. The majority of these are expected to come from among the 280,000 IDPs in the 24 formal camps and who are returning to the counties of Grand Cape Mount, Bomi, Margibi and Gbapolou. A second phase of facilitated returns to additional counties that have been or will, in due course, be declared safe will commence in January or February 2005 and will be reflected in future revisions of this Action Plan.

Spontaneous Returns

In addition to facilitated returns, there are large numbers of IDPs who have either already returned or would be prepared to return sooner rather than later and without transport assistance from the international community. Many of these will require and expect to be provided with the return assistance package when distributed in the county to which they have returned.

Camp Support, Consolidation and Closure

Facilitated and ongoing spontaneous returns will allow the consolidation and closure of some of the IDP camps, the modalities of which are now being established. At the same time, it is unrealistic to assume that all IDPs will return between November 2004 and May 2005. As such, there will be an ongoing need to provide protection and assistance to a diminishing camp population. Such support will be required up to and possibly beyond the end of the rainy season in October 2005 when the process of facilitated returns can recommence.

Return and Reintegration Activities

UN agencies and humanitarian partners will implement a broad range of activities outlined in this Action Plan which, in line with the National Reintegration Strategy, are considered in terms of the following categories:

- Protection monitoring, reporting and intervention.
- Mass information campaign.
- Transport and logistics.
- Return assistance – food, non-food items and shelter.
- Community-based recovery – health, education, WATSAN, livelihood support
- Capacity-building to local and host communities
- Camp support, consolidation and closure.

Funding

Liberia is at a critical juncture. UN agencies and humanitarian partners face severe funding constraints that prevent the implementation of community recovery and other activities aimed at meeting the immediate needs of returnees, such as distributions of seeds and tools. This limits both the incentive for people to return but also the possibilities of sustaining them should they do so. Ultimately it means that resources that might contribute to community recovery are used instead to support the displaced in camps where they face ongoing deprivation and exposure to extreme levels of sexual violence and exploitation.”

Facilitated IDP return to take place according to new government strategy (June 2004)

- Under the government strategy, conditions must be conducive to the "safe return and sustainable reintegration of displaced Liberians"
- Areas of return must be officially declared "safe" according to various criteria relating to general security, restoration of state authority, humanitarian access and spontaneous returns
- Registered IDPs in camps are to receive resettlement and reintegration assistance
- Unregistered IDPs are to receive benefits through community-based assistance

GoL, 2 June 2004

“1.2.1 Objectives:

- To support the resettlement and reintegration of internally displaced, refugees and ex-combatants to return voluntarily, in safety, and with dignity, to their homes or habitual place of residence, or location of their choice and to strengthen their livelihood security and promote reconciliation.
- To generate conditions and support mechanisms, in a coordinated and structured manner.
- To develop an environment conducive to return and the successful and sustainable reintegration and recovery.
- To give emphasis on an integrated approach that is designed to avoid disparities between different categories displaced persons, whether IDPs, non-IDP poor, ex-combatants, waraffected communities or returnees from abroad.
- To assist the majority of displaced persons to regain their areas of habitual residence before the 2005 elections, thus enabling the population to participate in the democratic process;
- To promote national recovery that fosters peace and stability and lays the foundation for medium and long-term development.

1.2.2 Return and Reintegration Principles:

The community resettlement and Reintegration strategy is based on the following principles;

- All humanitarian action should be undertaken in line with universal humanitarian values including principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and without discrimination factoring in the reality that while all in need are entitled to assistance, degrees of assistance vary depending upon the circumstances of the individual or population;
- The NTGL has the primary duty and responsibility to generate the conditions conducive to the safe return and sustainable re-integration of displaced Liberians including facilitating discussions between the different war affected populations;
- Returnee, IDPs and receiving communities should participate in a representative and meaningful manner in the planning and organization of return and reintegration activities;
- Special measures should be taken to avoid disparities and distinctions that could be perceived as discriminatory or provoke tensions between different groups, returnees (IDPs, returnees, excombatants) or the settled community.

- Support for the settled community and returnees should be provided as part of an integrated package that is community-focused and within the context of the RFTF and supports a longterm vision of sustainable recovery.
- Special measures should be taken to minimize the negative impact on host communities of closing IDP camps without proper phase-out and rehabilitation inputs.
- Support for return and reintegration activities should be closely coordinated with all relevant actors involved in this process and should be undertaken in a manner that targets intended beneficiaries, avoids gaps and duplication, and maximizes use of available resources.
- Resettlement and reintegration programmes for IDPs, refugees and ex-combatants are integrated as far as possible
- Every effort will be made to ensure that there is close co-ordination of all aspects of assistance for the resettlement process to ensure appropriate targeting and efficient use of resources
- Return and reintegration activities should be closely monitored, reviewed, and modified in a wellcoordinated and transparent manner so that the best interests of the intended beneficiaries reflects informed decision-making and subsequent interventions.
- Attention should be given to past inter-group conflicts and the unique experiences of the different war affected populations promoting reconciliation in all actions.
- Special attention will be given to children, youth and people with disability in resettlement and reintegration programs.

[...]

2.3 Declaration of Safe Areas:

2.3.1 Security Assessment Committee for Resettlement (SACR)

In line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the NTGL and the UN will only facilitate resettlement into areas that have been declared safe for resettling IDPs and returnees. To assess whether an area can be declared safe, a two-tiered system will be developed at the County and National-levels. The basis for any organized resettlement movement will be an authoritative decision that the security situation in the resettlement area has been re-established to a satisfactory level.

For this purpose, the Security Assessment Committee for Resettlement (SACR) will be set-up in order to assess the security situation in every County/District and to inform RWC3 and all other stakeholders. The Executive Director of LRRRC will be the Chairman of the SACR.. The SACR, based on information and deliberations received from the respective CRAC and other sources, will be solely responsible to decide whether and where organized resettlement activities can commence.

The SACR will undertake the following activities:

- Develop a set of objective criteria through which the County Resettlement Assessment Committees will assess the safety of Districts for resettlement
- Review the outcomes and recommendations made by County Resettlement Assessment Committees
- Endorse or reject with reasons, the recommendations made by the County Resettlement Assessment Committees as to the Districts they have deemed safe for resettlement.
- Upon areas declared safe it is the responsibility of the chairperson to inform the County Resettlement Assessment Committees and County Resettlement and Reintegration committee of their decisions. This information should also be made public.

SACR will continue to meet until such a time as all Districts have been declared safe and that, following this, a sufficient period of time has elapsed for the committee to have confidence that resettlement has occurred both safely and securely.

[...]

2.3.2 Criteria and Benchmarks for Security Assessment

The Security Assessment Committee for Resettlement will deliberate whether the following criteria for resettlement in a specifically defined County/District has been met:

a) General Security

Security is a state of affairs whereby the resident population in a given area can live free of fear of being harassed, injured, kidnapped, forced against their will, or even killed by armed individuals and groups.

Security benchmarks for safe return will include :

- Full deployment of UNMIL along main roads and in major towns
- Regular static and mobile UNMIL patrols in all other areas
- Disarmament of all previously armed Liberian elements (AFL, government militias, police, LURD, MODEL, and others)
- General absence of hostilities
- Few, if any reports on security incidents

b) Restoration of State Authority

Restoration of state authority at the county and district level will remain a high priority for NTGL, this will further enhance the confidence of displaced people to return to their original homes. Key benchmarks are:

- Presence of superintendents at county level
- Growing presence of Development Superintendents
- Presence of commissioners at district level
- Reopening of police stations,
- Reopening, on-going rehabilitation or plans for rehabilitation of courts and prisons factoring in adequate human resource capacity
- Reopening basic public services such as schools and hospitals
- Visible activities of civil administration, including FDA, LRRRC, NCDDRR
- Return of traditional chiefs

c) Unhindered access of Relief and Development Agencies

Free and unhindered access of relief and development co-ordination to the needy population would include ;

- Deployment of UN agencies and NGOs to various field locations
- Presence of agencies supporting the population in improving basic services (Education, Water, Sanitation Health) and access to shelter
- Existence (or creation) of community structures to support relief/social services"
- Existence of Food distribution mechanism and supply of agriculture inputs
- Community Empowerment projects aimed at supporting self-reliance.

d) Assessing Spontaneous Returns

The presence of sizeable numbers of spontaneous returnees can be regarded as a sign that living conditions are in the process of returning to normal. The CRAC and SACR might consider any other issue brought to its attention, in particular issues relating to peace, security and inter-communal relations.

The Terms of Reference for the both committees are presented in Annex 1 and 2 .

2.3.3 Policy on non-accessible and Insecure areas

- Registered IDPs and displaced returnees whose district of origin is deemed unsafe for resettlement will retain the right to accommodation and support services within a camp environment or in other safe resettlement areas.
- SACR will not facilitate return to insecure resettlement areas. Registered IDPs spontaneously resettling into insecure areas will not benefit from any targeted resettlement assistance.
- In areas yet to be declared safe for resettlement, assistance can be provided by humanitarian agencies according to need and accessibility. Spontaneously resettling IDPs may benefit from community-based interventions being provided. But they will not have access to the same return/resettlement packages that will be provided alongside facilitated return.

[...]

Fourteen years of intermittent conflict in Liberia has created several categories of beneficiaries that require reintegration assistance. Past experience has taught us that the RR strategy ensures that assistance is targeted to covers all needy populations in order to consolidate peace and community cohesion. Thus, the categories to be supported in this RR strategy include:

- Registered IDPs in the Camps
- Unregistered IDPs living with the communities.
- Refugee and Returnees
- Host and receiving communities
- Ex combatants and their dependents
- Persons with special needs

3.1 Registered IDPs in Camps

This category of displaced persons estimated at 260,000 consists of IDPs who have been verified in the IDP survey, and are currently receiving assistance in recognized IDP camps in Montserrado, Margibi, and Bong Counties.

When their respective district of origin is declared safe for resettlement, these IDPs will receive resettlement and reintegration assistance, which is described in detail in Section 4. This will include transportation assistance and the receipt of a resettlement packages and assistance directed towards the promotion of community-based activities; with a view to strengthening existing social infrastructure and sustainable livelihoods in the areas of return. This may be in the form of employment-based safety-net programmes that benefits from community rehabilitation and reconstruction targeted at basic service provision and income generation.

3.2 Unregistered IDPs Living in the Communities

Many IDPs live within the community particularly in urban areas. The unregistered IDPs will receive benefit from community based assistance. In cases where there is clear evidence of unregistered IDPs being resident in a camp for a reasonable period of time, then transport assistance may be provided to support their return to areas of origin or resettlement. This will be undertaken separately from the transport assistance provided to registered IDPs and returnees. No other targeted, resettlement assistance will be provided. Given the drive to phase-down IDP camps and support resettlement, the NTGL does not support the registration of new caseloads, unless there is a significant new displacement of people.

Unregistered IDPs may receive assistance that is geared towards the promotion of community-based activities thereby strengthening existing socio-economic infrastructure and livelihoods. This could include, for example, entry onto seeds and tools programmes and/or other employment-based safety net / income generating schemes.

Provision of food aid to vulnerable groups within this category may be provided through school feeding programmes, VGF rations in cases of food insecurity and in cases where there is acute malnutrition, therapeutic feeding. The needs for such interventions will be determined through food security and nutritional monitoring. Similarly, they may also be supported with non-food assistance.”

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

General

Reintegration of returnees benefits from improved road conditions but challenges remain (2007)

- Road rehabilitation projects have improved humanitarian access in Lofa county
- Other road projects are, however, behind schedule because of delays in the implementation or due to heavy rainy season
- Humanitarian air service is invaluable given road conditions

UNMIL, 24 June 2007

"Rehabilitation of the Voinjama–Zorzor and Voinjama–Foya routes has been completed, and the roads are expected to be officially opened soon. Humanitarian agencies lauded the project as successful in improving road access in Lofa County. The also vital Kolahun – Vahun road is expected to be completed in a month's time.

The improvement in the road condition in these previously difficult to access areas is a welcomed improvement, as it will boost the reintegration of returnees in Lofa County. Yet, despite this success in Lofa County, other road projects either are behind schedule because of delays in implementation or have been halted due to the heavy rains. Areas in the southeast of the country are increasingly becoming difficult to access due to the deteriorating road condition. The key Harper to Fish Town route is still in poor condition and, in the absence of plans to rehabilitate it, will continue to pose a serious impediment to road travel to southeast Liberia."

EU, 2 February 2007, p. 7

"Needs for a humanitarian air service

Humanitarian workers in Liberia need to have access to their areas of work, but large sections of the road network are damaged and regularly completely closed during the rainy season. This is particularly the case in Lofa, Nimba, River Gee and Maryland where most of DG ECHO partners are present. Because there are no commercial companies with domestic flights, the only alternative is the UNMIL flight service. Since 2004, DG ECHO has funded a regional humanitarian air service in order to guarantee humanitarian access in the sub-region. In 2006, this air service which is managed by WFP transported around 750 persons per month from UN agencies, international NGOs and donors. Given the fact that 2007 will remain an important year in terms of humanitarian operations in Liberia with many actors present in the field, and given the extremely bad conditions of the road infrastructures, an air transport service needs to be maintained."

Poor road network is major impediment to humanitarian access and IDP return (2005)

- Poor roads and bridges make many rural areas inaccessible for both humanitarian actors and for communities to access markets

- While improved security has made humanitarian access possible throughout Liberia, issues such as incomplete reintegration of ex-combatants may impede access in future

UN, 30 November 2005

"The state of Liberia's road network is a severe hindrance for humanitarian programmes and the revitalisation of the economy. Poor roads and bridges, exacerbated by heavy seasonal rains, leave many rural areas in Liberia inaccessible. This situation affects the ability of communities to access markets and basic social services, delaying the revitalisation of these communities and their prospects for self-sufficiency. Likewise humanitarian actors are restricted in their ability to access isolated communities to provide basic social services or emergency relief. The state of the roads also impedes the returns process.

The stability and improvement in the security situation has made humanitarian access possible to all parts of Liberia. Nonetheless, there are security issues that may impede access in the future, notably outstanding reintegration of ex-combatants, unresolved ethnic tensions and property disputes. The lack of access may have led to a skewed and inequitable distribution of humanitarian action, but this is difficult to discern given the lack of reliable data from inaccessible areas."

Increased UNMIL deployment helps to improve humanitarian access (2004)

- Security has continued to improve with the increased deployment of UNMIL troops and greatly improved humanitarian access
- Indicative of general humanitarian expansion in the country, WFP opened seven new sub-offices in late 2004
- Logistical problems such as bad roads and general lack of infrastructure continue to hamper humanitarian access

UNMIL, 6 October 2004

"In the port town of Buchanan, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Abou Moussa, announced the opening of seven World Food Program (WFP) sub-offices. This is a result of the full deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) which now enables the humanitarian agencies to expand their activities throughout the country.

[...]

He noted the opening of WFP field offices in rural Liberia represents a milestone in UN's efforts to bring the providers of aid closer to their beneficiaries. Furthermore, the expanded network of field offices would significantly assist the return of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), ex-combatants and host communities who absorb them.

Mr. Justin Bagirishya, the WFP Representative in Liberia, announced that the UN agency had received \$5.1 million of the \$6.6 million it needed to feed beneficiaries through the end of the year. He thanked donors for positively responding to WFP's appeal for funds which currently provides food assistance to an estimated 650,000 persons per day. This number is expected to increase to one million next year due to the ongoing repatriation and resettlement of refugees and IDPs.

[...]

The WFP Representative outlined a number of priorities for the future, which include repatriation and resettlement, school feeding, and vulnerability assessment and mapping. He said WFP, in

collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), would emphasize the need for self-sufficiency by providing seeds and tools.

WFP field offices are operationing in Saclepea, Nimba County, Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County, Harper, Maryland County, Voinjama, Lofa County, and Tubmanburg, Bomi County.”

UN, 15 June 2004

“When the CAP was launched at the end of 2003 it was stated that an improvement in the security situation was seen as the single most important prerequisite for an improved humanitarian situation. As of 10 May 2004, UNMIL had deployed over 14,000 military personnel, military observers, civilian police as well as a civilian support component to all counties except the southeastern part of the country. While this has seen checkpoints being dismantled, a decrease in the number of weapons in circulation and regular military and police patrols, as importantly it has also meant that humanitarian access has begun to improve over recent months. So far nine counties have been downgraded from Phase V to Phase IV allowing United Nations (UN) agencies to extend humanitarian assistance to previously inaccessible parts of the country. UN agencies have also begun to establish offices in Gbarnga, Saclepea, Zwedru, Voinjama, Bopulu and Buchanan. However, security phases remain at Phase V in seven counties including Maryland, Grand Kru, and Lofa, which has hindered the ability of UN agencies to deploy to these areas; areas that are expecting a large return population. Due to security reasons, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) staff are covering Maryland from Grand Gedeh County and Voinjama from Gbarnga in Bong County. It is important to note that access and delivery of humanitarian assistance will be constrained in the coming months due to the onset of the rainy season. Agencies are already reporting that parts of the road to Zwedru and Harper are deteriorating and that some of the bridges on secondary roads in bad condition might be washed away.”

N.B. In July 2004, all of Liberia was declared UN phase 4 security areas

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

National response

Government's actions must show visible results (2007)

Liberia has made significant progress in consolidating peace and democracy. The country is on the right track towards economic recovery, sustainable growth and longer-term stability, but huge challenges still remain. The long-standing constraints of weak national response capacity and limited humanitarian access due to endemic insecurity and poor infrastructure have improved. Restoration of basic services in areas of return and generation of employment opportunities remain at the top of the government's list of priorities, but visible progress is still limited.

After years as a pariah state during the rule of Charles Taylor, the free and fair elections held in October 2005 provided the first essential step towards restoring Liberia's credibility. More than one year after the election of the first female head of state in Africa, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's government has impressed international donors with its efforts to achieve financial accountability. In a country where donor assistance has been undermined by "corrupt diversion and political manipulation of aid" (K. Savage, April 2007), this newly-acquired image helped to enable considerable progress on the issue of debt relief and debt reduction at the Liberia Partners Forum in February 2007 (UN News, 16 February 2007). Having been up to \$3.7 billion in debt, Liberia was able to secure a US offer for debt relief, soon to be followed by several other countries (IRIN, 14 February 2007). The Government also received positive feedback on the implementation of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme, a three-year anti-corruption plan drafted and imposed by key donors in 2005, and on its interim poverty reduction strategy, which highlights the challenges for the transition from relief to development (GoL, January 2006). Finally, in "recognition of the progress made by Liberia", the UN Security Council lifted a six-year old ban on diamond exports in April 2007, even though the diamond mining is to be legalised again only after the government introduces an effective monitoring system (UN SC, 27 April 2007; IRIN, 5 June 2007).

Considerable efforts have also been made to addressing the deep-rooted problem of impunity, most notably with the June 2006 transfer of Charles Taylor to The Hague to face a UN Special Court's charges of war crimes committed during the conflict in neighbouring Sierra Leone, and the launch of Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, again in June 2006 (IRIN, 5 June 2006). However, as Amnesty International has warned, there are both political and practical challenges in addressing impunity in Liberia (AI, 15 February 2007). Politically, the pervasive culture of violence during the 14 years of conflict has left the political class compromised, with current Members of Parliament facing allegations of human rights abuses; practically, the work of the Commission is hampered by the difficulties of operating in a context of post-war reconstruction and by a chronic lack of funding.

Liberia still faces massive reconstruction and development challenges, and humanitarian support is still essential in principle areas of return such as Lofa and Bomi counties. With some 500,000 displaced people having returned or resettled in areas where basic services including provision of drinking water, healthcare and education are critically inadequate, the situation remains fragile (UN SC, 15 March 2007). Constant tangible improvements are necessary for the government to continue enjoying people's support given the length of time that the task of rebuilding Liberia will take (BBC, 16 January 2007; NRC, 31 December 2006), but the path will not be smooth; while

the government faces damaging allegations of corruption by the country's auditor general (BBC, 21 June 2007) and legal procedures get underway against alleged coup plotters (BBC, 21 July 2007), steps "critical to the consolidation of peace in the country are yet to be completed, including the reintegration of ex-combatants, the resettlement of returnees, the reform of the judiciary and the extension of the rule of law throughout the country" (UN SC, 15 March 2007).

International response

Positive reviews and outstanding challenges for the cluster approach (2007)

The UN manages the humanitarian response in Liberia through UNMIL. Having absorbed the office of the Humanitarian Coordinator, UNMIL has maintained since the beginning of 2003 a fully integrated structure, led by the Special Representative of the Secretary General.

In 2006, in order to help Liberia's new government meet its responsibility to assist and protect both returning IDPs and the "residual" IDPs still living in camps or in public buildings, the international humanitarian community in the country reorganised in line with the global humanitarian reform process to overcome a legacy of weak, confusing coordination mechanisms and bitter divisions, particularly between the UNMIL and humanitarian agencies (A. Davies, M. Murray, October 2005).

The 2006 introduction in Liberia of the new cluster approach – whereby clear responsibilities have been assigned to lead organisations at sector level in order to strengthen the accountability and predictability of humanitarian response – appears to have addressed at least some of the previous coordination problems, helped also by the creation of an Inter-Agency Standing Committee country team including non-UN organisations. UNHCR, which had already played a key role in the IDP return process in Liberia, assumed cluster lead for camp management, emergency shelter and protection (UNHCR, 21 April 2006). As part of its new responsibilities UNHCR elaborated both a camp closure and a protection strategy, which established a monitoring framework mechanism in camps and areas of return.

Despite concerns voiced by some international NGOs over the risks of undermining the UN-NGO relationship and the "humanitarian space" (X. Zeebroek, July 2006; IASC, 26 October 2006), the cluster approach has received positive reviews. The results of UNHCR's real-time evaluation presented in June 2007 show that there is "strong participation by all actors and good leadership in the Liberia cluster approach" (UNHCR, 24 July 2007). It is further noted that the designation of cluster leads has given legitimacy, accountability and predictability to the operational responses and that there is an excellent cooperation between the international community, the government and the NGO community. The availability of funds has been crucial to UNHCR's ability to provide a coordination role, whereas for other cluster leads the central emergency response fund (CERF) has played an essential support role. The previous emergency response fund in Liberia had directed the largest share of funds to support the activity of local NGOs, but it was closed at the end of 2005 despite the dissent of some of the beneficiaries (UN OCHA, January 2007). Inter-cluster coordination is clearly of crucial importance to avoid overlaps and make certain that all the gaps are accounted for.

Although the situation in Liberia is considered to be improving, and no Consolidated Appeal Process is planned for 2007, several challenges still face the international response. The Common Humanitarian Action Plan, launched in February 2007 to provide a bridging fund for humanitarian activities during the transition from emergency to recovery and development, had

received little over one third of its funding requirements (\$45.9 million of an estimated total of \$117 million) by 21 July 2007 (UNMIL, 23 July 2007). In order to avoid gaps in the provision of assistance, continued funding must be ensured while the role of the UNDP-led early recovery cluster must be expanded, especially as some of the humanitarian actors begin to withdraw or scale down their operations (UNMIL, 17 June 2007; UNMIL, 10 June 2007).

References to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

Known references to the Guiding Principles

- References to the Guiding Principles in the national legislation
- Other references to the Guiding Principles (in chronological order)
- Availability of the Guiding Principles in local languages
- Training on the Guiding Principles (in chronological order)

References to the Guiding Principles in the national legislation

Official adoption of the Guiding Principles by Chairman Gyude Bryant on behalf of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), coinciding with the launch of facilitated IDP returns at Perry Town, Monrovia. "Recognising that the NTGL has the foremost authority and responsibility for IDPs within Liberia's borders....., determined to foster a legal and institutional framework in Liberia that can make use of the guidance provided by the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.....the NTGL does hereby adopt... the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement to serve as a source of ongoing guidance and reference for the protection, dignity and rights of IDPs."
Date: 8 November 2004
Documents: Instrument of Adoption UNMIL press release, 8 November 2004

Other references to the Guiding Principles

National Community Resettlement and Reintegration Strategy: "In line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the National Transitional Government of Liberia and the UN will only facilitate resettlement inot areas that have been declared safe for resettling IDPs and returnees....."
Source: Government of Liberia (Liberian Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission)
Date: 2 June 2004
Documents: Liberia Government National Community Resettlement and Reintegration Strategy, 2 June 2004

LRRRC Draft IDP Camp Management Guidelines: "Internally Displaced Persons shall enjoy, in full equality, the same rights and freedom as provided for under the Humanitarian Charter, the UN Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement and other international and domestic instruments. The Humanitarian Charter and the UN Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement

reaffirm the fundamental importance of three key principles on internal displacement: The right to life with dignity The distinction between combatants and non-combatants The right to be protected against forcible return to or resettlement in any place where their life, safety and liberty and/or health would be at risk."
Source: Liberian Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC)
Date: October 2001
Documents: Included in the NRC Training Report October 2001

Availability of the Guiding Principles in local languages

None

Training on the Guiding Principles

NRC training workshop: The Global IDP Project of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), in collaboration with the Liberian government ministry responsible for the protection and assistance of refugees, returnees and IDPs (Liberian Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission, LRRRC), held a 3-day training workshop on the Guiding Principles in Monrovia, Liberia. The workshop was part of a global NRC effort to disseminate and explain the Guiding Principles to representatives of governments, NGOs, the UN agencies and the displaced themselves, in order to ensure better protection and assistance to internally displaced persons. A total of 48 participants attended the workshop, more than 25 of whom had travelled to Monrovia from the provinces.
Sources: LRRRC, other government agencies, national and international NGOs, UN agencies, IDP community representatives
Date: 23-25 October 2001
Document: Report of the Training Workshop on the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, NRC, 23-25 October 2001

OCHA IDP Unit training workshop: On the recommendation of the Protection Coalition, the OCHA IDP Unit organised an IDP workshop in Monrovia, in October 2002. Government officials as well as UN Country Team members were given training on the Guiding Principles. Discussions focused on the implementation of the Principles in the Liberian context.
Sources: Government officials and UN Country Team members
Date: 1-4 October 2002
Document: As of November 2002, the workshop report was not yet available. For further information and updates, go to the website of the OCHA IDP Unit.

OCHA Protection Unit Workshop: With assistance from the UNDP funded Capacity Building and Promotion of Human Rights Awareness to Enhance Protection of Civilians with Special Focus on IDPs project, OCHA's protection unit organized a two-day training workshop for 40 journalist from the print and electronic media on 25 and 26 November, general protection of IDPs and the ethics of responsible journalism especially in handling protection issues. Training included sessions on international human rights law, international humanitarian law, basic humanitarian standards; the guiding principles on internal displacement and specific protection concerns including investigating alleged abuses against IDPs. The rationale on responsible journalism

~~purported to look into covering sensitive stories related to protection including issues of SGBV, witness/victim confidentiality and journalistic responsibility towards the alleged. Also addressed at the workshop were the challenges facing journalists in adequately and viably reporting stories with a humanitarian context.~~

Sources: UN, OCHA

Date: 25-26 Novembre 2002

Document: For further information, go to the website of the OCHA IDP Unit.

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