



**Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of  
UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women, and WFP  
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**Efficiency of emergency response and the transition to recovery  
and long-term development: lessons learned**

**Annex: The case of Liberia**

1. The Republic of Liberia in West Africa is bordered by Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire and by the Atlantic Ocean. It has a population of 3.5 million<sup>1</sup> and a land area of 111,369 km<sup>2</sup>. Montserrado county, where the capital Monrovia is located, is the most populous county, with 1.1 million people; the next most populous county is Nimba, with 462,026 residents. The national population includes 16 indigenous ethnic groups and various foreign minorities. According to the 2008 census, Liberia has a population growth rate of 2.1 percent. Like its neighbours, Liberia has a large population of young people: half of the national population is under 18.

2. Liberia has vast and varied natural resources, large biodiversity, lush vegetation and a climate favourable to agriculture. It has enormous potential for mining, ecotourism and the production of food and cash crops, but decades of economic mismanagement and lack of social investment, exacerbated by two civil wars, have seriously eroded human capital, social infrastructure and productive assets.

## **Background**

3. The history of Liberia is unique in Africa: it was founded in 1821 by freed American slaves with the help of a private organization called the American Colonization Society, on the premise that former American slaves would have greater freedom and equality there than in the United States of America. Liberia is one of only two countries in Africa – Ethiopia is the other – that have never been colonized by a foreign country.

4. A military coup in 1980 led by Samuel K. Doe overthrew the incumbent president, William R. Tolbert, and marked the beginning of a period of instability that led to the first Liberian civil war in 1989. During the conflict Charles Taylor entered Nimba county, backed by fighters from neighbouring countries: they quickly gained control of much of Liberia and found strong support among local people disillusioned with the Doe government.

5. After winning a bloody insurgency, Taylor was elected President in 1997. But by 1999 his dysfunctional government was involved in another cycle of civil war which lasted until 2003. By then, various rebel groups controlled two thirds of the country. The international community increased pressure on Taylor to resign and he fled to Nigeria in August 2003. Following his departure, a comprehensive peace agreement was signed by the rival factions and a peacekeeping force of 15,000 was deployed by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). A transitional government was established, and in 2005 free and democratic elections led to the appointment of the first African woman Head of State, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Charles Taylor is currently facing a tribunal at the International Criminal Court at The Hague to answer to accusations of war crimes.

6. Today, Liberia enjoys relative social and political stability and improved security. This is largely a result of the work of the Government, which has political, financial and military support from the international community with a view to strengthening civil authority throughout the country to enable gradual recovery.

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<sup>1</sup> National Population and Housing Census, 2008.

## **Liberia: a Fragile State**

7. Peace, security and social and political stability have increased since the establishment of the new Government in 2005. But despite significant progress in establishing public institutions, strengthening the security apparatus and investing in the development of national capacities, Liberia continues to face challenges to its recovery and development. It remains a fragile state, especially in view of the political instability in West Africa, particularly in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, impending national elections, weak national cohesion, significant security challenges and the transfer of UNMIL responsibilities to United Nations agencies. Widespread poverty and the 25 percent unemployment rate<sup>2</sup> among the large population of young people could threaten peace and stability. According to the recent Human Development Report, Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 162<sup>nd</sup> of 169 countries in the 2010 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) human development index.

8. In July 2009, the national Demobilization, Disarmament, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme (DDRPP) was declared complete; in December 2009 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its final report. Also in 2009, the Government, a signatory of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention), and its international partners considered the internal displacement situation to be over.

9. The main drivers of fragility in Liberia are:

### ***Economic and social situation***

- Tensions in Liberia are often caused by high levels of poverty and inequality related to competition for resources and limited employment opportunities. The high unemployment and under-employment rates among young people constitute a critical challenge in that they lead to the establishment of a volatile and vulnerable group that could be exploited by insurgents seeking to undermine stability. A 2008 core welfare indicator question survey by the Ministry of Labour and the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services estimated that 63 percent of Liberians lived below the poverty line and that 48 percent lived in extreme poverty. Clearly, improved livelihoods would be a powerful tool to address the multiple drivers of fragility.
- Low levels of investment in agriculture, which are exacerbated by land disputes, are a significant threat to the economy. Agricultural extension services are minimal, and incentives to enter the sector and opportunities for agricultural skills training are very limited. Despite the destabilization of previous investment in agriculture, continued urban migration, an ageing farming population – the average age of farmers is 55 – and low interest among young people, agriculture is the sector with the greatest potential for increasing sustainable livelihoods and gross national product (GDP).

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<sup>2</sup> Demographic Health Survey 2008.

- The slow rate of economic growth caused by the global economic and financial crisis had a major impact on reconstruction: GDP growth fell from 9.1 percent in 2007 to 4.6 percent in 2009. Even though the December 2010 forecast of the International Monetary Fund was 6.3 percent growth, Liberia remains vulnerable to variability in global food prices.
- Post-war tensions that damaged the social fabric, low levels of literacy – only 55 percent of people aged 6 and over are literate – and the poor quality of the workforce have created a competitive market for unskilled jobs.
- Education is critical to sustaining peace and stability: more work is required to improve school enrolment – net enrolment for primary education is only 33 percent<sup>3</sup> – and more investment is needed in the education sector. The gender gap is narrowing – it is 0.88 in primary education and 0.69 at the secondary level – but more work is required to support enrolment among girls and boys.
- A 2008 survey by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission identified land and property disputes as one of the main threats to Liberia's fragile peace. The situation is complicated by a weak judicial system with widespread impunity in cases of wrongdoing and a weak security apparatus, which limit the capacity of the state to impose its authority.

### ***Human rights***

Despite advances in the protection of human rights, concerns persist relating to significant capacity and resource constraints in the legal, judicial and correction sector, including the juvenile justice system. Rape, other sexual crimes and female genital mutilation remain prevalent. Children continue to suffer from violence at home, at school or in the community. The adjudication of disputes through trial by ordeal is deeply entrenched and continues to be practised with impunity.

### ***Security***

The West Africa sub-region is increasingly unstable. Recent unrest following Presidential elections in Guinea seems to be resolved, but the political impasse following the November 2010 presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire is a significant concern in terms of its impact on the impending national elections in Liberia and of pressure on resources created by the influx of refugees from Côte d'Ivoire, of whom there were 26,500 in January 2011.

### ***Corruption***

Corruption is rife, despite government efforts to eliminate it. State institutions affected by corruption include the police, schools – where money or sexual favours may be required in return for good grades – and health facilities. Payment of a bribe to obtain employment is common.

### ***Violence***

Widespread and frequent armed robberies reflect weaknesses in the security sector such as the limited capacity of the police to maintain law and order. The continuing high levels of

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<sup>3</sup> National School Census Report 2007/2008.

gender-based violence, including rape, in households, communities and schools are a critical concern.

10. In view of the risks of violence in Liberia, UNMIL decided not to reduce its police advisory service and to maintain all seven formed police units, given their critical backstopping capability. The strength of the peacekeeping force will be maintained at its present level until after the 2011 elections.

## **Reconstruction and Development Strategy in Liberia**

11. The current Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) for 2008–2011 is the national development framework for Liberia. The PRS has four pillars: (i) enhancing security; (ii) promoting economic recovery; (iii) strengthening governance and the rule of law; and (iv) developing infrastructure and basic services. The Government, with support from international partners, is investing major resources to achieve the aims of the PRS, which is critical in setting Liberia on a sustainable path towards recovery and development.

12. In September 2010 Liberia was included in the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission. The commission and the Government of Liberia are committed to working for peace and security under the Statement of Mutual Commitments, which identified peacebuilding priorities in terms of the rule of law, reform of the security sector and national reconciliation; these issues are addressed in the Peacebuilding Priority Plan.

13. Food production is gradually improving in post-conflict Liberia as abandoned land is returned to cultivation, but low agricultural productivity leaves Liberia heavily dependent on imports. The increases in global food prices, particularly for rice, had a significant impact on food security, especially among the urban and non-producing rural groups that account for two thirds of the population.

## **United Nations Programmes, Coordination Mechanisms and Achievements**

### ***Coordination and joint programmes***

14. The United Nations operated in humanitarian mode throughout the crisis under the Consolidated Appeals Process. The United Nations Development Group and the World Bank carried out a post-conflict needs assessment in 2003. The cluster approach, which was piloted in Liberia in early 2006 to enhance accountability, effectiveness and predictability in humanitarian action, was suspended at the end of 2007. United Nations programmes in Liberia are aligned with the PRS: the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) sets out the ways in which the United Nations will support the PRS and establishes an additional outcome area for 2008–2012 addressing HIV and AIDS.

15. In view of the shift of emphasis from humanitarian intervention to recovery and development, in line with the PRS and UNDAF, coordination support at the national level was shifted from the UNMIL Humanitarian Coordinator's Support Office to the office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, now known as the Integrated Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General. At the county level, this function is carried out by county support teams and county coordinators. In 2008, the United Nations established an integrated coordination structure based on the five UNDAF outcomes – peace and

security, economic revitalization, governance and the rule of law, basic social services and HIV/AIDS.

16. At the request of the President in March 2010, Liberia became a Delivering-as-One self-starter country, the first post-conflict country with a peacekeeping mission to implement the initiative. The Delivering-as-One process was launched jointly by the United Nations, the Government and development partners in October 2010 at a high-level meeting that endorsed an implementation roadmap and established a joint steering committee. The Delivering-as-One initiative aims to increase the coherence, effectiveness and relevance of United Nations operations in Liberia, with a focus on enhancing the impact of the United Nations system by increasing Government ownership, delivering coordinated, effective and efficient assistance and ensuring smooth transfer of UNMIL responsibilities to United Nations agencies.

17. The United Nations in Liberia is implementing five joint programmes that combine the comparative advantages of United Nations agencies and UNMIL in support of government priorities, as articulated in the PRS. The joint programmes, which include development of common work plans, joint needs assessments, planning, monitoring and evaluation, collaborative decision-making and improved dialogue with partners, are being implemented to address: (i) food security and nutrition; (ii) employment and empowerment of young people; (iii) sexual and gender-based violence; and (iv) gender equality and women's empowerment. Signature of a joint programme on the prevention of and response to HIV and AIDS is expected in the first quarter of 2011; a joint programme on justice and security will be formulated to address issues identified in the Peacebuilding Priority Plan.

18. Preparations for the gradual transfer of UNMIL technical and operational functions to United Nations agencies, government authorities and other partners began in 2010. Two thematic working groups were created to address issues related to security and civilian assets; significant progress has been made with regard to security. Four joint transition task groups were established in December 2010 for borders and airports, law and order, security of assets and logistics: their role is to identify UNMIL duties that may be transferred to United Nations agencies in the immediate future or taken over by the Government once capacity gaps have been filled, and those requiring additional resources or capacities. The initial findings and recommendations of the groups, to be presented to the Working Group in January 2011, will lead to the development of a detailed transition plan by mid-2011. Collaborative research on the impacts on peace and stability is being planned by Columbia University, the World Bank, UNDP and UNMIL. The expected policy recommendations will help advance planning for the transition of civilian assets.

### *Agency contributions*

19. The UNDP country programme (2008–2012), which is aligned with the PRS and UNDAF, has two pillars – democratic governance and pro-poor economic development – operationalized through four sub-components: (i) state capacity and institutional enhancement; (ii) consolidation of peace and security; (iii) economic policy and management; and (iv) sustainable local economic recovery. Capacity development is the major cross-cutting activity. The country programme supports mainstreaming of gender and environmental issues in national policies and promotion of equality in socio-economic opportunities.

20. Under the pro-poor economic development pillar, a ten-year capacity development strategy and action plan have been developed to: (i) improve basic services such as schools

and clinics; (ii) improve roads to provide access to markets and enable people to return their places of origin; and (iii) construct warehouses and hand them over to farmers' groups to improve food storage and mitigate food insecurity. The National Youth Volunteer Service has been piloted, and under DDRP 65,000 former fighters have been trained in vocational skills to assist their social re-integration. The inclusive financial sector programme has assisted 18,000 vulnerable beneficiaries through micro-finance initiatives.

21. The democratic governance pillar supports public administrative reform, for example through the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission; it assists with preparation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report and organization of the national reconciliation conference. A major decentralization programme is led by UNDP and the Ministry of Internal Affairs at the county and district levels, with a focus on building the capacities of local staff. The pillar supports the security and justice sectors, for example by helping to make the Liberian National Police operational and by promoting capacity-building for public prosecutors and defence lawyers. UNDP supports enhancement of the capacities of the National Elections Commission, especially in view of the forthcoming national elections, and provides technical assistance for the 2011 referendum and national elections, for which it manages a fund of US\$30 million.

22. The Government, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other partners have to some extent addressed the multi-faceted challenges of sexual and gender-based violence over the past two years. UNFPA refurbished 12 health facilities, provided rape and post-exposure prophylaxis kits, trained trainers for clinical management of rape, and equipped facilities with medical reporting forms to facilitate prosecution of rapists. Access to medical services has increased considerably, but only 20 percent of reported rape cases involved access to medical services within 72 hours. There are ongoing challenges in accessing services in rural areas because of inadequate facilities at the community level, because qualified health professionals are not retained, and because of inadequate infrastructure at the county level.

23. The joint programme of the Government and the United Nations on sexual and gender-based violence, which was launched in 2008, has helped to improve redress mechanisms and systems to reduce such violence. During the first phase from 2008 to 2010, support was provided in the psycho-social, healthcare, legal redress and security and protection aspects; an effective coordination mechanism was established. A fund of US\$11 million has been made available for implementation of the programme.

24. Coordinated work has resulted in standard national operating procedures for sexual and gender-based violence and safe homes, a joint monitoring system and Government-led development of a referral system that enables victims to access services. The principle of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse has been reinforced in all border counties through training of border security personnel in collaboration with the Government, the United Nations and the communities.

25. The participation of women traders in training related to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse for security personnel in border counties helped to highlight the risks faced by these women when crossing the border.

26. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) signed its current five-year Programme of Cooperation (2008–2012) with the Government in 2008. UNICEF aims to reduce child mortality and vulnerability and to develop a secure and peaceful environment for

children by: (i) improving service delivery; (ii) developing the capacities of government and civil partners; and (iii) supporting the formulation of national policy on the basis of a child-rights approach. Increased partnership with other agencies and with communities is needed in view of the post-conflict context and with regard to considerations of equity. UNICEF's three main programmes in support of the Government are:

- The Child Survival Programme. This aims to reduce mortality rates among mothers by 10 percent and among children under 5 by 15 percent by 2012. In line with the PRS and the UNDAF, the programme is increasing access to and utilization of health, nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene interventions for mothers and children in the most vulnerable populations. The programme works at three levels: i) support for policies promoting the survival of children under 5 and women of child-bearing age; ii) increasing capacities in ministries involved in child survival; and iii) improving the capacity of caregivers and communities in child survival and maternal health.
- The Basic Education and Gender Equality Programme. This is intended to increase access to primary school by raising the net enrolment ratio to 75 percent from 25 percent in 2007, with gender parity to grade 6, and to increase retention with a view to achieving a completion rate of 90 percent. The two programme components – increased access for gender equality and implementation of quality improvement initiatives – also address Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3 and UNDAF outcomes 4 and 5.
- The Child Protection Programme. This has two components: child justice, and social protection of vulnerable children and young people. It focuses on building child-sensitive social protection laws and systems, for example by building community-based conflict-management structures and legal systems for handling child protection issues. In partnership with the Government, civil organizations and communities, UNICEF is working to create an environment in which children are protected from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. This contributes to UNDAF outcomes 1, 3, 4 and 5, PRS pillars III and IV, and Millennium Development Goals 1, 3, 6, 7 and 8.

27. Many of UNICEF's interventions are implemented under joint programmes of the United Nations and the Government addressing food security and nutrition, sexual and gender-based violence, and empowerment and employment of young people in Liberia.

28. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) aims to contribute to the consolidation of peace by implementing two priorities of the PRS and the Peacebuilding Fund: (i) fostering national reconciliation and conflict management; and (ii) increasing national capacities for peace consolidation.

29. To achieve this, UNOPS works to: (i) improve the working environment and capacities at the Liberian national police headquarters; (ii) improve prisons, increase access to justice and ensure humane prison conditions; (iii) provide technical and financial supervision to ensure that schools are constructed for the Ministry of Education; (iv) construct three administrative district buildings as models for the Western, Central and South East regions; (v) improve working spaces for district commissioners and other government officials in the districts; (vi) improve pre-natal and post-natal care by reducing



morbidity and mortality rates through increased access to primary healthcare; and (vii) increase the safety of births by renovating the maternity hospital in Monrovia and providing new medical equipment.

30. The interventions of UNOPS have supported: (i) training for staff of civil organizations in participatory action-oriented research and facilitation of action-oriented dialogue; (ii) training for a group in the Ministry of Internal Affairs to study and report on challenges affecting the consolidation of peace in Liberia in a way that reflects the perceptions of different sections of Liberian society; (iii) the creation of a national platform for inter-sector dialogue on the challenges in consolidating peace; and (iv) follow up of three recommendations of the 2008 Nimba Reconciliation Project, a public-awareness campaign to combat inter-ethnic discrimination and establish a network of peace committees.

Construction and repair interventions include:

- renovation of the roof, electrical system and plumbing in the maternity hospital;
- construction and logistics support for a new secure prison (including 72 beds);
- construction of 120 classrooms giving access to education to an additional 5,400 pupils; and
- construction of three office buildings in three counties for district commissioners and ministry representatives.

31. WFP's work in Liberia is based on a Letter of Understanding with the Government. Its programmes support the PRS pillars for economic revitalization and rehabilitation of infrastructure and basic services and UNDAF outcomes 2, 4 and 5. Activities are implemented through a protracted relief and recovery operation and a school feeding project, both of which are in their final year of implementation. The main activities in the two projects are:

- **Purchase for Progress (P4P).** This scheme provides an incentive for smallholder farmers to increase production by building capacities in farmer-based organizations for management and agro-processing and by improving access to fair and predictable food markets. The P4P initiative achieves these aims by purchasing surpluses for distribution in the school feeding programme and shortage areas.
- **Livelihood Assets Rehabilitation.** This programme enables farmers to increase marketable surpluses by helping them to increase productivity and to extend the land under cultivation by reclaiming swamps and building small-scale irrigation systems under food-for-work or cash-for-work activities. WFP intends to use food support to rebuild the livelihoods of rural families by helping smallholder farmers to rehabilitate agricultural assets, with a focus on rice production.
- **School Feeding.** These interventions provide social protection for primary schoolchildren. School feeding targets food-insecure areas with high malnutrition rates among children, low and unstable school enrolment and high drop-out rates, especially among girls, and high rates of illiteracy. The project provides nutritious meals for primary schoolchildren and take-home rations for girls in grades 4 to 6.

It also enhances the monitoring and management capacities of the Ministry of Education and increases community participation. To support the Government's efforts, WFP is proposing a development-oriented school feeding programme to increase enrolment and sustain school attendance. A 2008 external evaluation of WFP activities found that school meals were an important factor in revitalizing the education system in rural areas and in encouraging the return and resettlement of displaced populations.

- WFP uses food assistance to protect the nutritional and health status of mothers and children at risk of malnutrition, TB patients and people living with HIV. Under the protracted relief and recovery operation, WFP is providing lean season safety net rations to mitigate the impact of high food prices on vulnerable rural households in the most food-insecure counties during the hunger period between harvests.
- WFP is enhancing the capacities of the Government and communities for increased ownership and participation in the management of programmes through the school meals and food security and nutrition monitoring programmes.

32. In cooperation with the Government, United Nations agencies, donors and stakeholders, WFP is preparing a country strategy for Liberia based on analysis of reconstruction, the current food-security situation and the work of development partners. The strategy will provide a roadmap outlining the ways in which WFP can contribute to sustained recovery of food and nutrition security. It aims to integrate food security and nutrition as elements of the Government's development agenda, which involves the PRS, the Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme, education and health policies and programmes, and the UNDAF.

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