

LIBERIA:

Future of returning IDPs is at critical juncture

A profile of the internal displacement situation

9 February, 2006

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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: future of returning IDPs is at critical juncture

Following Liberia's credible elections in October 2005 there may at last be real cause for optimism for the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by fourteen years of civil war. While the new government of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has been taking the first steps towards economic and security sector reform, IDPs and refugees have been continuing to return home in large numbers. In January 2006 the UN reported that less than 50,000 registered IDPs remained in camps – with some 270,000 already assisted to return to their home areas – and that facilitated IDP return was expected to be completed in April 2006. The presence of some 15,000 UNMIL peacekeepers has contributed towards the restoration of peace across the country. Yet huge challenges clearly remain. Years of conflict, compounded by acute mismanagement and poor governance, have devastated Liberia's infrastructure and economy, leaving it one of the poorest countries in the world. IDPs are returning to areas without basic social services or livelihood opportunities, in some cases causing them to drift back to camps or urban areas. Unknown numbers of unregistered IDPs continue to occupy public buildings in the capital Monrovia in often grim conditions. Protection concerns as well as urgent humanitarian needs still exist in camps as well as areas of return. Crucially, the reintegration and rehabilitation of ex-combatants is incomplete, largely due to funding constraints, which poses a risk to sustained peace and stability. The volatile political situation in the region, particularly in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, could also threaten the progress made so far. Not only will the new government in Liberia have to live up to its promises, but the international community will also have to remain seriously committed for as long as it takes to achieve sustainable reintegration and reconstruction. Anything less could presage a slide back to conflict and displacement on a massive scale.

Background and causes of displacement

Internal displacement in Liberia has been caused by the civil war that started in 1989. Charles Taylor, leading the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), launched an armed rebellion in the north of the country against the Samuel Doe regime. Fighting quickly reached the capital. In 1990 the Economic Community of West African States deployed a Nigerian-led peacekeeping mission (ECOMOG) to Liberia to restore order. ECOMOG's control did not extend beyond Monrovia, however, and the rest of the country was ruled by Taylor and other self-styled freedom fighters battling over the country's rich natural resources, principally timber and to a lesser extent diamonds. Taylor effectively controlled the Liberian countryside through the promotion of ethnic massacres and gross human rights violations. An estimated 150,000 people were killed and several hundred thousand internally displaced during the first phase of the conflict that lasted for seven years.

In 1997 Taylor won a landslide victory in the presidential contest, winning the legitimacy he craved through the ballot box. However, peace in Liberia was short-lived. Predictable problems quickly surfaced: factional and ethnic tensions continued across the country, exacerbated by Taylor's tendency to brutality and despotism, and only about half of the estimated 60,000 Liberian fighters had been disarmed by the ECOMOG peacekeeping force. Less than two years after the elections, Liberian dissidents based in Guinea attacked north-western Liberia. Fighting between government forces and the newly-formed rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) spread throughout much of the country, worsened by the appearance of another rebel movement in 2003, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), which launched attacks on border areas with 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, unprecedented international attention (UNHCR, 10 June 2003; CRS, 1 August 2003).

The arrival of West African troops in August 2003, followed by the deployment of UN peacekeepers (UNMIL), helped restore calm to Monrovia, although there were some reports of continuing insecurity and targeting of civilians, including rape and looting (DEC, 11 August 2003; UNHCR, 4 September 2003). Under huge international pressure, and surrounded by rebel forces, President Taylor went into exile in Nigeria in mid-August, handing over power temporarily to his vice-president, Moses Blah. In October 2003, Gyude Bryant was sworn in as new president to head a transitional government.

Despite these political changes, more fighting between Liberia's three armed factions – namely forces loyal to Charles Taylor, as well as LURD and MODEL – displaced thousands more civilians in central and northern Liberia towards the end of 2003 (UNHCR, 24 September 2003; UNOCHA, 2 October 2003; IRIN, 10 November 2003). Leadership disputes within the LURD rebel movement resulted in open violence on several occasions during 2004 (UN SC, 26 May 2004; IRIN, 4 August 2004). Despite the deployment of more than 15,000 UN peacekeepers, vast areas of the country remained beyond their control – with rebel fighters continuing to control key border crossings (IRIN, 17 August 2004). 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). Indeed, in 2005 ex-combatants awaiting rehabilitation and reintegration opportunities became increasingly volatile, rioting on several occasions in Monrovia and provincial towns (UN SC, 17 March 2005; IRIN, 13 May 2005). In a March 2005 report, Human Rights Watch cited evidence that hundreds of recently demobilised combatants, including children, had since at least November 2004 been re-recruited to fight in Côte d'Ivoire. Failures in disarmament processes in the region, it said, have contributed to the phenomenon of thousands of "regional warriors" who move from one West African conflict to the next, motivated largely by the promise of money and looting opportunities.

Elections held in October 2005 were deemed free and fair, despite some violent protests by supporters of the losing candidate George Weah. Some IDPs in camps also threatened to disrupt the elections unless they were assisted to return home in time to vote (IRIN, 15 September 2005), but this never materialised. Some political candidates reportedly tried to take advantage of this situation, promising assistance to return home in exchange for votes (RI, 22 July 2005). The National Elections Commission did amend polling regulations to enable IDPs who had registered to vote in their areas of origin but who had not managed to return to vote in the camps – but for President and Vice President only (NEC, 5 August 2005). Relatively few IDPs chose to vote anyway: out of 1.2 million people registered to vote, accounting for just over one third of the general population, only 5 per cent were IDPs – many of them disillusioned by Liberia's poor track record on elections. Three months after the first round of elections, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was inaugurated as president in January 2006 – the first African woman to achieve this position. She now faces the daunting task of rehabilitating a thoroughly devastated country and creating the conditions for sustainable return, for which she will need to ensure the long-term support of the international community.

Protection of displaced populations still an urgent need

IDPs in both camps and return areas have remained vulnerable to human rights violations – particularly teenage mothers, children and young girls. Reports of gender-based violence and abuse of minors have continued from all parts of the country, and girls as young as 12 are known to have turned to prostitution as a survival mechanism (UN, 30 November 2005). Returnee/displaced women and girls have been particularly at risk of rape and other forms of sexual violence by armed gangs and former militia members. Indeed, rape has been so pervasive

throughout the Liberian conflict that it has been described as a weapon of war (UNHCR, 12 August 2003).

A “badly planned disarmament and demobilisation process” as well as a “poorly designed reintegration assistance package” have been identified as posing possible protection risks for returning IDPs (Martin, 13 October 2004). In October 2005, Human Rights Watch once again reported that recently disarmed Liberian combatants – including children – were being recruited to fight on behalf of the government in neighbouring Côte d’Ivoire, perpetuating the regional cycle of conflict and displacement (HRW, 28 October 2005). At the same time the NGO Save the Children published a report focusing on strategies to prevent the recruitment of children into armed groups in West Africa, including the need to ensure that IDP camps provide safe havens for children and their families who are fleeing to avoid the fighting forces (Save the Children Alliance, 10 October 2005).

In the run-up to the October 2005 elections, human rights organisations warned that while some progress had been made during the transitional period, Liberia’s prospects for peace continued to face numerous threats, including an incomplete demobilisation programme, the widespread availability of small arms, a culture of impunity, endemic corruption and mismanagement, a weak judicial system, ethnic discrimination and crushing poverty. Rights organisations called on the new government to urgently address these issues, particularly judicial reform (AI, 19 September 2005; HRW, 30 September 2005).

In December 2005 new legislation made rape illegal for the first time in Liberia, with rapists facing anything between seven years and life imprisonment depending on the gravity of the offence (IRIN, 5 December 2005). This followed the establishment in September of a Women and Children’s Protection Unit within the Liberian National Police, also seen as a positive contribution towards the protection of women and children from sexual abuse and exploitation (UNICEF, 1 September 2005).

Urgent humanitarian needs remain in camps and areas of return

With the official IDP return process due to end in April 2006, many camps have been closed, the huts demolished and services such as health posts largely reduced. According to some NGOs, including the Norwegian Refugee Council, the conditions in the remaining camps – including those officially closed but still housing thousands of unregistered IDPs (ie. those without a valid food ration card) – are deplorable. Not only have services providers been pulling out of the camps, partly due to lack of funding, but landowners have in some cases been stripping the camps of water pipes and other infrastructure. Shelters are in a state of collapse, and water and sanitation facilities are seriously lacking (NRC, January 2006). The absence of a clear plan for the consolidation and integration of IDPs who for various reasons do not wish to return has exacerbated the situation. Reasons cited include inadequate return packages and lack of transport, continuing security fears, and lack of infrastructure and services in home areas. In some cases IDPs have also complained of demolition of huts in the camps and forced eviction (RI, 18 July 2005).

While the UN has reported that around 80 per cent of all IDPs who have returned may have actually stayed in their areas of return, due in part to the increasing absorption capacity of communities (UNMIL, 16 November 2005), there is clearly a serious lack of basic services and infrastructure in key areas of return – such as Lofa county which was once home to many of Liberia’s IDPs and which was almost entirely devastated in the war. Almost two thirds of communities in Liberia do not have adequate shelter. The health care system throughout the country remains in emergency phase, with agencies and NGOs implementing more than 90 per cent of health service delivery. 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 various waterborne diseases (UN, 30 November 2005).

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, 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. Childhood malnutrition in particular remains high, with 39 per cent of children under five stunted (UN, 30 November 2005).

Political and humanitarian reform offers hope for improved IDP response

The October 2005 elections provided the first essential step towards restoring Liberia's credibility internationally after years of pariah status. Liberia's international isolation reached its depths during the rule of Charles Taylor who is currently in exile in Nigeria and is still wanted on charges of war crimes in neighbouring Sierra Leone. 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), on the basis that the situation in Liberia continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security (UN SC, 20 December 2005). At the same time donor support to humanitarian assistance in Liberia has been extremely low – notwithstanding the departure of Charles Taylor in August 2003 – largely as a result of rampant corruption within the transitional government (IRIN, 1 June 2005).

Donors have therefore been encouraged by the government's endorsement, in September 2005, of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP) that aims to stamp out corruption and achieve financial accountability by placing foreign experts in key administrative positions (IRIN, 15 September 2005). The UN also welcomed the adoption of the GEMAP agreement, saying it carried "much promise" in addressing the problems that have in the past hampered donor funding (UN, 30 November 2005).

The previous National Transitional Government of Liberia did not have the financial or technical resources to fulfil its primary responsibilities for IDP protection and assistance. While hopes may be high that the new government will usher in a new era of positive change, it is clear that at present the national agency responsible for coordinating assistance to IDPs – the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) – continues to be hampered by a serious lack of capacity and resources.

Given the previous transitional government's incapacity, as well as the overwhelming humanitarian needs in Liberia – and within that the magnitude of internal displacement – there has been a relatively huge international presence, bringing with it confusing and sometimes highly divisive coordination mechanisms.

The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) – with almost 15,000 troops one of the largest peacekeeping missions in the world – is headed by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) supported by two deputies who include the Humanitarian Coordinator. A key concern, particularly among international NGOs in Liberia, has been the fact that the SRSG effectively manages not only the Humanitarian Coordinator but also all the UNMIL military contingents, raising fears that humanitarian mandates take second place to political and military ones.

International NGOs in Liberia have consistently voiced concerns that humanitarian coordination particularly of the return process has been politically driven by UNMIL. The UN's desire for a

“success story” ahead of October 2005 elections in Liberia, they have claimed, has been the main reason for what they see as a rushed and poorly planned reintegration process (IRIN, 6 May 2005). They have argued that the necessary safeguards of voluntariness, the availability of full and objective information, and the declaration of return areas as safe based on an objective assessment, all risked being jeopardised. A dire lack of services as well as continuing protection concerns in areas of return has reportedly resulted in IDPs returning to the camps, or creating new settlements near the capital Monrovia, according to NGOs.

However, the year 2005 also saw some significant changes towards strengthening IDP response at the international level. Humanitarian reform globally resulted in the assignment of clear responsibilities to lead organisations at sector level, with a priority in relation to the protection and care of IDPs. UNHCR agreed to take on sectoral responsibility for camp management, emergency shelter and protection – with Liberia identified as one of three pilot countries for 2006. Although crucial issues remain to be resolved – not least the question of additional funding and resources to allow UNHCR to fulfil its new responsibilities (UNHCR, 7 December 2005) – UN agencies and NGOs in Liberia have generally been very supportive of the new “cluster approach” (IDD, November 2005).

A national policy framework – the Results-Focused Transitional Framework (RFTF) – was adopted by the international community and the transitional government in 2004 designed to address all aspects of Liberia’s rehabilitation, including IDP and refugee return. At the end of 2004 both humanitarian and targeted transitional needs were integrated into the RFTF Humanitarian Appeal. However, donor reluctance to continue supporting reconstruction activities in view of government corruption – resulting eventually in the endorsement of GEMAP – also threatened the release of funds for urgent humanitarian activities. The UN therefore issued a Consolidated Appeal for 2006, requesting \$121 million to address priority humanitarian needs, which was seen as a more effective way of ensuring sustained donor support. The term of the RFTF is due to end in March 2006, while discussions have been underway on the launch of a Common Country Assessment/UN Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF) process as well as an interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper during 2006.

Pending the full development of the CCA/UNDAF, and with the official return programme of registered IDPs expected to be completed in April 2006, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP have established a Joint Action Plan for Community Based Recovery (2006-2007). This provides a framework for a collaborative response to the reintegration of displaced populations in Liberia – targeting community-based projects aimed at the restoration of basic services, protection, productive livelihoods, shelter and community infrastructures. The Action Plan also supports national institutions to progressively take the lead in directing the recovery process (UNHCR, December 2005).

In order for the reconstruction and peacebuilding process to make real progress, responsibility lies not only with the new government to live up to its promises but also with donors to provide adequate funding and to stay seriously engaged until sustainability is achieved. Failure to do so could negate all the gains made so far and presage a return to conflict and renewed displacement on a massive scale.

CAUSES AND BACKGROUND

Background

Chronology of key events, 1980-2005

“1847 - Constitution modelled on that of the USA 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.

Taylor's uprising

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 - The warring factions draw up a plan for a National Transitional Government and a ceasefire, but this fails to materialise and fighting resumes.

1994 - The warring factions agree on 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 initiate 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 of seats 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.

2002 September - President Taylor lifts an eight-month state of emergency and a ban on political rallies, citing a reduced threat from rebels.

Rebel offensives

2003 March - Rebels open several battlefronts and advance to within 10km of Monrovia. Tens of thousands of people displaced by fighting.

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 Ecomog 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 February - Electoral commission says the first post-war elections will be held on 11 October.

2005 June - UN extends a ban on Liberian diamond exports - a source of funding for the civil war - and urges Liberia to freeze Charles Taylor's assets.

2005 September - Liberia signs an agreement under which the international community will supervise the state's finances in an effort to counter corruption.

2005 23 November - Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is proclaimed the winner of presidential elections, becoming the first woman to be elected as an African head of state." (BBC, 23 Nov 05)

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

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

"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. (AI 20 June 1997, "Liberian Tragedy")

"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." (HRW 17 November 1997, para. 4)

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." (DHA 23 October 1996, sect. 4.5)

"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." (USCR 1997, p. 77)

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

"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." (DHA 23 October 1996, sect. 2.3)

"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." (DHA 23 October 1996, sect. 2.1)

"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." (US DOS 26 February 1999, para. 1)

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)

"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." (AI 1 August 2001)

"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." (HRW 2000, Human Rights Developments)

"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." (IFRC 20 February 2001)

"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." (USCR 28 August 2000, para. 2)

"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." (IFRC 19 October 2000)

Ethnicity has been one factor behind the fighting

- 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

"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." (HRW 2000, Human Rights Developments)

"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." (IRIN-WA 15 October 2000)

"The festering ethnic clashes between the Mandingo, Gio and Mano tribes in Nimba and Bong Counties could continue and cause further internal displacement." (UN November 2000, Republic of Liberia)

"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." (IRIN, 28 August 2003)

"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.” (AI, 19 Sep 05)

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

“The security situation in Liberia remains precarious. Fighting between GOL troops and anti-government forces continues to displace 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.” (USAID, 3 October 2001)

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. ” (UNHCR, 21 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. .” (IRIN, 8 February 2002)

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 13 Feb 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." (IRIN 10 Feb 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." (UN OCHA, 26 March 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." (Global Security 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." (IRIN 28 April 2003)

Accra Peace Agreement of August 2003 and subsequent deployment of UN troops bring high hopes for peace – but intermittent conflict continues (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 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

"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." (IRIN 18 Aug 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 News Service, 5 August 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 SC, 11 Sep 03)

"[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." (UN November 2003, p 6)

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](#)

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

"2. 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.

3. 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.

[...]

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. 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.

20. 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.

[...]

26. 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." (UN SC, 17 Mar 05)

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)

"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." (UN News, 21 Jun 05)

"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, 18 September 2002)

" '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." (Global Witness, 12 Feb 04)

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)

"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." (UN OCHA, 10 Jun 04)

"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." (GW, 7 Dec 05)

"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." (UN SC, 20 Dec 05)

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

"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." (Amnesty International, 1 October 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." (HRW, 1 May 2002)

New round of displacement initiated with the resurgence of violence in northern Lofa County in 1999

- Reported in July 2000 that people were fleeing armed insurgency and gun battles
- Claims that Guinean security forces were involved in shelling of Zorzor district that caused 1,500 IDPs fleeing the war zone

- Government troops ordered women and children to leave the areas of fighting

"In April and August 1999, Liberian rebels operating from neighboring Guinea carried out attacks in Lofa County, northern Liberia. Although not confirmed, the rebel attacks were thought to be led by former fighters from the ULIMO-K faction who were largely ethnic Mandingos. The fighting resulted in civilian deaths and displacement, forcing thousands of Liberians and Sierra Leonean refugees to flee." (HRW 2000, Human Rights Developments)

"On 8 July [2000], the Government of Liberia reported that an armed group of Liberian dissidents operating from neighbouring Guinea, attacked the provincial town of Voinjama in Lofa county (approximately 384 kms north of the capital of Monrovia). Thousands of civilians fled the town into the bush and nearby towns and villages.

[...]

Most recently, the Government has reported the shelling of Zorzor district by Guinean security forces. Reports say that the incident has resulted in some casualties of IDPs from Voinjama, who had taken refuge in Zorzor town. Over 1,500 IDPs have fled the war zone, traveling (sic!) through the bush to towns as far away as Camp Anthe (125 kms from Voinjama) in Lower Lofa County." (IFRC 19 October 2000)

"On October 7th [2000] Zorzor town came under attack for the second time in the space of 2 weeks. An estimated 30,000 civilians deserted the town of Zorzor after it was shelled by rebel forces believed to be operating from Guinea. The shelling has forced civilians to head towards the town of Gbarnga, although many are now staying in towns between Zorzor and Gbarnga in neighbouring Bong County and are in need of food, shelter and sanitation facilities. It seems that only those who have family to stay with have been permitted to enter Gbarnga." (SCF 24 November 2000, Current Situation)

"The relief workers also said the mass movement of the people was started by instructions from military personnel in Zorzor and surrounding towns and villages, that women and children leave the areas in the wake of the attack." (PANA 10 October 2000)

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:

"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." (ACT, Appeal Liberia 30 March 2001)

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." (AFP, 5 March 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." (SCF, 6 April 2001)

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." (IRIN-WA, 6 April 2001)

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." (IRIN-WA, 4 July 2001)

October-December 2001: Fighting getting closer to Monrovia

"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." (UN, November 2001, p. 3)

"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." (ACT 11 December 2001)

January-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." (UNHCR, 21 February 2002)

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." (UNICEF, 29 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.." (IRIN, 10 May 2002)

February 2003: Thousands of IDPs arriving in Monrovia

"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 10 Feb 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. "(IRIN, 5 Feb 2003)

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." (UN OCHA, 18 March 2003)

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

"[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." (MSF, 11 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." (ACT, 12 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." (UNHCR, 3 March 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 Saclapea, 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." (AFP, 9 April 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. " (USAID, 27 August 2003)

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

"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. " (AI, 12 May 2003)

FEBRUARY:

"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, 13 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. ". (AFP, 6 February 2003)

MARCH :

"(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." (WFP, 4 April 2003)

APRIL :

"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." (AFP, 29 Apr 2003)

MAY:

"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." (AFP, 20 May 2003)

JUNE:

"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." (AFP, 10 June 2003)

JULY:

"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." (IRIN, 19 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." (UN OCHA, 22 July 2003)

AUGUST:

"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." (USAID, 13 Aug 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." (World Relief, 6 August 2003).

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

"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." (UNHCR, 3 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." (IRIN, 4 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, 24 Sep 03)

"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.” (UNHCR, 2 Oct 03)

“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.” (IRIN, 10 Nov 03)

Monrovia riots may have been linked to problems in the disarmament and demobilisation process, October 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

“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." (UN OCHA, 7 Nov 04)

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

“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." (HRW, Mar 05)

POPULATION FIGURES AND PROFILE

Global figures

In January 2006, the UN reported some 48,000 IDPs remained in camps awaiting return assistance - but NGOs reported actual IDP total in camps as nearer 70,000

- Since the beginning of the return process in November 2004, more than 276,000 IDPs have been assisted to return to their areas of origin as of early January 2006
- Almost 48,000 registered IDPs remain in camps awaiting return assistance and, according to NGOs, some 20,000 unregistered IDPs
- Approximately 75 per cent of IDPs who claimed their resettlement package may have actually returned home

"From November 2004 to present [6 January 2006], a total of 275,791 IDPs representing a total of 52,684 families have received their return assistance.....201,140 IDPs have received their second food ration as of 6th January 2006." (UNMIL, 7 Jan 06)

According to UNMIL's IDP Unit, the IDP return figure in early January 2006 stood at 276,009, representing a total of 52,740 families who have received assistance to return home. This is a cumulative total since the return process officially began in November 2004, out of a registered caseload of 314,095 IDPs living in camps. The return figure however includes 9,732 refugee returnees who were repatriated from camps inside Liberia during the IDP return process; they are not part of the original caseload. The correct number of IDPs assisted to return home is therefore 266,277, leaving 47,818 IDPs in seven out of the 35 original camps still waiting for return assistance.

According to NGOs, the actual figure of IDPs still in camps is between 60,000-70,000, since the official total only includes IDPs holding valid ration cards. IDPs without valid ration cards are not included in the original 314,000 caseload.

The total of just over 201,000 returnees receiving their second food ration in their counties or villages of origin [about 75 per cent of the official return figure] is said to be a fair indicator of the actual number of IDPs going back home. To date, however, there has been no registration of the residual IDP caseload.

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

"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.”
(OCHA/UNHCR, 18 May 04)

Disaggregated figures

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

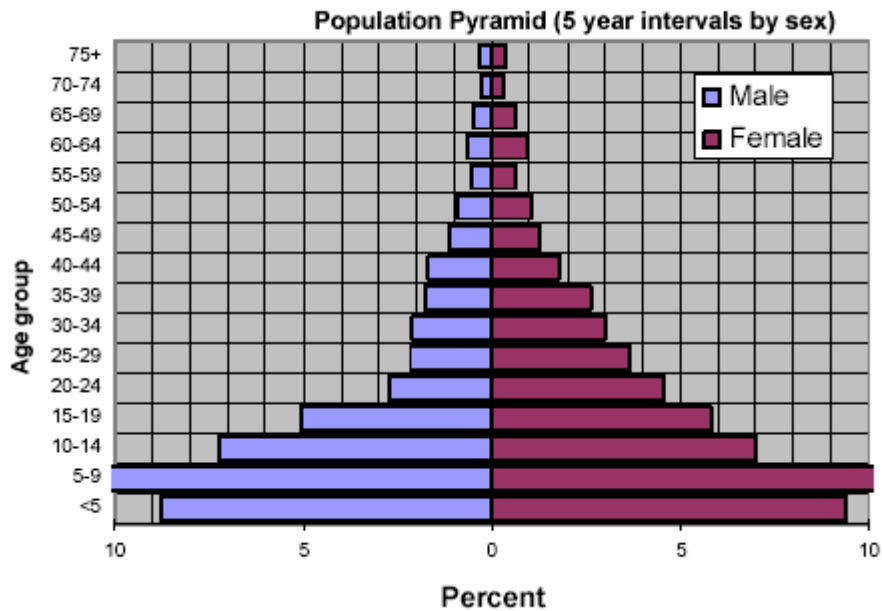
- May 2004 IDP Survey in Liberia's 20 official camps reveals information on age, sex and household size of more than 260,000 IDPs

“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.

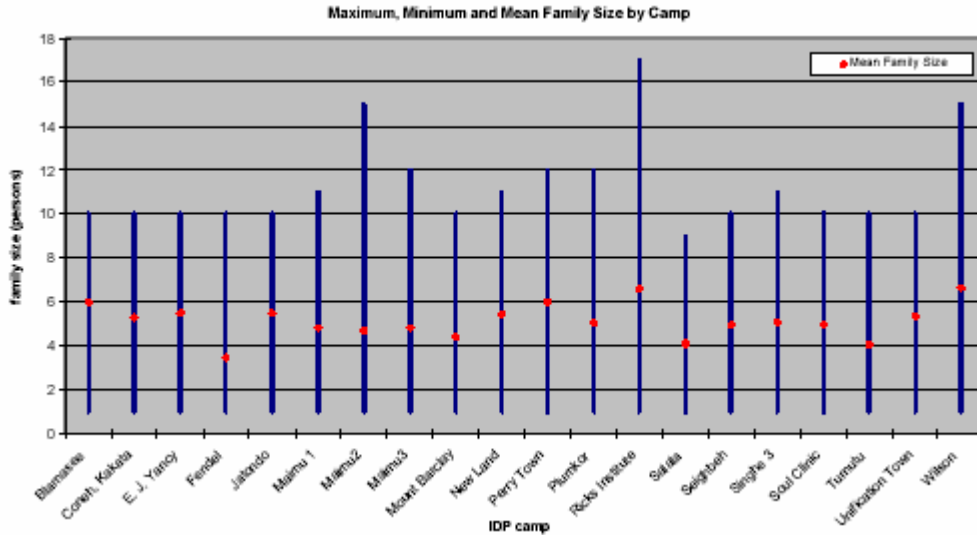
Key Findings - Demographics

- 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.



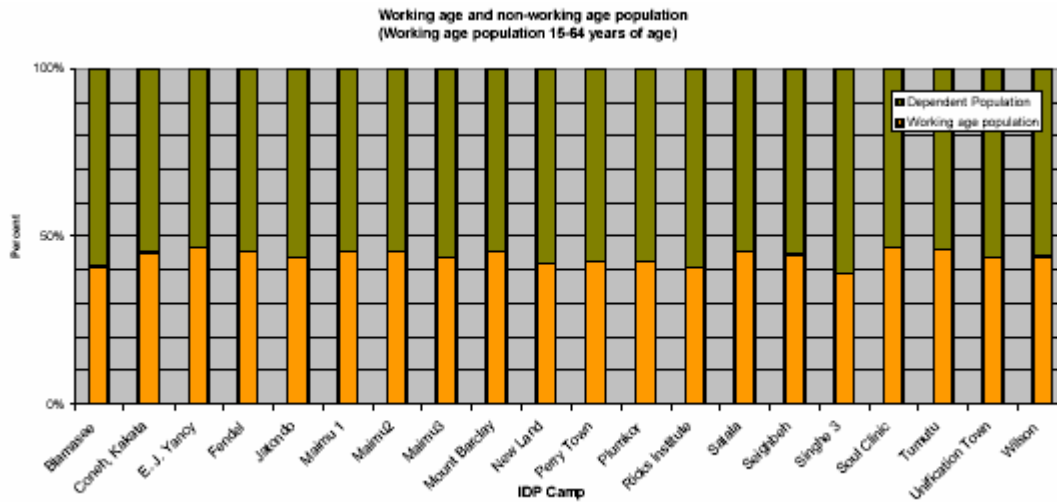
Key Findings – Demographics (cont.)

- 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.



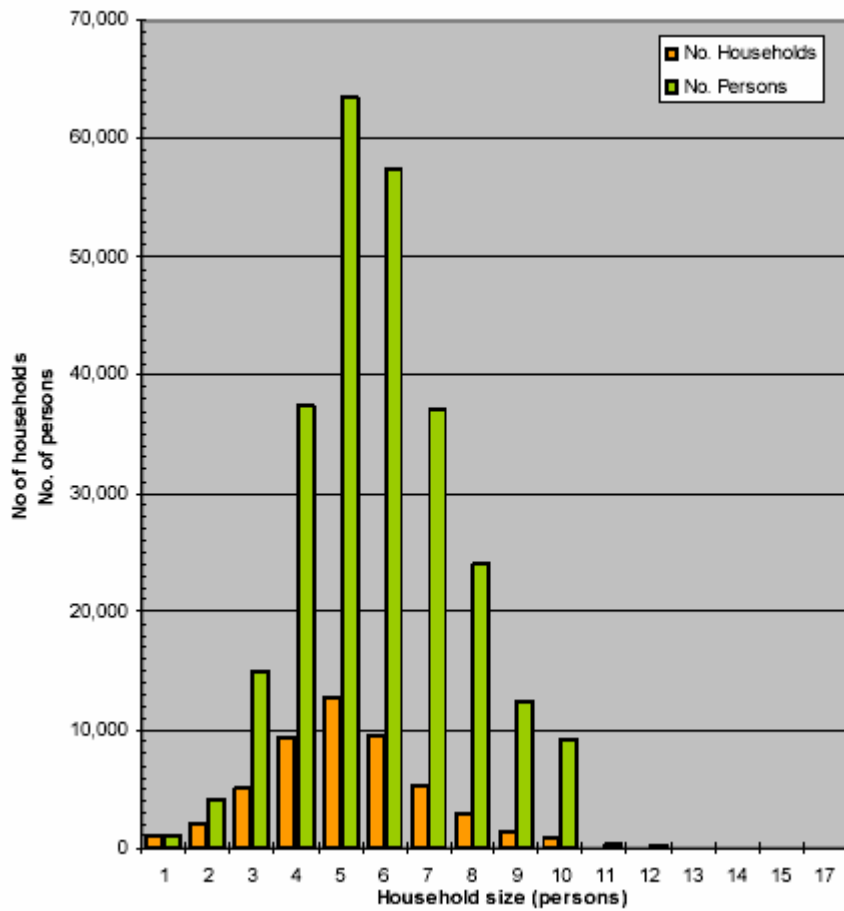
Key Findings – Demographics (cont.)

- 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.



(OCHA/UNHCR, 18 May 04)

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

“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.” (UNCHR/EPAU, Dec 03)

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

“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.” (MSF, 9 Sep 03)

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

“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.” (OCHA Liberia, 20 Jan 04)

PHYSICAL SECURITY & FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Physical security

Protection of displaced population still an urgent need, 2006

- 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

"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." (UN, 30 Nov 05)

"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." (Martin, 13 Oct 04)

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

"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, June 05)

"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." (IDD, 10 Oct 04)

"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." (NRC, 8 Sep 04)

Displaced children particularly vulnerable to rights violations, according to Watchlist report (June 2004)

- Both government and rebel forces have forcibly conscripted young children from IDP camps
- Displaced girls in camps have been regularly subjected to rape, sexual abuse and prostitution
- IDP camps and informal shelters have at times been targets for fighting forces, for example during the height of the fighting in Monrovia in summer 2003

"IDP children are especially vulnerable to a range of violations of their security and rights. For example, local militias loyal to government forces and illegal armed groups have forcibly conscripted young children from IDP camps, particularly before and during the 2003 War (see below). In Montserrado County, LURD forces reportedly abducted 1,000 IDPs between February and April 2003. During the same period, government-aligned militia reportedly recruited young IDPs from Jahtondo Displaced Camp.

IDP girls are regularly exposed to rape, sexual abuse and prostitution in camps, according to UNICEF. Non-state armed groups and government forces, including soldiers as young as 12 years old, prey on and rape IDP women and girls. In the SKD Stadium in Monrovia, anecdotal reports indicated that gender-based violence against women and girls was rampant. Amnesty International (AI) reported that 40 women and 20 girls reported being raped during one week alone in August 2003. Humanitarian workers report high rates of teenage pregnancy in the IDP camps as a result of poverty and peer pressure.

In October and November 2003, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) held a series of focus group discussions and individual interviews on gender-based violence in seven IDP camps in Montserrado County. Information from these discussions is documented in IRC's Situation Analysis of Gender Based Violence in Liberia, April 2004. In each camp, discussions were held with adult men and women (over age 18) and adolescent girls and boys (ages 14–18). During all discussions, there was at least one mention of having been raped, or knowing of women or girls who had been raped, during conflict. It was evident from comments made that young girls were particularly targeted for rape, with participants saying, 'the young girls are the most,' 'some can even rape a baby if they get a chance' and 'they like 7- to 11-year olds.' The broader issue of sexual violence within the camps was raised during the discussions, with participants suggesting that overcrowding, women being forced to share rooms with men and poor structural planning, such as lack of lighting at night, placement of bathhouses and latrines, all caused sexual violence. (See Gender-based Violence section below for more information.)

Before and during the 2003 War, IDP camps themselves were marked as targets by fighting forces. In one case, a mortar hit Newport Road School, where nearly 6,000 IDPs were living. The attack killed eight civilians on July 26, 2003. In several incidents, indiscriminate shelling and other attacks by LURD and government forces were perpetrated against the estimated 20,000 displaced civilians seeking safety and shelter in the Greystone residential compounds near the U.S. Embassy, as well as thousands of other displaced civilians who sought refuge at other sites in downtown Monrovia.

Over one dozen civilians were killed in late June 2003, when they were crushed to death at the Greystone gate by a panicked mob seeking to avoid mortar shelling, and another group was killed in June by two 'rockets' shot into the Greystone compound by government forces, according to HRW. During the war, IDP women and children were victimized by LURD's brutal tactic of hacking off their limbs as part of the campaign to oust President Taylor.

The SKD stadium is no longer functioning as a makeshift shelter for IDPs. Most IDPs have been transferred from the stadium to more traditional IDP camps in and around Monrovia. Reports from humanitarian workers in Liberia, in April 2004, indicate that these IDP camps are relatively well resourced and that residents generally have more access to basic services than citizens living outside the camps, although gender-based violence against women and girls and other forms of insecurity persist." (Watchlist, 28 Jun 04)

Rape and sexual violence have been used as a weapon of war in Liberia throughout the 14 years of conflict, according to rights organisations (2004)

- Sexual violence is believed to have affected around two-thirds of the population
- Fighters from all sides to the conflict have used rape and other sexual violence to humiliate, frighten and punish civilians perceived to be sympathetic to the opposition
- Victims have ranged from girls less than eight years old to women in their seventies, and also men and boys although there is little information on this
- Rape has been documented even after the signing of the August 2003 peace agreement

"In a new report, *Liberia: No impunity for rape - a crime against humanity and a war crime*, Amnesty International describes through harrowing testimonies the sexual violence which is

believed to have affected around two-thirds of the population. The report also shows the physical, psychological and social consequences of such violence.

'Lasting peace will not be achieved in Liberia unless those responsible for crimes under international law are held criminally responsible, truth is established and victims obtain full reparations,' Amnesty International said.

'The National Transitional Government of Liberia currently has no policy to bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes under international law. Neither has there been any expression of resolute commitment by the international community to end impunity for such crimes in Liberia.'

'A long-term action plan to restore justice and the rule of law must be developed and implemented,' Amnesty International said. 'This must be a priority for the government, working in cooperation with the United Nations and the wider international community and non-governmental organizations.'

The report describes:

- widespread and systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence, including gang-rape the rape of pregnant women and children, committed by combatants of all three parties to the conflict: the former government of Liberia, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia;
- health facilities unable to cope with the physical injuries and psychological trauma resulting from rape and other forms of sexual violence on a massive scale;
- the need for donor governments to honour fully the pledges made at the International Reconstruction Conference on Liberia in February this year; about half of the funds promised have still not been made available;
- the continued vulnerability of women to sexual violence and exploitation as a result of extreme poverty and vast numbers of internally displaced people remaining in camps." (AI, 14 Dec 04)

"Rape and other forms of sexual violence have been pervasive during both the first phase of the Liberian war, from 1989-1996, and in the resurgence of the conflict, since 2000. Abductions of women and girls for sexual and domestic services have been a regular feature of the recent war, as have acts of rape and sexual violence of women and girls of all ages, from young children of less than eight years old, to older women in their seventies. Human Rights Watch has documented numerous reports of rape by combatants from all warring factions even after the August signing of the peace accord. Rape and sexual violence towards men—while apparently occurring—is much less known and recorded, partly due to the deep cultural taboos on homosexuality.

Estimates of the total number of victims of rape and sexual violence are impossible to obtain given that some areas of Liberia remain inaccessible to medical and humanitarian assistance, and thus large numbers of victims remain unrecorded. In addition, rape is habitually under-reported given the social stigma attached to the crime. Rape and other forms of sexual violence have been reported in virtually all areas of Liberia, by all the warring parties and have clearly been used to humiliate, intimidate and dominate civilians and as a means of penalizing civilians perceived to be sympathetic to the opposition. Every time an area changes hands, or fighters embark on a looting spree, rape has become the near-inevitable, violent accompaniment to other activities.

Patterns of sexual violence appear to be worse when any of the warring factions enter new areas previously held by one of the opposing groups, or where any of the warring factions encounter civilians of ethnicities perceived to be allied with their opposition. As an experienced counselor who works with dozens of rape survivors in and around Monrovia told Human Rights Watch,

'[Rape] is a weapon. It happens when they take over a place and they want to prove they are in control. They even rape in front of the husbands, they tie them up and make it a powerless situation, and sometimes afterward they kill the husbands in front of the wives.' " (HRW, 21 Jan 04)

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

“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." (ACF, Mar 05)

"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. 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." (IRIN, 25 Mar 05)

Focus on return and reintegration must not overlook needs of IDPs remaining in camps, 2004-2005

- While the Liberian transitional government emphasises the need to encourage greater returns to allow for swifter camp closures, it also acknowledges the need to provide ongoing support and assistance to IDPs remaining in camps - especially to women and children - who continue to have wide-ranging emergency needs
- Although a food security assessment carried out by ACF in various camps towards the end of 2004 found the situation to be generally "favourable", it did warn that in view of various issues such as the reduction of the WFP ration this situation could change

"Immediate humanitarian priorities involve achieving food security by funding emergency seeding and agricultural implements. While ongoing food assistance is critical and unavoidable, especially for those remaining in IDP camps, timely investments in agriculture can go far to promote self-sustenance and reduce dependencies on international aid. Furthermore, the provision of basic services in primary health, education, water and sanitation in counties of return not only meet the urgent needs of host communities, but can serve as 'pull factors' to encourage greater returns leading to swifter camp closures and attendant shifts in funding from camp management to relief, recovery and development activities. Additionally, support for the process of return and

reintegration by way of transportation for returnees and social and physical infrastructure including emergency shelter can hedge against overwhelming the absorptive capacities of host communities. However, even the most expedited returns process cannot return home all displaced persons in IDP and refugee camps in the space of the dry season between October and April. Hence, ongoing support and assistance must be given to these camps with special attention to women and children. Without proper attention to these groups, a critical investment in Liberia's social fabric and future are lost.

[...]

It is envisaged that assistance to displaced populations should be targeted to meet critical humanitarian needs and provide basic services and social protections, including in primary health; education; water and sanitation. Moreover, food security programmes aimed at ensuring enough food for returning populations will be enhanced. Distribution of non-food items will be coordinated with all participating stakeholders in order to avoid duplication. Protection monitoring; camp management and maintenance and provision of emergency agricultural seeding to returnee populations are part of the prioritized activities.

III. Humanitarian Needs in 2005

- Care and maintenance of IDPs and refugees in camps.
- Legal assistance and protection monitoring of returnees and IDPs profiling.
- Transportation assistance to returnees and IDPs and establishment of transit facilities in the counties of return.
- Emergency and basic health care services to 100,000 IDPs in camps and host communities.
- Water, sanitation and hygiene services in 20 IDP camps (until resettlement).
- Contain outbreaks of bloody diarrhea and cholera in hot spots in 20 IDP camps.
- Provision of material and technical support to child-friendly spaces in 7 IDP camps.
- Provision of food to returnees and IDPs that are being resettled in areas of origin and continue to provide food to IDPs in existing camps." (NTGL, 10 Dec 04)

"Following the disarmament and the pacification of the country, the repatriation process of displaced Liberians started, in late 2004, for both Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees. In the last quarter of 2004, a total of 5,041 IDPs and 5,141 refugees have been officially assisted in their repatriation to their place of origin.

The population of displaced people remaining in IDP camps and refugee camps is still high. In December 2004, around 321,000 IDPs were living in camps and 266,000 refugees were still abroad. According to this situation the repatriation process is taking longer than expected—displaced Liberians will probably need humanitarian assistance for at least the first part of 2005.

In the last quarter of 2004, the assessments conducted by ACF in the IDP camps of Montserrado and Margibi indicate a favorable food security situation for the internally displaced. The provided humanitarian assistance enables the IDPs to live in relative good conditions and no major issue has been detected. In addition, IDPs have developed strong coping mechanisms and have organized their lives in order to satisfy their needs.

Nevertheless, issues such as the gradual reduction of the WFP food ration, the few irregularities in the registration for food distribution, the unequal access to basic facilities (water, schools and health clinics) could reduce the food security situation of the IDPs if they are not closely monitored in the future.

Therefore, despite the ongoing repatriation, Action Contre la Faim recommends that local, national and international agencies in charge of the IDPs camps assess and meet basic needs of camp residents throughout the repatriation process.

Regarding the repatriation, in all the IDP camps visited in Montserrado and Margibi Counties, the displaced stated they were eager to be repatriated. The same will to return 'home' was observed with the refugees coming from Sierra Leone. The beginning of the year that correspond with the dry season and the launch of the farming season appears to be the best period to carry out repatriation.

Considering the evolution of the repatriation process during the last quarter of 2004 and the strong motivation of the displaced to be repatriated before the rainy season, Action Contre la Faim recommends increasing the logistic means dedicated to the transportation of returnees and the number of transit centers. In the specific case of the IDPs, if these measures do not permit the transport of enough returnees before the rainy season, Action Contre la Faim recommends supporting voluntary returns through appropriate assistance of transportation funds and the provision of food and NFI that ensures the safe return of the returnees." (ACF, 17 Feb 05)

Health

Health care system in Liberia remains in emergency phase, 2006

- 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

"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.” (UN, 30 Nov 05)

Large reduction of health services in IDP camps, 2005

- Nine out of 33 IDP camps have no health facility at all
- Many health services in camps have been reduced in anticipation of large-scale IDP return

“The 33 IDP camps have a total of 26 health posts within which 6 are mobile clinics providing health care a few times a week. There is no health post at all in 8 camps in Montserrado (VOA, Perry, Sinje, Indigent Children Home, Civil Compound, Newland, 15 Gate and Bernard Curve,) and 1 in Bong County (Tumutu). The IDPs from these camps either access other health posts in surrounding communities and camps or treat themselves with medicines bought in the streets and traditional herbs (20%).

In anticipation of the repatriation, a large reduction of the health services provided in camps and some closing of health posts have been reported by the lead agencies, LRRRC and CMC. This may mean a widening gap in coverage if the returns are slower than anticipated.” (ACF, Mar 05)

Food and Nutrition

While most IDPs in camps depend on limited WFP rations, their food consumption is still better than average (2005)

- The large majority of IDPs depend on WFP monthly food rations, which last a maximum of 1-2 weeks, resulting in low consumption
- Food consumption of IDPs in camps is nevertheless better than in some rural areas and in greater Monrovia
- IDPs have developed strong coping mechanisms to tackle problems accessing food

“Prior to the crisis, ‘own production’ and ‘purchase’ were the two primary ways for the population to access food. Current living conditions and the difficult access to land has resulted in a radical change in food sources. Presently, the large majority of IDPs relies on WFP monthly food ration distributions. But ‘purchase’ and, in a lesser degree, ‘bush collection’ remain important ways to access food.

Food from the WFP distribution is mainly consumed. According to

the displaced the food distributed monthly in camps is insufficient and lasts a maximum of 1 to 2 weeks. Due to the difficult access to food and the limited duration of the ration distributed, IDPs have to reduce their food consumption. Before the crisis, households reported that they ate 2 or 3 times a day. Currently, 55% eat once a day while others eat twice (43%) and very few consume three daily meals (2%). It is important to notice that this food consumption is still better than in some rural areas and in greater Monrovia where a very large majority of the population eats only once a day.

As stated in the previous report, the monthly food ration distributed does not meet the nutritional standards recommended by the World Health Organisation. It is especially the case in terms of 'Kcal' and 'energy provided by fat', respectively covered at 60% and 40% of the recommended standards. The daily diet consumed is mainly composed of bulgur and sauce but at times, if affordable, they include rice and other ingredients like fish, tubers and leaves.

IDPs stated that there was some food items (peas & salt) omitted from the food basket during the last distributions (especially in January).

According to the survey, this incomplete distribution affected 36% of the interviewees in the camps of the three counties. WFP faced some problems with the food pipeline in January but ensured that the food was finally entirely delivered.

Despite the difficulties IDPs are facing accessing food, discussions with medical staff and the team's observations did not underline significant negative impacts in term of malnutrition. This is mainly due to the strong coping mechanisms activated by the IDPs (jobs and incomes generating opportunities) but also, in a lesser degree, to the food business with WFP food ration cards that allows several IDPs to obtain more food than expected. They sell it in the camps making more food available." (ACF, Mar 05)

Shelter

Shelter needs are most acute in key areas of return, 2006

- Destruction of shelter during the conflict was worst in key areas of return such as Lofa county
- Almost two thirds of communities in Liberia do not have adequate shelter
- Restitution of property of displaced populations is a major challenge

"During the course of the civil strife in Liberia, there was almost complete destruction of shelter throughout the country. Most houses and community structures were burnt or destroyed and household goods abandoned or stolen. In many areas of the county, adequate shelter and basic housing fall seriously below the acceptable standard. The Counties that suffered most in terms of major destructions of shelter and household property include Lofa, Grand Cape Mount, Bomi,

Nimba and Grand Gedeh. Most of the 100,000 displaced people are expected to return to these Counties.

General conditions of shelters and living space are deplorable. A regular rural family size of 5-10 per household resides in average living space of 2.5sq m/person while the standard is set at 3.5sq.m/per person. Basic design of shelters are substandard and cannot provide adequate physical comfort and protection from climatic conditions to ensure safety and well being of inhabitants. Interagency needs assessment revealed that currently over 60% of the communities in Liberia do not have adequate shelter. The problem is most acute in Lofa County where close to 40% of the total number returnees and IDPs will be returning.

Security of tenure and legitimate access to land for returnees and vulnerable populations, property rights of displaced populations, and developing the means to reconstitute/manage land and housing issues in a transparent way remains a major challenge. Additionally household goods such as kitchen sets, blankets and mats are beyond the reach of many rural communities. Returnees and local communities lack the capacity to erect their own shelters, and cannot provide and operate basic services. In addition to destroyed water sources including shallow wells and spring, the lack of access to proper sanitation facilities and solid waste management are due to poor settlement planning and lack of local management structures. There will be a huge need to accommodate the more than 300,000 families who require shelter and significant non-food items (NFI) support nationally. The pressure to accommodate newly arriving returnees will require a concerted interagency effort. The provision of basics shelter material and household goods to vulnerable communities, will effectively contribute to and reinforce peaceful coexistence and community reconciliation processes.

Inadequate sector response will lead to further deterioration of living standards of the affected population. It is evident that lack of adequate shelter, security of tenure and proper settlement planning may cause tensions in the communities, affect social harmony, reconciliation and the peace process. To pre-empt this likelihood, sector requirement needs to be addressed in a comprehensive manner involving all key partners and stakeholders. As the needs for this sector are vital in day to day running of families, non implementation may lead to hardship and spontaneous return to camps by formerly displaced populations with expectation of international communities assistance, consequently rendering previous repatriation and resettlement efforts unsustainable.” (UN, 30 Nov 05)

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

“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." (UN, 30 Nov 05)

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

General

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

- School drop-out rate is extremely high, with the situation for girls exacerbated by pregnancy, early marriage and domestic work
- In 2004, only one quarter of primary school-age children were found to be in school
- Access has been hindered by numerous factors, including destruction of schools, lack of materials and a shortage of qualified teachers
- Returnee children and those still displaced are one of the groups of particular concern
- The majority of IDPs in camps do not attend school

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." (UN, 30 Nov 05)

"There are 47 primary schools within all of the camps but there are 5 camps in Montserrat (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." (ACF, Mar 05)

ISSUES OF SELF-RELIANCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Self-reliance

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

“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.” (ACF, Feb 05)

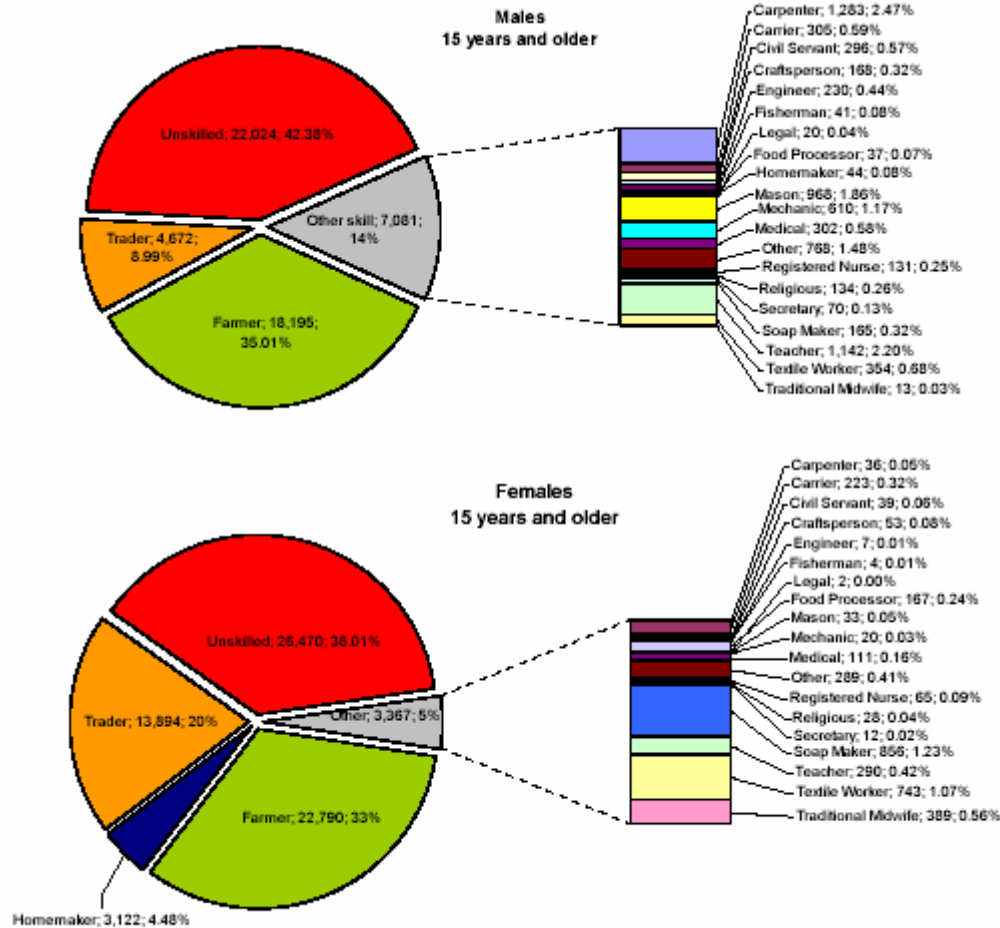
Key findings of IDP return survey: skills (May 2004)

“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.



(OCHA/UNHCR, 18 May 04)

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

“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." (OCHA Liberia, 20 Jan 04)

Public participation

Concern over disenfranchisement of IDPs in October 2005 elections

- 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

"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 per cent of those registering for a vote by the time the exercise finished last Friday.

[...]

Of those IDPs that have registered to vote, seventy per cent 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.” (IRIN, 24 May 05)

“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.” (RI, 22 Jul 05)

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

“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.” (OCHA Liberia, 20 Jan 04)

PROPERTY ISSUES

General

Property disputes between returning Mandingos and other ethnic groups in some areas (2005)

- Property disputes between returning Mandingos and Lorma ethnic groups have arisen in Lofa and Nimba counties

“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.” (UN, 30 Nov 05)

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

“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." (Mooney, May 04)

Returnees in Nimba County facing land disputes (June 2004)

- Spontaneous return of IDPs (and refugees) - in the absence of assistance with shelter and property restitution - has led to land disputes, particularly in Nimba County
- Funding and support to county administrations is urgently needed in order to avoid escalation of such conflicts

"As a result of spontaneous voluntary return of IDP population in the northwestern and central regions in the country (Gbarpolu, Lofa and Nimba) IDP and refugee returnees have started reconstruction of their homes. However, currently there is no assistance in proper planning with regard to permanent shelters and basic services, nor is there assistance to support the provision of mechanisms for land and property restitution in the counties. This has led to several land disputes emerging in Nimba County. Hence there is an urgent need to provide funding and support to the county administration to put in place land and property restitution mechanisms in order to avoid the escalation of conflicts over land and property." (UN, 15 Jun 04)

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

"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.” (Oxfam, 26 Mar 04)

PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

General

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

“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.” (IRIN, 13 Jul 05)

“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, 18 Jul 05)

“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.” (RI, 24 Jun 05)

“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." (ACF, Feb 05)

Sustained return requires protection and community recovery activities – UN Action Plan, 2004-2005

- 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

“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.” (JPT, Nov 04)

Assistance packages for returnees, 2004-2005

- WFP provides four month return/ resettlement food package to returnees
- Non-food items such as plastic sheeting, blankets etc. are provided by UNHCR and ICRC (the latter to returnees and communities specifically in Lofa county)
- Critically, seeds and tools are not included in the assistance package for returnees

(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.” (JPT, Nov 04)

Official IDP return and resettlement begins in November 2004 – despite daunting challenges

- Undeterred by the outbreak of violence in Monrovia in October 2004, the first batch of 500 IDPs were assisted to return to their areas of origin in Grand Cape Mount county at the beginning of November
- UNHCR and partner hope to assist some 260,000 IDPs living in 20 formal camps near the capital to return home by April 2005
- The UN told the departing IDPs that basic services would be provided, despite an acute lack of funding

“Undaunted by the recent unrest in Monrovia, Liberians uprooted by 14 years of civil war continue to repatriate on today's first return convoy of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the first airlift of refugees from Nigeria.

On Monday, 500 internally displaced Liberians left Perry Town camp in Montserrado county for Sinje transit centre in Grand Cape Mount county. They received a package containing relief items and two months' supply of food before leaving for their home areas in Grand Cape Mount county. [...]

Almost half of today's returning IDPs were refugees who had returned from neighbouring countries to Liberia on their own following the Accra peace accord in August last year. Upon their return, they found their areas of origin unsafe for return, and were accommodated at IDP centres in the Monrovia area until their home areas were declared safe for return.

By April 2005, UNHCR and its partners hope to help the 261,886 IDPs living in 20 camps near the capital to go home. UNHCR has been directly involved with Liberia's internally displaced population since 2000, when fighting erupted in the western part of the country, causing thousands of Liberians to seek protection in camps for Sierra Leonean refugees.” (UNHCR, 8 Nov 04)

“Chanting ‘no more war’ and praying for peace, a first batch of 500 internally displaced Lpeople (IDPs) headed home on Monday from a camp where they had lived for years, as the UN and Liberia's government kicked off a scheme to resettle 300,000 IDPs.

The resettlement of the IDPs, who live in a ring of camps around the capital, began a week behind schedule due to a sudden flare-up of riots in Monrovia a week ago, the worst violence to hit the West African country since civil war ended in 2003.

As they boarded more than 20 trucks and mini-buses at the Perry Town camp for IDPs to head home to Grand Cape Mount country near the Sierra Leone border, the group of mainly women and children sang gospel songs and chanted ‘No more war, we have peace’.

Grand Cape Mount is one seven counties in Liberia – which has a total of 15 – that have been declared safe for the return of IDPs and for the other 350,000 people who fled the country during its 14 years of civil war.

[...]

The return of the IDPs, which took place with Liberian transitional authorities and top UN officials looking on, marked the latest step in a string of key developments carrying the nation from war to peace.

Last week the country's three former warring factions jointly announced the disbanding of their forces, a milestone declaration that came only days after the end of a nationwide programme to disarm ex combatants in which some 100,000 fighters laid down their arms.

[...]

Relief workers told IRIN that the first phase of the IDP repatriation plan would focus on western Liberia, whose three counties - Bomi, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount - had been declared safe for the return of the displaced people.

In central Liberia, Bong County has been declared safe as have been Grand Bassa and Rivercess, southeast of the capital, and Margibi, north of Monrovia.

The UN and the Liberian government have said people must be encouraged to return only on condition a county is safe. Key benchmarks for determining a areas safety are completion of disarmament, the presence of civil authorities, rehabilitation of basic services and unhindered access for humanitarian workers.

UN humanitarian coordinator for Liberia, Abou Moussa, told the departing IDPs that basic services would be provided. "It is our responsibility to make sure that their return is sustainable. The sustainable requires the provision of basic services of primary health, education and sanitation".

In northwest Liberia, health facilities, schools and public buildings are being renovated by USAID, said Interior Minister Horatio Dan Marias.

‘The turning of US 520 million dollars pledges from the donor conference into cash as required for Liberia's recovery program, including the reintegration of refugees and IDPs has been slow and this is hampering the reintegration program in Liberia’, he said.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) warned last week that not enough funding had been received for a three-year Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) programme for Liberia and appealed for an extra US 58 million dollars.” (IRIN, 8 Nov 04)

“Go and see visits” aim at involving IDPs in planning the return process (September 2004)

- In assessing whether an area is "safe" for resettlement, government/ inter-agency teams look at security, basic facilities, rule of law and humanitarian coverage
- Whereas rule of law in areas visited by, inter alia NRC, was acceptable for return, basic social services were "deplorable" and not acceptable for return
- Teams from IDP camps have been given the opportunity to see conditions in areas of return for themselves

“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.” (NRC, 8 Sep 04)

IDPs returning to areas without necessary conditions of “safety and dignity” (August 2004)

- IDPs and refugees are attempting to return to insecure areas where armed groups harass villagers and extort money
- Although large numbers of fighters have been disarmed, most are without jobs and are resorting to crime
- Refugees returning from neighbouring countries often end up in already overcrowded IDP camps, since conditions are not conducive for return to their home areas

“Areas of post-conflict Liberia where United Nations peacekeepers are stationed are being reconstructed as refugees and internally displaced persons return, but some are trying to go home even to insecure areas where armed groups are harassing villagers and extorting money, the UN refugee agency said today.

Near the border with Guinea, residents of Ganta are returning to their shattered town where troops of the now ousted Government repeatedly clashed with rebel combatants of Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) during the long civil war. They are rebuilding under the watchful eyes of UN peacekeeping forces.

The town once more has restaurants, beauty salons and store shelves filled with goods imported from Guinea, while farms have been planted with rice and maize, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said.

UNHCR's appeal for \$39 million has brought in \$23 million for the organized return of refugees, scheduled to start in October. The funds are being used to repair roads, and to provide water, sanitation, education and clinics in safe areas.

Although leading members of LURD and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) have joined the transitional government which the UN is helping to prepare for elections next year, some of their fighters are no longer controlled and they continue to demand 'taxes' from villagers.

Some 66,000 former combatants have disarmed under the UN-sponsored nationwide demobilization, but they have not been able to find jobs in the rehabilitation and re-integration phases of the programme.

'Criminal incidents and occasional reports of looting and abuses committed by ex-combatants have been attributed to the slow implementation of the programme to provide them with jobs,' UNHCR said.

Some refugees, weary of life in the camps, have tried to go home. 'The majority of them are ending up in a camp situation in their own country as conditions are still not conducive for a return in safety and dignity,' said Moses Okello, UNHCR's Representative in Liberia." (UN News, 25 Aug 04)

Facilitated IDP return to take place according to new government strategy (June 2004)

- Facilitated return, resettlement and reintegration of IDPs (and refugees and ex-combatants) scheduled to begin on 1 October 2004 and end before the 2005 elections
- 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

"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 re-integration 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.” (GoL, 2 Jun 04)

Categories of IDPs to receive assistance under government resettlement strategy (June 2004)

- Registered IDPs in camps (about 260,000 in total) will receive resettlement and reintegration assistance (although in reality details of this, particularly the funding, remain unclear)
- Unregistered IDPs may receive community-based assistance in their areas of return, but not targeted resettlement assistance

“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.” (GoL, 2 Jun 04)

Key findings of IDP return survey: return destinations and vulnerabilities (May 2004)

- The vast majority of IDPs in camps wish to return to their counties of origin, and only 1.5 percent wish to resettle elsewhere, according to the IDP Return Survey
- Main return movements will be to Lofa and Bomi counties
- A surprisingly small percentage of the overall IDP camp population declared any specific vulnerability (95 percent of men and 86 percent of women declared no vulnerability)

“Return Destination

The 20 camps surveyed are in three counties close to Monrovia and the vast majority of the IDPs in those camps plan to return to their counties of origin (Map 2 in Appendix A). It is important to note that responses to the question of “where do you want to go when you leave the camp” were not on an individual basis, the head of the household answered the question on behalf of the people living in that shelter.

Key Findings – Return Destination

- Only 1.5 percent (3,809 people) expressed a preference to return to a district different than their district of origin.
- The majority of the heads of households expressed a desire to return to Lofa (36 percent) and Bomi (32 percent) counties.

- The highest percentage of IDPs (26.5 percent) plan to return to Klay District in Bomi County.
- In Lofa County the majority plan to return to Voinjama (11 percent), Zorzor (10 percent), and Salayea (9 percent) Districts.

Total IDPs by County of Return

County	Total	Percent of total
Lofa	95,502	36.47%
Bomi	82,579	31.53%
Gbapolu	30,128	11.50%
Bong	23,010	8.79%
Grand Cape Mount	15,313	5.85%
Grand Bassa	4,516	1.72%
Montserrado	3,121	1.19%
Nimba	2,607	1.00%
Margibi	1,711	0.65%
Sinoe	1,467	0.56%
Maryland	750	0.29%
Rivercess	585	0.22%
River Gee	280	0.11%
Grand Gedeh	162	0.06%
Grand Kru	155	0.06%
Total	261,886	100%

Vulnerabilities

Specific information was gathered in order to identify vulnerable IDPs that may require special assistance in the return and reintegration process. Vulnerabilities assessed included; being a single parent, single female, teenage mother, physically disabled, chronically ill, mentally ill, an unaccompanied minor, unaccompanied elder or other specific vulnerability indicated by the IDP themselves. Figures 5 and 6 show a breakdown of the vulnerabilities by sex and by head of household.

Female Headed Households

Vulnerability	Total	Percent
No Vulnerability	8,530	32 %
Single Parent	16,234	61 %
Other Vulnerability	1,715	7 %
Total	26,478	100 %

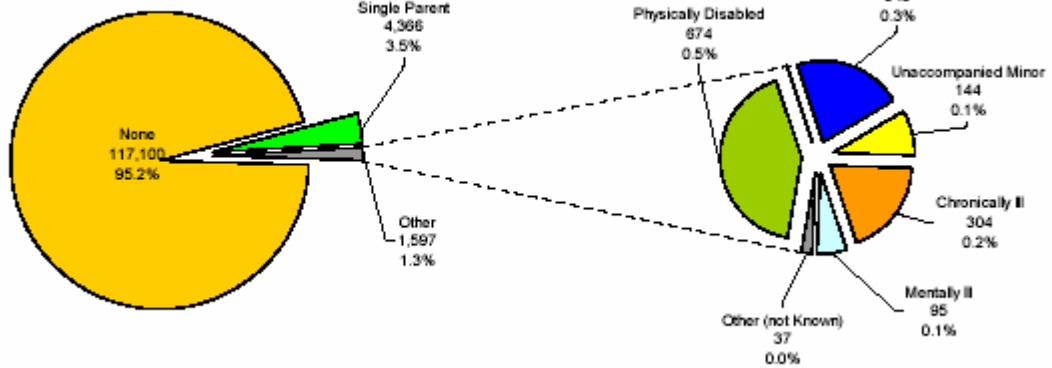
Male Headed Households

Vulnerability	Total	Percent
No Vulnerability	21,024	81 %
Single Parent	4,100	16 %
Other Vulnerability	890	3 %
Total	26,014	100 %

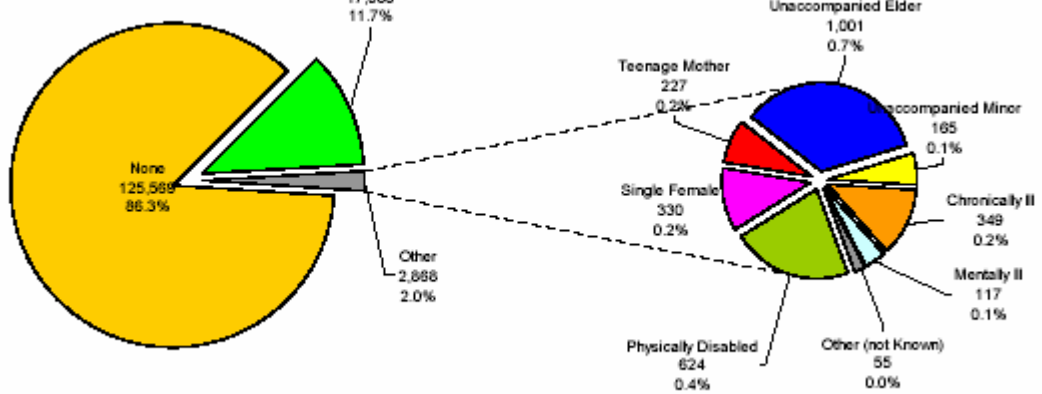
Key Findings- Vulnerabilities (All IDPs)

- Of the entire IDP population the vast majority of men, 95 percent, had no vulnerabilities.
- Of the five percent of males with a vulnerability, 3.5 percent were single parents.
- For women 86 percent listed no vulnerability.

IDP Vulnerability - Males



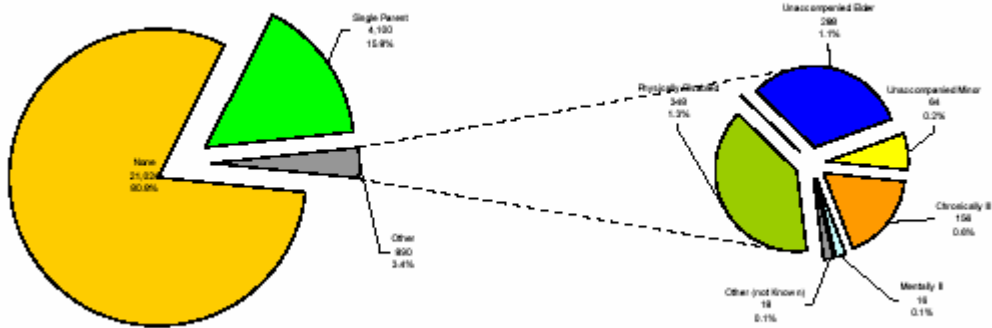
IDP Vulnerability - Females



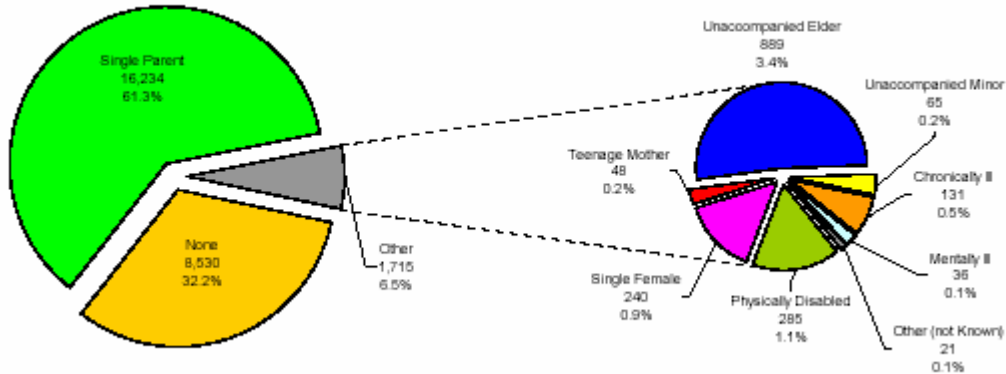
Key Findings- Vulnerabilities (Heads of Household)

- Of the 261,886 people living in the surveyed IDP camps there are 52,493 heads of households.
- Of the 52,493 household heads 26,014 are male and 26,479 are female, an almost 50/50 split.
- Of the female headed households 61percent are single parents as opposed to only 16 percent of the male headed households.
- Of the 14 percent of female headed households with vulnerabilities almost 12 percent were single parents.

IDP Vulnerability - Male Heads of Households



IDP Vulnerability - Female Heads of Households



(OCHA/UNHCR, 18 May 04)

Return problematic for child soldiers (June 2004)

- Child soldiers are too scared to return home, and there are insufficient reintegration and rehabilitation facilities to cater for them, warn child protection agencies
- Disarmed child soldiers are exceeding the envisaged three month stay in interim care centres because they feel unable to leave
- In June 2004, child soldiers accounted for about six percent of the almost 43,000 disarmed combatants

“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.

According to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), former child soldiers account for about six percent or 2,770 of the 42,755 combatants who have given up weapons since the launch of the disarmament program last December. Boys make up the vast majority - 2,231 versus 539 girls.

The Liberian government's Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission said it was aware of children exceeding the envisaged three-month stay in interim care centres and was trying to tackle the problem." (IRIN, 8 Jun 04)

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

"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.” (Oxfam, 26 Mar 04)

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

General

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

"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." (UN, 30 Nov 05)

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

"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." (UNMIL, 6 Oct 04)

"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." (UN, 15 Jun 04)

N.B. In July 2004, all of Liberia was declared UN phase 4 security areas

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

Overview

Political and humanitarian reform offers hope for improved IDP response

The year 2005 heralded significant changes in Liberia – both on a national and international level – that gave rise to cautious optimism for an improved overall response to the IDP situation. Constraints have in the past included weak national response capacity, limited humanitarian access due to both endemic insecurity and poor infrastructure, lack of funding for humanitarian programmes, and weak capacity and coordination at the international level.

The October 2005 elections, which resulted in the inauguration of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as Liberian president in January 2006, provided the first essential step towards restoring Liberia's credibility internationally after years of pariah status. Liberia's international isolation reached its depths during the rule of Charles Taylor who is currently in exile in Nigeria and is still wanted on charges of war crimes in neighbouring Sierra Leone. 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), on the basis that the situation in Liberia continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security (UN SC, 20 December 2005). At the same time donor support to humanitarian assistance in Liberia has been extremely low – notwithstanding the departure of Charles Taylor in August 2003 – largely as a result of rampant corruption within the transitional government (IRIN, 1 June 2005).

There has been a serious lack of funds both for the rehabilitation and reintegration of disarmed ex-combatants, and for humanitarian programmes. The Liberian transitional government and the UN have repeatedly warned that lack of funds for education or skills training for former fighters poses a threat to national security. In September 2005 the UN said that approximately \$18.5 million was still needed for around 26,000 ex-combatants to participate in reintegration and rehabilitation programmes (UN SC, 1 September 2005). At the same time WFP has repeatedly complained that its programmes are threatened by lack of funding, while about one fifth of Liberia's 3.5 million population continues to be dependent on food aid (WFP, 16 January 2006).

Donors have therefore been encouraged by the government's endorsement, in September 2005, of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP) that aims to stamp out corruption and achieve financial accountability by placing foreign experts in key administrative positions (IRIN, 15 September 2005). The UN also welcomed the adoption of the GEMAP agreement, saying it carried "much promise" in addressing the problems that have in the past hampered donor funding (UN, 30 November 2005).

The previous National Transitional Government of Liberia did not have the financial or technical resources to fulfil its primary responsibilities for IDP protection and assistance. While hopes may be high that the new government will usher in a new era of positive change, it is clear that at present the national agency responsible for coordinating assistance to IDPs – the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) – continues to be hampered by a serious lack of capacity and resources.

Given the previous transitional government's incapacity, as well as the overwhelming humanitarian needs in Liberia – and within that the magnitude of internal displacement – there

has been a relatively huge international presence, bringing with it confusing and sometimes highly divisive coordination mechanisms.

The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) – with almost 15,000 troops one of the largest peacekeeping missions in the world – is headed by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) supported by two deputies who include the Humanitarian Coordinator. A key concern, particularly among international NGOs in Liberia, has been the fact that the SRSG effectively manages not only the Humanitarian Coordinator but also all the UNMIL military contingents, raising fears that humanitarian mandates take second place to political and military ones.

While there are numerous national and international humanitarian agencies operating in Liberia – including 16 UN agencies and 450 NGOs (110 of them international) – no single agency has effectively coordinated IDP response (FMR, 31 October 2005). The formal integration of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) into UNMIL in 2004 exacerbated divisions within the humanitarian community. The lack of an effective replacement for OCHA has severely hindered humanitarian coordination, according to an April 2005 report by a joint delegation of the United States and European Commission, and the subsequent proliferation of often unrepresentative coordination mechanisms related to IDPs has ultimately caused “mass confusion and inertia” (EC/US, April 2005).

International NGOs in Liberia have consistently voiced concerns that humanitarian coordination particularly of the return process has been politically driven by UNMIL. The UN’s desire for a “success story” ahead of October 2005 elections in Liberia, they have claimed, has been the main reason for what they see as a rushed and poorly planned reintegration process (IRIN, 6 May 2005). They have argued that the necessary safeguards of voluntariness, the availability of full and objective information, and the declaration of return areas as safe based on an objective assessment, all risked being jeopardised. A dire lack of services as well as continuing protection concerns in areas of return has reportedly resulted in IDPs returning to the camps, or creating new settlements near the capital Monrovia, according to NGOs.

However, the year 2005 also saw some significant changes towards strengthening IDP response at the international level. Humanitarian reform globally resulted in the assignment of clear responsibilities to lead organisations at sector level, with a priority in relation to the protection and care of IDPs. UNHCR agreed to take on sectoral responsibility for camp management, emergency shelter and protection – with Liberia identified as one of three pilot countries for 2006. Although crucial issues remain to be resolved – not least the question of additional funding and resources to allow UNHCR to fulfil its new responsibilities (UNHCR, 7 December 2005) – UN agencies and NGOs in Liberia have generally been very supportive of the new “cluster approach” (IDD, November 2005).

A national policy framework – the Results-Focused Transitional Framework (RFTF) – was adopted by the international community and the transitional government in 2004 designed to address all aspects of Liberia’s rehabilitation, including IDP and refugee return. At the end of 2004 both humanitarian and targeted transitional needs were integrated into the RFTF Humanitarian Appeal. However, donor reluctance to continue supporting reconstruction activities in view of government corruption – resulting eventually in the endorsement of GEMAP – also threatened the release of funds for urgent humanitarian activities. The UN therefore issued a Consolidated Appeal for 2006, requesting \$121 million to address priority humanitarian needs, which was seen as a more effective way of ensuring sustained donor support. The term of the RFTF is due to end in March 2006, while discussions have been underway on the launch of a Common Country Assessment/UN Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF) process as well as an interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper during 2006.

Pending the full development of the CCA/UNDAF, and with the official return programme of registered IDPs expected to be completed in April 2006, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP have established a Joint Action Plan for Community Based Recovery (2006-2007). This provides a framework for a collaborative response to the reintegration of displaced populations in Liberia – targeting community-based projects aimed at the restoration of basic services, protection, productive livelihoods, shelter and community infrastructures. The Action Plan also supports national institutions to progressively take the lead in directing the recovery process (UNHCR, December 2005).

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)
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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 journalists from the print and electronic media on 25 and 26 November, general protection of IDPs and the
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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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Action by Churches Together (ACT), 12 March 2003, Plight of people worsening as civil crisis threatens to spiral out of control in Liberia

Internet : http://www.act-intl.org/news/dt_nr_2003/upliberia0203.html , accessed 30 April 2003

Action by Churches Together (ACT), 4 May 2001, "Liberia: Thousands of displaced need help"

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