

UNMIL FOCUS



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Liberia Gains From Partners' Forum

No Sex For Help

All-female Police Contingent Arrives

Exclusive Interview
Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf



Message From the Special Representative of the Secretary-General



Since the start of the New Year, there has been a healthy debate in Liberia, in the same vein as seen in democracies elsewhere, on the scorecard of the country's freely elected government that completed one year in office in January.

The debate itself was refreshing, as Liberians have not had the right to free speech for a long time, let alone the freedom to publicly air their views on the performance of their government. Liberians can be proud of the path of peace and democratic governance they have chosen since the civil war ended. In this difficult but decisive journey, the United Nations has stood by the country, every step of the way.

As 2006 drew to a close, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jordan Ryan had the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the Secretary-General's thirteenth progress report on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The report highlighted the encouraging progress made by Liberia's democratically elected government in consolidating peace, promoting national reconciliation and stimulating economic recovery.

Despite the significant strides in these areas, serious challenges persist that must be addressed if progress is to be sustained. Prominent among them is the need to develop a national security strategy and policy to enable Liberian security agencies to sustain the secure environment currently ensured by the presence of UN peacekeepers in the country.

A nationwide recruitment drive has been intensified to reach the target of training 3,500

Liberian National Police personnel by July 2007. The launch in January of the education support programme for female candidates, besides being a much needed affirmative action, aims to achieve a 20 per cent participation of qualified women in the police force. However, there is urgent need for additional donor assistance to address the outstanding logistical and infrastructural needs of the security sector, particularly those of the national police.

With over seven per cent growth, Liberia is among a small number of sub-Saharan countries that saw their economies grow above the regional average in 2006. Yet, considering the massive devastation brought about by the 14-year civil war, Liberia must run while others walk, for it to make up for the lost years. Investments in infrastructure and energy supply are critical to sustained growth. Since Liberia cannot meet these investment needs from domestic sources, external assistance is critically needed to fill the gap.

While UNMIL continues to support the restructuring of Liberia's security sector to enhance the government's ability to maintain peace, other UN agencies are actively involved in humanitarian and development work.

As we have seen in many parts of the world, rebuilding a shattered nation is a long-haul journey. For some years to come, Liberia will need continued bilateral and multilateral assistance. For the international community, the Partners' Forum to be held in Washington in mid-February will be an opportunity to reassert its commitment to help Liberia back to sustainable peace and development.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alan Doss".

Alan Doss
Special Representative of the
Secretary-General and Coordinator of
United Nations Operations in Liberia



Liberia receives a thumping endorsement of its policies at the Partners' Forum in Washington in February leading to some bilateral donors writing off the country's debts with increasing momentum to clear all of Liberia's huge external debts.



The Liberian government and UN launch a nationwide campaign against Sexual Violence and Exploitation as Ban Ki-moon reiterates "zero tolerance" for such acts by peacekeeping personnel.



Marking a first in the history of UN peacekeeping, an all-female police contingent from India arrives in Liberia as more women are encouraged to join Liberia's new police force.



In an exclusive interview, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf sums up the achievements of her government during the past year, acknowledges the challenges that lay ahead and pays tribute to the contribution made by the UN in helping Liberia.

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Liberia Gains From Partners' Forum

By Mathew Elavanalthoduka

Making a strident pitch for continued international assistance to Liberia at the Partners' Forum that brought together the country's bilateral and multilateral partners in Washington in February, newly elected Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said more work remains to be done to entrench lasting peace in the war-torn nation. "Liberia is fast emerging as a pillar of stability in the region," he said, urging the international community to rally behind the struggling West African coun-

try devastated by a 14-year civil war.

Recalling his own childhood experience in war-torn Korea, Ban said he had observed firsthand how such strife "robs individuals of opportunities for a decent life and entire societies of prosperity" but voiced hope that Liberia "can and will succeed" to overcome the terrible legacy of civil war with support from the international community. In a speech delivered by his Special Representative Alan Doss, Secretary-General Ban highlighted Liberia's progress towards restoring and consolidating peace during the past three years since the civil war ended.

"Much work lies ahead to entrench

lasting peace and development in this war-ravaged part of Africa," Ban pointed out and hoped that Liberia's government and citizens would take the lead in such efforts. "But to succeed, they must be able to count on the continuing and collective support of the international community," he stressed.

Ban singled out the government's interim Poverty Reduction Strategy that outlines priority areas needing urgent assistance. These projects range from the reintegration of the country's war-affected population and reform of the security sector, to the rehabilitation of Liberia's legal, judicial and correctional systems. "Donor



Condoleezza Rice, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Paul Wolfowitz, Louis Michel and Alan Doss at the Partners' Forum in Washington

support is also being sought for employment generation, restoration of basic services such as electricity and water, and infrastructure rehabilitation. Today, I appeal to all of Liberia's partners to contribute generously towards these programmes," he said.

The Partners' Forum, held on 13-14 February, brought together the donor community and multilateral agencies supporting the reconstruction of Liberia for the first time since a democratically elected government headed by former World Bank economist Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf took over the reins of the strife-torn nation a year ago. Ban assured the Forum that the entire United Nations family in Liberia would continue to support the government's national reconstruction and development agenda.

Addressing the Partners' Forum, President Johnson-Sirleaf warned that armed conflict could return to Liberia if the international community does not act quickly to assist her year-old government in broad-based reconstruction efforts. "Time is pressing. The risk of return to war

in post-conflict society is high," the Liberian leader told the gathering of international development experts and delegates from over 20 countries.

"Emergency funding established to meet urgent humanitarian needs after peace was established is running out, and this early investment in peace must be augmented if Liberia hopes to avoid a return to chaos. The longer-term challenge of building a functioning economy and a capable state urgently requires development assistance that has been slow in arriving," said President Johnson-Sirleaf and World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz in an op-ed co-written by them in *The Wall Street Journal* on the first day of the Partners' Forum. They called for the lifting



Ban Ki-moon: Liberia "a pillar of stability"

of Liberia's debt burden, a staggering \$3.7 billion accumulated by previous despotic regimes during the past decades.

"If the expectations of two generations of Liberians who put their faith in a better future are not realized, the consequences for Liberia and its neighbours could be dire," they warned, noting that three-quarters of the Liberian population continue to live on less than \$1 per day and nearly half of the children are out of school.

The plea for debt relief received a prompt response from U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "The United States currently holds \$391 million in outstanding bilateral claims on Liberia. We will cancel that debt -- all of it -- under the framework of Heavily Indebted Poor Countries," she said, addressing the

Partners' Forum. Reiterating America's commitment to continue and expand its support for Liberia, Rice said President George Bush had asked for more than \$200 million of total assistance to the country for fiscal years 2007 and 2008, drawing applause from the participants.

"We hope that this will help to relieve Liberia's crippling debt burden, a debt burden that today's leadership and today's people of Liberia do not deserve. We hope that it will enable the Government to direct more of its resources toward reconstruction and development," Rice said, promising to work closely with other donors to resolve Liberia's multilateral debt. The United States also announced that it was prepared to redirect more than \$150 million in funds held by the International Monetary Fund as a contribution to forgiving Liberia's debt to the IMF.

A day later, Germany announced that it would forgive Liberia's entire \$230 million in debt to Berlin followed by United Kingdom promising to provide 10 per cent of the donor funding necessary to clear Liberia's arrears to the African Development Bank.

Addressing a session for Partners' Response, Special Representative Doss said a faster, more responsive model of aid delivery was needed in Liberia as well as an approach that encouraged the wider participation of the population in development choices. "We hope donors will generously support a Trust Fund for Social Services that will allow funds to go to priority activities whether through government, NGOs or UN actors," he said. He pledged to align recovery and development efforts by the United Nations with national goals and the government's interim Poverty Reduction Strategy.

In addition to the United States and World Bank, the two-day Partners' Forum was co-hosted by the United Nations, the European Commission, the African Development Bank and IMF. Twenty-two nations also participated, including China, Japan, France, India, Senegal, Germany and the United Kingdom. Multilateral organizations like the African Union and non-governmental organizations were also represented. A follow-up meeting to review progress would be held early next year in Monrovia. ♦

Alan Doss, Varbah Gayflor and Jordan Ryan at the launch of the campaign



No Sex For Help

By Sulaiman Momodu

“Would you allow your mother, sister or daughter to be sexually exploited and abused?” The question is directed at men who misuse their wealth, authority or physical power for sexual gratification.

“No sex for help, no help for sex!” is the theme of the year-long campaign to combat Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in Liberia and to drive home the message that sex is not a requirement for jobs, grades, medical treatment or other services. “Pay my school fees if you wish but not for sex” and “Treat me like your own child, not your sex mate” are among the campaign’s messages aimed at sensi-

tizing the Liberian people and international partners on the prevention of SEA.

At his first formal press conference in New York in January, newly elected UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reiterated the UN policy on sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel and others. He said zero tolerance means zero complacency and zero impunity.

Organised by the Liberian government and the United Nations Mission in Liberia

(UNMIL) together with national and international partners, the campaign was simultaneously launched last December in Monrovia and other parts of the country with thousands of people receiving the message that SEA is an “unacceptable behaviour.” During the event, several promotional materials were distributed, including T-shirts, posters, flyers, wristbands and stickers.

Women and children were the principal victims of Liberia’s prolonged civil war. Killed, raped, enslaved and sexually abused, women and girls have been treated as mere commodities by men.

In a special message during the launch of the campaign at Monrovia City hall, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf urged privileged and successful Liberians and members of the international community not to misuse their wealth and power to



Help

sexually exploit children and women. "Let us constructively combine our efforts in this campaign to identify, prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse as a nation and as members of the international community."

Re-affirming her commitment to the fight against SEA and its consequences in Liberia, Johnson-Sirleaf noted that SEA includes the exchange of money, food, goods, services or any other form of assistance for sex and pointed out that it is damaging to any society as it destroys relationships, families and communities and leads to diseases such as HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies and causes lasting emotional or psychological scars.

Although allegations of SEA have made headline news in recent times with accusing fingers pointed at peacekeepers

and humanitarian workers in Liberia and other countries, the problem itself is an age-old one. Giving a testimony at the launch, a senior female government official noted that sexual exploitation and abuse has not been a new phenomenon. "It is not now that it started. I can remember as far back when I was in school as a student," she said, narrating how a teacher had given a very difficult and impromptu test which all the students failed. The teacher then asked the girls to meet him privately at home if they wanted to pass the test.

Reiterating the commitment of the United Nations to combat SEA, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Alan Doss said the purpose of the campaign is to make clear that SEA is totally unacceptable. He noted that in a post-con-

"Zero tolerance is the norm," the UN envoy said, highlighting what is being done within the United Nations to address SEA. "There will be no cover up within UNMIL for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse," he stressed.

flict situation where people are striving to restore their dignity and self-pride and in which the rule of law and basic social and cultural institutions may still be fragile, SEA represents a gross violation of the survivor's human rights. The responsibility for prevention of SEA must be shared by everyone, he stressed, including -- parents and guardians, religious and political leaders, teachers and those in position of moral and financial authority, together with Liberia's partners in the international community.

"Zero tolerance is the norm," the UN envoy said, highlighting what is being done within the United Nations to address SEA. "There will be no cover up within UNMIL for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse," he pointed out. "We have a duty of care as UN staff to help the people of Liberia and not contribute to the trauma

they have suffered -- this is why we must be part of the solution and not a cause of the problem."

Doss detailed the operations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) which investigates SEA cases and noted it was an autonomous body that reported directly to the UN headquarters in New York. He said UNMIL publishes a report twice a year "which says what we are doing, what the outcome is and where we are proceeding."

At his first formal press conference in New York in January, newly elected UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reiterated the UN policy on sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel and others. He said zero tolerance means zero complacency and zero impunity. "In the coming months, I will work with Member States to forge an ever stronger partnership to ensure that accountability is brought to bear -- among the perpetrators, and among their commanders and superiors."

Liberia's Minister of Gender and Development, Varbah Gayflor pointed out that SEA is a major challenge that is having a very negative impact on Liberians. "We must create the necessary environment where all members of society, regardless of age or status have the opportunity to lead a life of dignity and fulfillment," she said.

The year-long SEA campaign in Liberia started with a week of activities including sports as well as musical and cultural events. At a jam-packed concert at the Antoinette Tubman Stadium in Monrovia, Liberia's famous comedian George "Boutini" thrilled the audience with comedies depicting SEA messages. Other local and regional artists warned people "not to fall into SEA."

The in-country network on SEA is chaired by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Jordan Ryan. The campaign, led by the Ministry of Gender and Development is planned and implemented through the Sexual and Gender-based Violence Task Force. It includes national and international non-governmental organizations, government representatives, UN agencies, donors and UNMIL. ♦

Combating Rape

By Marjorea Ballada

Monrovia grieved over the painful loss of nine-year-old Theodosia Janjay Gargar last July. She died after being raped by a 35-year old man in the Paynesville suburb of the capital. Gargar's fragile body was severely injured from the rape that left her incontinent before she died.

Children as young as four years are becoming an easy prey to rapists especially in the rural areas of post-war Liberia. The grandmother of six-year-old Lisa Harris* was so horrified when she caught an 18-year-old cripple who lives in the neighbourhood in the act of raping her granddaughter. Her family immediately reported the rape to the police in Gbarnga after they brought little Lisa to Phebe Hospital in Suakoko. Denying the charges pressed against him, the accused said: "I was not to my mind. My friend gave me medicine [local aphrodisiac]. That's what made me act so. It's not me. It's the devil. And she also asked me to play with her, so I played."

Before a new rape law was passed in December 2005, only gang rape was a crime in Liberia. The current anti-rape legislation, which came into force after President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was sworn into office, is much tougher and more comprehensive than the previous law. It broadens the scope of rape to cover penetration with any foreign object, and not just the male sex organ. It also addresses the aspects of rape of boys and assault of children under the age of 18. Under the new legislation, bail will not be granted for accused rapists and punishment is seven years to life imprisonment. Human rights activists consider this to be a significant milestone in the fight against rape in war-ravaged Liberia.

Rape and sexual abuse were rampant during the 14-year civil crisis. A survey conducted by the UNDP in 2004 revealed

that 60 to 70 per cent of Liberian women had been subjected to some form of sexual violence during the war. The war ended three years ago but nothing much seems to have changed since then, at least for the women and girls who continue to fall victim to prowling men.

has pledged.

Africa's first female President had highlighted the plight of Liberian women during her inaugural address. "I know of the struggle because I have been a part of it," she said. "I recall the inhumanity of confinement, the terror of attempted rape."



A billboard in Monrovia alerts the victims of rape

The poor rape victims can only hope that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf will be true to her promise. "We are determined to combat violence against women and girls and to protect the human rights of all people in our society. We will furthermore enforce the Rape Law -- which came into effect the day after my inauguration -- without fear or favour," Johnson-Sirleaf

President Johnson-Sirleaf also endorsed and supported the official five-year National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action that is being implemented jointly with Liberia's development partners.

However, the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL), the leading anti-rape advocacy group, continues to lobby for the establishment of a special

court devoted to rape charges to expedite the processing of the cases. Most of the courts in Liberia are not yet fully functional and qualified lawyers are lacking in rural areas.

At the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court in Gbarnga, 180 km east of the capital city of Monrovia, Bobby Johnson* was charged with raping a young girl and boy on separate occasions. His case was tried during the August term of court but the trial was discontinued because of insufficient prosecution evidence. AFFELL members

Kangoma, says that as of February there are already four rape cases in his docket awaiting trial.

In an effort to step up the measures undertaken by the Government to combat sexual violence, UNMIL has carried out various campaigns to ensure that Liberians are aware of their new rights. The nationwide information campaigns, held in partnership with the Ministry of Gender and Development use a community-based approach involving youth groups, opinion leaders, and local celebrities. Key mes-

eight police stations, and five correctional facilities around the country have so far benefited. UNMIL's Legal and Judicial System Support Division has trained hundreds of legal and judicial personnel and deployed the division's legal advisors in the counties to offer consultations on the ground.

The UN Police is also working closely with the Liberian National Police on building the capacity of the Liberian National Police (LNP) by providing special trainings on women's rights and handling of cases of rape and abuse. The LNP are also being trained on referral for medical treatment and administration of post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection. A dedicated section in the police stations separately handles cases related to sexual and gender-based violence and abuse.

UNMIL continues to provide training and assistance to the Ministry of Gender and Development in developing gender sensitive programmes. The Human Rights and Protection Officers deployed throughout the country also continue to monitor and report human rights situation and train the Liberian police on human rights issues.

Although much has been accomplished, a great deal still remains to be done in Liberia to break the entrenched culture of impunity as more reports of rape continue to surface involving influential community members such as religious and traditional leaders, teachers, and even family members.

One such case was tried by the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court in Gbarnga in May 2006. A 64-year old man was found guilty of raping an eight-year-old girl. The man was a church pastor in the young victim's community.

Majority of the rape victims particularly in rural Liberia would rather forget about the inhumane injustice they suffered rather than face the disapproval of their families and community. "There is a general conspiracy of silence or denial by the community or even the affected family. Customs and traditions often take precedence over Liberia's formal legal system," says AFELL President Lois Bruthus. ♦

**Not the real name. Some names in this story have been changed to protect their identity.*



believe that the weak judicial system is hampering the war against rape.

Although rape cases have caught people's attention after the new rape bill was enacted, only a few cases have been tried in Gbarnga. Three rape cases received life imprisonment and another case got a 10-year sentence. The Clerk at the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court, Kingsley

sages are translated in the local dialects to be more effective. Rape victims are encouraged to report their cases to the police and to urgently seek medical treatment.

To further bolster the rule of law, UNMIL is also renovating dilapidated judicial infrastructures through its Quick Impact Projects. Thirteen courthouses,

EDUCATING WOMEN FOR A POLICE CAREER

By Sulaiman Momodu

I believe the time has come for my dream to come true,” said Victoria King, 21, who has been aspiring to become a police officer for as long as she can remember. It was Saturday morning, 20 January, and King was among dozens of women who had flocked to the Ministry of Education headquarters on Broad Street in the Liberian capital of Monrovia heeding the call for more women to join the country’s new

police force.

The 21-year-old said she always dreamed of a career as a police woman. She admired female officers in the Liberian National Police (LNP) in their dark blue uniforms and envied women officers among the UN Police. But she had a challenge -- her qualifications. Having left school in tenth grade, King lacked the requisite high school certificate that would qualify her for police recruitment.

King was a victim of the civil war and doubly handicapped because of her gender. During the civil war years, tens of

thousands of girls were forced to drop out of school. Some went into early marriages, many were forced to become “bush wives” to fighters, and thousands of them got killed. The lucky ones fled their homes.

As the loud speakers rent the air inviting women to join the police force, young aspirants milled around specially placed tables to complete forms to join a programme that would help bring their educational level up to high school graduation and thus qualify for LNP recruitment. King and scores of other women facing the same predicament were eager to grab the



opportunity.

Launching the pilot education programme for interested female police candidates between the ages of 18 and 35 years with the aim of increasing female representation by at least 20 per cent among police personnel, Liberia's Vice-President Joseph Boakai commended the LNP, the UN Police and the Ministries of Education, Justice, and Gender and Development for coming together to implement the initiative. "Enduring peace cannot be guaranteed unless women play a greater role in the peace process and the reconstruction of a post-conflict society," he said.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Alan Doss, said the launch of the programme demonstrates the collective determination of the government and the United Nations to come up with creative solutions to overcome some of the challenges faced by Liberian women. The programme is an opportunity for women to enhance their education and to help make a difference in their country, he said, urging young women to come forward to serve their country in the new police force being trained.

As part of the security sector reform,

all personnel of the existing LNP were required to register in 2004 and to reapply to be part of the new, restructured police force. Over 2,300 police personnel who had either reached retirement age or did not meet the minimum requirements were deactivated, retaining about 900 personnel who were retrained as part of a revamped police force of 3,500 personnel. As of 27 January, 2007, the LNP has 2,336 newly trained personnel, only 6 per cent of them female.

The education support programme was therefore initiated to meet the target of 20 per cent female representation in the LNP. "This is not about lowering standards but about actually helping women raise their standards so that they can be members of this programme," the UN envoy stressed. Noting that women suffered disproportionately during the years of conflict, with many of them forced to leave school, Doss said the programme was one way to right the balance.

He expressed the hope that having a good number of women personnel could actually improve the performance of the police force as research has shown that qualified women know how to better handle conflict, adjudicate disputes and

ensure that both women and men are better protected. He said the restructuring and retraining are all designed to make the LNP a force for good.

"Liberia is on course of a fundamental reform necessary to make us a nation of social justice and equality...if gender equality is to have true meaning, then we need to build the capacity of women to take on more responsibilities," said Minister of Education Joseph Korto.

The first phase of the programme will identify 300 candidates and administer an aptitude test to them. This will follow the selection of 150 candidates who will undergo three months of intensive tutorials at the Stella Maris Polytechnic in Monrovia. They will be provided with educational materials, a daily lunch and a small monthly stipend. The syllabus will be set by the Ministry of Education and the West Africa Examinations Council, which will administer a special examination. Those who qualify will be enlisted for police training. Prior to the commencement of the tutorials, the candidates will sign an agreement committing them to remain in the police force for a minimum of five years. ♦

Aspiring women candidates apply to join the police under the special programme



All-female Police C

By J. Wesley Washington

Dressed in blue camouflage with the UN blue berets to match, 103 women police officers from India disembarked from an Airbus 320 in single file. As the first officer descended the aircraft, she unfurled the Indian flag that swayed to the pleasant African breeze as the rest of the team set foot on the Liberian soil, thus beginning their historic tour of duty as part of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

Re-emerging from a brutal civil war that ended three years ago, Liberia is beginning to stand for all the positive things. First, it was the pioneering election of Africa's first female head of state. Now, the country has welcomed the first ever all-female United Nations police force. This landmark deployment, marking a first in UN's history, follows India's decision in September 2006 to send an all-female police contingent to strengthen the rule of law and consolidate peace in Liberia.

Standing in formation outside a hangar at the Roberts International Airport soon after their arrival in Monrovia on 30 January, the female police officers listened attentively as UNMIL Police Commissioner Mohammed Alhassan, flanked by senior UNMIL colleagues, welcomed them as the 5th UNMIL Formed Police Unit (FPU) within its ranks. He said the mission was delighted to receive their Indian colleagues. "The arrival today of the female FPU is an extra boost to our policing efforts in Liberia."

The 125-strong Indian FPU consists of 103 female officers serving in operational roles with 22 men as logistics staff. The women, among them 13 ranking officers, are formed into three platoons of 30 each with a platoon leader. Although the platoons will be based in Monrovia, they could be deployed to any part of Liberia.

For a few years now, the UN has had increasing success with FPUs as a means



Contingent Arrives

of bridging the gap between regular and lightly-armed police and fully-armed military peacekeepers. The FPU, which is better armed than a regular police unit, provides general support to police activities and acts as a rapid reaction force in public disorder situations and for crowd control. They also assist in training national police officers.

Addressing journalists, the contingent commander, Commandant Seema Dhundia, who has spent 19 years in the Indian police service, said the morale of the contingent is very high. Most of these police officers have served in India's worst flashpoints, from insurgency-hit Jammu and Kashmir to the rife-torn north-eastern states of India. They've also tackled communal riots in the central part of the country. "Their morale is very high. They are confident because training was very tough for them; moreover they are all well experienced. I think they will perform very well out here," she said.

"Our contingent has been carved out

from a paramilitary force and as far as training is concerned, it is almost on the same line of what army recruits get," said Commandant Dhundia, pledging utmost professionalism from the officers in carrying out their duties. "We are definitely going to perform to the best of our abilities and meet the expectations of UNMIL authorities and our own country."

The all-female Indian FPU has arrived at a time when there's heightened efforts by the Liberia National Police (LNP) and its international partners to lure more Liberian women into joining the country's new police force that is currently being restructured. It is hoped that the presence of this all-female contingent will encourage young Liberian women to join the LNP.

In January the Liberian government, in collaboration with UNMIL, launched the education support programme for female candidates, aimed at achieving a 20 per cent participation of qualified women in the police force. Currently female police

officers make up just 6 per cent of the restructured police force with only 147 women receiving training.

Given the unique strengths women can bring to the police components of peacekeeping operations, a UN-backed conference held in New York in March last year called for more female officers among the police contingents in peacekeeping missions. It is believed that female police officers often respond more effectively to incidents of violence against women because they are better equipped to deal with the victims of violence with confidence, compassion and respect.

Female police officers rely more on communication skills and less on physical force than their male counterparts. As a result, women officers are often better at defusing potentially violent confrontations and are less likely to be involved in the use of excessive force. Currently, women make up just 1 per cent of UN military personnel and 4 per cent of police. ♦

Members of the all-female Indian FPU begin their historic assignment



Police Re-armed

By J. Wesley Washington

For the first time in three years, the Liberian government has issued side arms to a unit of the Liberia National Police (LNP), making them the first group of police officers to carry arms since the end of the country's 14-year civil war. The arms were donated by Nigeria.

The LNP, discredited during the civil war, was disarmed under the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. During the civil strife, the police was regularly accused of brutality and abuse of power.

In June 2006 the UN Security Council amended the arms embargo on Liberia recognizing the need for the newly vetted and trained Liberian security forces to assume greater responsibility for national security, including policing, intelligence gathering, and executive protection.

"I think the police will be able to help minimize the crime rate if they are armed. Criminals will be a little frightened," said University of Liberia student, Amos Turay. Early last year, the government admitted the police could not cope with the rising wave of crime, especially in the Liberian capital of Monrovia.

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is mandated to establish a new 3,500-strong Liberia police service by June 2007. Since the training of a new police force began in 2004, the National Police Training Academy has graduated 2,481 police officers. There are 575 recruits currently undergoing basic training.

The amendment of the arms embargo on Liberia paved the way for the Nigerian government to assist the LNP in its ongoing reform. The side arms donated were only a part of the Nigerian government's overall material contribution to Liberia

that included patrol vehicles, police shields and batons, riot helmets, bullet proof vests and smoke cartridges, among other items. In September 2005, 300 LNP officers, including 22 women, underwent training at Nigeria's elite Mobile Police Training College in Maiduguri, Borno State.

"The firearms will help the process of capacitating the LNP and enabling it to be more pro-active and functional in advancing the frontiers of public security and

ted and trained security forces to assume greater responsibility for Liberia's national security. Secondly, it is an expression of confidence by the Security Council in the new Liberia," he said. He also noted that with the exception provided comes responsibility as the Security Council Sanctions Committee has put certain obligations on the Liberian Government, the exporting state, LNP and UNMIL to ensure that these weapons are properly used to uphold the law and not to break it.

As part of the measures to meet the expectations of the Security Council, the LNP must have a secure armoury staffed with trained personnel and a weapon and ammunition registry. The arms must also be marked and only used by trained and vetted members of the service.

UNMIL has supported the LNP in the establishment of such facility by providing technical support and training for the LNP. UN Police in collaboration with the LNP has also developed Use of Force and Firearms Policies that will ensure the protection of the rights of individuals but at the same time guide the individual LNP personnel to use such weapons within the parameters of the law. UNPOL has also launched a refresher firearms training programme for the 300 police personnel who



maintenance of law and order all over the country," Nigerian Ambassador to Liberia Eineje Onobu said at the hand-over ceremony. He cautioned the police authorities to ensure that the side arms are used judiciously and strictly in accordance with the established guidelines as stipulated in the UN Security Council Resolution 1683.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative to Liberia, Alan Doss, said the rearming of the police is an expression of confidence in Liberia. "Firstly, it is the recognition of the need for the newly vet-

underwent training in Nigeria in 2005.

Liberia's Foreign Minister George Wallace, who received the items on behalf of the Liberian government, implored the LNP to use them wisely to restore the hope of residents to normal civilized existence. "Use these instruments to offer protection to residents and communities," he urged, adding, "As police officers, you must be the peace makers to whom the people run to for rescue and not from you because you are using these weapons to abuse and intimidate them." ♦

Liberia Prepares to Host Women in 2008

By Sulaiman Momodu

Elegantly dressed, many wore head-wraps in bright colours and different shapes. The Monrovia City Hall, where they had assembled, reverberated with slogans of solidarity. “Women o women!” they chanted.

The occasion was the launch of the ‘Preparations for Convening the International Colloquium on Women’s Empowerment and Leadership’ that saw women in positions of authority from across Africa converge in the Liberian capital in January. The high-profile event was attended by government ministers, parliamentarians, representatives of regional organizations including ECOWAS and Pan African Women Parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations, traditional and religious groups, and international partners.

Addressing the women leaders, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said the International Colloquium on Women’s Empowerment and Leadership was scheduled to take place in Liberia in January 2008. The two-day seminar in Monrovia, hosted by the Liberian leader in collaboration with the Pan African Parliamentarians and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) was therefore in preparation for the event next year.

The objective of the two-day event was to initiate activities that would lead to the hosting of the international colloquium aimed at empowering women at various levels to become effective leaders and to make a positive impact on development at

national and international levels. It also sought to examine the difference that women make when they assume political leadership and to enhance women’s continued involvement in all processes of conflict resolution and consolidation of peace. In addition, the meeting served as an opportunity to assess the status of the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on the impact of war on women and women’s contribution to conflict resolution and sustainable peace in

ment.”

The only male speaker at the opening ceremony, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Alan Doss, said a good start has been made in Liberia in the area of women’s leadership but pointed out that good and effective leadership doesn’t happen by accident. “It takes vision, planning, training and above all courage and opportunity.” Doss said there are around 32 women leaders around the world who are heads of state or govern-

ment and noted that there are lots of elections coming up in 2007. “Let’s see if we can get that number up further,” he said. Wishing everybody at the seminar success in their work, the UN envoy said the world body will fully support the colloquium “to make it a success and to make Resolution 1325 a living reality.”

Elizabeth Rhen, former Minister of Defence of Finland and former Special Representative of the Secretary-General to

Bosnia-Herzegovina, gave a briefing on Resolution 1325. Rhen emphasized on the need to continue to work with the judiciary as it was important to protect women through legislation. She described President Johnson-Sirleaf, her former UN colleague, as “a model for the rest of Africa” and other countries.

Country reports were presented by Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Liberia on their implementation of Resolution 1325 and what needs to be done to mitigate the gaps in its implementation. Liberia’s Minister of Gender and Development Varbah Gayflor urged women to continue to demonstrate their leadership abilities with a focus on national development. ♦



post-conflict countries, with particular reference to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Rwanda.

President Johnson-Sirleaf, the first ever elected female President on the African continent, pledged to continue to work to strengthen the economic role of grassroots women, to mobilize funds for girls’ education and the rehabilitation of schools, and to support women to enact laws that protect their rights. She lauded the efforts of UNMIL, the international community and bilateral partners for their immense contribution to the achievements during her first year in office. “Without such support for this peace, we could not have embarked upon the path of develop-



SAILING TO START ANEW

A ship carrying Liberian refugees dock at the Monrovia Free Port

By Sarah F. Brownell

As *MV Brenda Corlett*, a repatriation ship of UNHCR, expertly maneuvers its way to berth at the Monrovia Free Port, a nostalgic chant from a group of returnees comprising women, men and children fills the air.

"Liberia, sweet land of liberty; we prophesize to you, you will rise; you will shine in Africa; yea the world," the returnees rhythmically swayed and sang, moving anxious relatives and bystanders to tears.

On receiving the signal to disembark, the returnees excitedly clambered out of the ship, some of them returning to Liberia for the first time in 15 years. In the euphoria of reunion, the new arrivals seem oblivious to the challenges that await them -- of rebuilding their lives and resettling in their communities of origin.

Smartly dressed relatives and friends gather around 26-year-old Deborah Kanneh, whom they last saw as a child some 15 years ago. Kanneh has now returned home, tightly holding her 4-year old daughter.

"So life is not bad in Liberia after all. I am surprised to see so much activity and my family looks so good," exclaims a delighted Kanneh, shaking her head in amazement.

Since the end of the civil war in 2003, the situation in Liberia has improved significantly. The increased commitment of the international community has helped to restore peace and improve humanitarian conditions in the country. For a year now, the democratically elected government, with support from the international community, has made significant strides to address the reconstruction challenges in areas of security, shelter, food security, health and employment.

Information on reintegration activities

as well as updates on Liberia's recovery initiatives in the various counties are disseminated through UNHCR's Mass Information Programme. The programme is aimed at providing Liberian refugees in countries of asylum with objective information about the repatriation and reintegration activities and current development initiatives to empower returnees. Such information helps allay the fears of the refugees who are concerned about what to expect on their return.

Kanneh acknowledged receiving these updates but said her strong desire to resettle in a third country could not allow her to believe that positive things were unfolding in her country. She believed that negative news from Liberia might have increased her chances to be given resettlement in a third country.

However, the death of her mother in early 2006 coupled with the announcement of the end of large scale resettlement for Liberian refugees to the United States



Sarah F. Brownell/UNHCR

of America was the driving force that led Kanneh to make up her mind to return to Liberia. "My mother's death really shocked me. We had come a long way from 1990 and she made sacrifices for me to be alive today," recounts Kanneh, now on the brink of tears.

When civil war broke out in the 1990s, Kanneh and her mother fled to Ghana via the Free Port of Liberia. "We walked from Congo Town, hiding between houses from time to time to get to the Port. At the port, there were people everywhere crying and fighting to enter the gate. I was pushed inside by the crowd and that's when I could not see my mother any more," says Kanneh.

A friend of her mother recognized young Kanneh while she frantically tried

to locate her mother. The lady offered her comfort and later helped her to board the ship along with her family. Luckily, she was later reunited with her mother on the ship. "Even after so many years I can never forget the ordeal I went through," Kanneh said, clinging to her daughter.

Kanneh is among an estimated half a million Liberians, including former IDPS, who have returned either spontaneously or on UNHCR's organized land, sea and air convoys from camps and communities within and outside the country. UNHCR organizes transportation for the refugees to their districts of origin in Liberia; distributes an assistance package containing food, domestic items as well as cash allowance to enable the returnees reach their final destinations. In addition,

UNHCR also ensures that those who came home on their own are also given similar assistance package.

In collaboration with other humanitarian partners, UNHCR is assisting the Liberian Government to resettle the returnees by restoring services such as road networks, rehabilitation of schools, clinics and sanitation facilities.

Like most of the returnees, Kanneh is optimistic that her journey back home is the beginning of a new life in her home country. "Once there is peace and security, there is always room to find a living." ♦

The writer is Public Information Assistant/Mass Information Focal Point, UNHCR, Liberia



GEMAP Shows the Way

By Sulaiman Momodu

The Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme, otherwise known as GEMAP, has been making a significant contribution to arresting corruption and improving transparency and accountability in the operations of governmental agencies, experts associated with the programme say.

GEMAP, aimed at laying a solid foundation for sustainable peace by improving governance and economic management, is a partnership between the government of Liberia and the international community. “The programme is making a significant impact,” says Natty Davis, the National Coordinator of the Liberia Reconstruction and Development Committee who is also President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf’s representative on the programme’s technical

team.

It is a view corroborated by USAID’s Alex Cuffy, an internationally recruited Financial Controller at the Roberts International Airport in Monrovia, Liberia’s main airport. “The programme has worked quite well,” concurs Michael Tharkur, the Country Representative of the International Monetary Fund.

GEMAP, introduced in September 2005, is in recognition of the fact that the

Liberia’s main airport, RIA, is among the institutions that have reaped the benefits of GEMAP



financial systems in Liberia had broken down as a result of the civil war and would need considerable assistance to rebuild. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has been actively involved in the establishment of the programme and plays a key role in ensuring that the benchmarks set are met.

In an exclusive interview with UNMIL FOCUS in January, President Johnson-Sirleaf acknowledged that GEMAP has played a significant role in arresting corruption in Liberia and has helped to improve accountability, transparency and good practices.

As part of the programme, in each of the key Liberian institutions internationally-recruited experts are working with Liberian leadership to establish transparent financial management systems, train and build capacity of the Liberian staff and report openly on their operations, revenue collection and expenditures. The GEMAP experts have co-signing authority so that

no major transactions take place without being examined by both a Liberian manager and an international expert. The programme focuses on public corporations and government entities that historically generate most of the government's revenue including the Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Liberia, Bureau of Budget, the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, the National Port Authority, Roberts International Airport, Liberia Petroleum Refining Corporation and the Forestry Development Agency.

Clearly, one of GEMAP's success stories is the RIA. Not too long ago, Liberia's main international airport was in the red. In some instances the airport could not even pay its own employees or give staff their severance pay. RIA recorded a net loss of over US\$548,000 at the end of 2005.

Cuffy points out that GEMAP, in collaboration with the management of RIA, has been instrumental in turning things around. "If you look at the financial statements at the end of December 2006, we have added nearly a million dollars in net profit, and sustained a positive cash flow, exceeding every target we set. Some of the things that RIA could not do in the past, we are gradually doing now, including obtaining airport liability insurance, buying communications and other equipment for the airport, renovating staff accommodations and so on," he says, attributing the positive achievements to the controls, policies and procedures that have been put in place at the airport.

"Gone are the days when people were holding cash for days, transacting business in cash and without adequate support. All these controls that we have put in have made the process work to ensure that the monies that are generated by the airport are deposited into the bank. We have revamped the whole process and hope it will be sustained when we leave," Cuffy says.

According to the programme's 2006 Status Report, during the past year GEMAP contributed to better economic governance and management in Liberia. In line with the six main interlocking components of the programme, the report states that there have been improvements in financial management and accountability,

budgeting and expenditure management, procurement and concessions practices, control of corruption, capacity development, and donor coordination. Government revenues have increased due to tax administration reforms, State-owned enterprises now have better and continuously improving financial controls and practices and there is better coordination between the Bureau of the Budget and the Ministry of Finance. There has been progress in the development of an anti-corruption policy and capacity-building programmes, and public procurement and concessions are increasingly being scrutinized and conducted according to current laws.

According to the Status Report, GEMAP's goal is to help the government ensure that all revenues due to the government are collected and those revenues are spent according to a budget. The projected revenue for 2006-2007 is US\$129 million, which is 52 per cent higher than the 2005-2006 revenue of US\$84.5 million. The status report states that the credit for these accomplishments belongs to a variety of government efforts. Considerable additional revenue can be found through governance reform efforts, the report adds.

The Economic Governance Steering Committee, which is the highest body charged with overseeing the implementation of the programme, is chaired by President Johnson-Sirleaf. This committee has three groups including the Liberian government, representatives of international partners, and the Liberian civil society. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Alan Doss, represents the UN on this committee.

GEMAP was established following consultations between the National Transitional Government of Liberia and the International Contact Group for Liberia. The programme is a direct response to the concern that the mismanagement of public resources in post-conflict Liberia represents a threat to the peace process. Partners of the programme include the UN, the European Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the United States, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. ♦



"We couldn't have done it without the U.N..."

Within a year after Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf took office as the President of Liberia, the war-torn country is firmly on course of a national renewal. In an exclusive interview with Editor Mathew Elavanalthoduka, the first ever elected female President on the African continent takes stock of her government's performance and acknowledges the critical role played by the United Nations in achieving the progress made during the past one year.

It has been a year since your inauguration. What are your government's achievements during this one year?

We achieved quite a lot in trying to set the country on the course of national renewal. First, we set some very clear goals. We centred those goals around what we call our four pillars -- peace and security, economic revitalization, infrastructure, and governance and the rule of law.

Under each of those pillars we made significant important first steps -- the training of the new army and a new

police force, formulating our economic policies, getting back in good relationship with the IMF and successfully concluding the staff monitoring programme. We got the forestry sector sanctions lifted and made progress on Kimberly Process, met the eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), reviewed major concession agreements and contracts and concluded the renegotiation with Mittal Steel. All of those, including the progress made in the rubber sector, are intended to get the economy back on track.

We've started repairing school buildings, clinics and roads. We have faced setbacks but for the first time in 15 years, we brought some electricity to the country and some running water. Those were important for us.

Through the Governance Reform Commission, a code of conduct for public officials has been drafted, anti-corruption policy and strategy have

been concluded, progress has been made towards establishing a Law

R e f o r m Commission that's

going to address issues related to the judiciary. The Land Reform Commission has been established and the civil service restructuring is underway. We have settled a lot of the inherited

arrears that were owed civil servants. We deactivated 17,000 persons, ghost workers, from the payroll.

We consider all these as important first steps. There are still challenges -- in each of these areas much more needs to be done. That's why we'll be setting the course for the next 18 months in the interim Poverty Reduction Strategy to build upon the progress already made.

In all these achievements you've described, what would you consider as the role played by the United Nations?

The United Nations has been an important, strategic partner in all that we've achieved. First of all, the security and safety of our nation rests on the United Nations and its peacekeeping force.

But the UN has gone beyond that. We've the UN agencies which are supporting much of our development agenda -- the rebuilding of schools, clinics, and capacity development in many areas. Even the peacekeeping force has now been involved in infrastructure rehabilitation, which is exceptional on the part of the UN. The engineering contingents are using their innovative skills to help us repair roads.

The UN has also been very supportive in tracking our progress for the lifting of sanctions. The mission here has provided some of the background information to enable us to do that. We have an extremely good relationship with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General who has been supportive in every way. We



could not have done it without the UN.

During the last one year, Liberia's economic growth rate was well above the average of 5.6 per cent for sub-Saharan countries. What are your expectations for economic growth in 2007?

We think the records will show that in 2006 we grew at eight per cent, above the normal average for African countries. But that is not good enough because we're starting from a low base. We think we should be able to grow in double digits and that's what we're aiming at.

We expect our economy in the second year to grow no less than 15 per cent because by that time we should reactivate most of our productive sectors -- the mining sector, the agriculture sector, the forestry sector. We must be able to maintain, at least for the next three to four years, double digit growth to be able to attack the serious poverty that exists in the country.

One of the major problems Liberia continues to face is high unemployment. How do you intend to tackle this?

We've already started the Emergency Employment Programme as well as the Employment Action Programme. These would enable us to employ about 50,000 young people over the next two years primarily in areas of infrastructure where our rehabilitation programme will be labour intensive and also in some sanitation works in the capital city and other places.

The action we've taken to encourage private sector investment will be the main source of sustained employment. When Mittal Steel operation starts, I don't have the numbers yet, but that's going to entail thousands of jobs, professional as well as manual labour.

We also hope that during the course of this year, other mining activities will start. That will also create jobs and help us bring down the level of unemployment.

We are also trying to get the statistics of what the true level of unemployment is because we've been repeating the 85 per cent over the past two to three years without any real data to tell us. Once we get the statistics, we'll know exactly where we are.

Investment in infrastructure is considered as key to economic growth. Do you foresee external assistance for infrastructure forthcoming and will it be a focus of your attention during the Partnership Forum in Washington in February?

Yes, that will be. We already have external assistance for infrastructure. Our road programme is largely financed by the World Bank and also some of the secondary roads get the support of other partners like USAID. We believe that infrastructure is a key to attracting private investment and private capital.

Even our electricity programme and our water programme are being supported by the European Commission, USAID, World Bank, and more recently even Libya, which has donated two generator sets to expand our programme.

What has been the impact of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP) in the last one year?

They have assisted us through the experts that are placed in our financial agencies essentially in designing the systems for resource management. They've provided a lot of technical assistance in our procurement -- the application of our procurement law through the Public Procurement and Concessions Secretariat. They've provided technical assistance generally to some of our state owned enterprises through the Comptrollers that work with the young people. It has helped us to improve our commitment to accountability, transparency and good practices.

Would you consider GEMAP as having played a significant role in arresting corruption?

Yes, because GEMAP experts are in strategic places of financial management. The systems that they have put in, they have supported, enable our people to carry out their functions in a much more open manner in accordance with the rules and regulations. So yes, it's made an important contribution.

Is the job of leading this country at a critical time like this weighing you down? Are there moments when you

think it was better not to have become the President?

No, I haven't reached that point of frustration (laughs). There are times I've wished I had a better way to solve a problem but I'm always mindful that Liberia is coming out of 25 years of indiscipline, dishonesty, lack of systems and structures, system of imperial presidency and a whole mindset over the years that has changed as a result of civil war violence and corruption. To think that in one year we're going to change the mindset of the people and all of a sudden we'll all be conforming to the rules, that's not realistic.

So we have to understand that for Liberia this is a process, it's a painful process sometimes, as we are going through right now, but there is no quick-fix. To instil a new value system, democracy has to be worked on, tested and tried before you can get to the level where it becomes a part of our thinking processes, our actions.

So yes, sometimes I get a little bit weary because I want to spend my time making progress rather than dealing with some of the politics but by and large I still remain challenged by the possibilities.

Your election as President electrified the women of Liberia, of Africa, and the world and you are a role model for many of them. Do you get a sense of the impact of your election on the women everywhere?

I'm excited by their endorsement, by what the women see in me. I represent to them what women would like to see, the success that it carries, but I'm also humbled by this because it means that I will be monitored very closely. The progress I make will be examined. Some of the mistakes I make will also come under microscope and so it's not an easy role to play. To be the one upon whom women's aspirations in Liberia, Africa, perhaps even the world rest on, it's a big burden on my shoulder.

On the other hand, I believe I have the requisite commitment, experience and competence to be able to try to play this role and make a success of it on behalf the women.

Thank you.

Building Lasting Peace and Development

By Sulaiman Momodu

With thousands of Liberians having returned to their villages from camps for the internally displaced and refugees from neighbouring countries continuing to return home, the legacy of the civil war has spawned a number of knotty issues that could threaten peace and development in some of Liberia's communities.

Civil Affairs Officers deployed across the country by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) acknowledge that, as with most post-conflict situations, there are different problems being encountered in building lasting peace and reconciliation in the country. However, they point out that UNMIL is actively engaged in efforts to consolidate peace at grassroots level using different approaches, at times averting conflicts from snowballing into violence and the destruction of lives and property.

At least some of those returning to their communities after long periods of absence discover that the properties they once owned have been illegally occupied by others. There are also property disputes between clans and multinational companies which had been allocated large tracts of land for their operations in the past, especially in the Nimba, Bong and Grand Cape Mount counties. Compounding the scenario are disputes over political subdivisions. "The latter problem was discovered during planning for local government elections but we are mapping out disputed

boundaries and developing strategies to deal with the situation," says Zainab Bangura, Chief of UNMIL's Civil Affairs Section. The Liberian government has already set up a 'Boundary and Harmonization Committee' with Nimba County as a pilot.

According to Civil Affairs officials, new "structures" have sprung up on some of the encroached properties. Some of these properties were appropriated as "spoils of war." As the warring factions were associated with specific ethnic groups, the actors were encouraged during the civil war to occupy land and properties

UNMIL is actively engaged in efforts to consolidate peace at grassroots level using different approaches, at times averting conflicts from snowballing into violence and the destruction of lives and property.

of their "enemies." The effect of this is that claims for the repossession of land and properties have sometimes taken an ethnic and religious dimension. This is a problem that runs across various counties such as Nimba, Bong and Grand Cape Mount, and cuts across ethnic and religious lines.

Notwithstanding the efforts by UNMIL and national and local authorities to identify and resolve land and property disputes, one area where such issues have

become a serious challenge is Nimba County, near the border with Guinea's Forest Region. It was in this area that the civil war that would later engulf the whole country started on Christmas Eve in December 1989.

Here, those who belong to the Mandingo tribe say their properties have been taken away by members of Gio and Mano tribes, leading to tension among the three ethnic groups. The disputes prompted President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to form a 17-member Ad-Hoc Presidential



Commission on Land and Property Disputes in Nimba County, to address the issue, with UNMIL providing technical and logistical support. The Commission co-chaired by the Minister of Internal Affairs, Ambulai B. Johnson, and the Minister of Lands, Mines and Energy, Dr. Eugene Shannon, has produced a draft report which is currently being reviewed at the county level before it is adopted.

In addition to the support to the Land and Property committees, Civil Affairs personnel are facilitating the establishment of Peace and Reconciliation committees in the counties. "Already, two of such committees have been formed in two districts in Grand Cape Mount County," says Civil Affairs officer Munyaradzi Motsi. The process is hoped to be replicated in other areas. Additionally, efforts are underway to train community members and leaders on peace and conflict resolution.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, is facilitating the formation of District Development Committees

(DDCs) across Liberia to spur national development. The process of establishing the DDCs started in 2005 with 73 committees established in all the 15 counties. Each DDC has a membership of 13 elected officials with the District Commissioner serving as ex-officio member.

Civil Affairs personnel are facilitating the establishment of Peace and Reconciliation committees in the counties. Additionally, efforts are underway to train community members and leaders on peace and conflict resolution.

"This is all about taking government to the people. You don't tell people what you want, you ask them what they want. We used to have top-to-bottom development: now, we are having bottom-to-top approach," Deputy Minister of Internal

Affairs, Amara Kiawu, explains. He says the DDCs mandate is to identify development projects in the various districts and is intended to get the people involved in their own development process. The DDCs, also trained in conflict identification and problem solving, champion the developmental initiative of the counties at the district level unlike in the past when beneficiaries had no say.

DDC members are currently being trained to enhance the awareness of their responsibilities and improve their ability to galvanize the people and to identify priority projects. Offices are also being established in the counties. The DDCs are funded by donors through a UNDP Trust Fund. Besides the DDCs, the GOL, the UN and other international partners are also supporting development efforts at the county level through the County Support Support Teams (CSTs).

All these joint efforts among the Liberian government, the UN and other partners are aimed at fostering sustainable peace, development and reconciliation, among all Liberians, especially at the grassroots level.

Land and property disputes are a legacy of the civil war



Census by March 2008

By J. Wesley Washington

By law, Liberia should conduct a National Population and Housing Census at least every decade to update its demographic database. However, no census has taken place in Liberia for 22 years now. Excepting the past three years, much of this period was consumed by civil war, scattering the population and destroying databases and statistical information that once existed.

Liberia's first census took place in 1962. Twelve years later in 1974, the second census put the country's population at 1.5 million which indicated an annual growth rate of 3.3 percent during this period. Liberia's last census in 1984 returned a total population of 2,101,628. Today, rough estimates put the country's population at a little over 3 million.

Demographic dynamics such as population size and growth, fertility and mortality rates, age structure, population distribution, and urbanization and migration significantly affect the socio-economic development of a country. Therefore population and housing censuses have come to be a major tool in formulating programmes and policies by governments and other partners.

It was necessary to have conducted a census before the October 2005 Presidential and Legislative elections. However, due to lack of time and qualified personnel for such an exercise, the census did not take place. A year after the new democratically elected government came to power, its Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs (MP&EA) in consultation with the donor community and international partners, especially the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), is readying to conduct the

fourth National Population and Housing Census in Liberia.

With assistance from UNFPA, the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), an autonomous body created in July 2005, has developed a five-year action plan for a census to begin in 2008. The plan outlines the various activities that will be carried out during the main phases of the census.

The main phases over the five-year period include training of field staff and other preparatory activities, census mapping, a pilot census, the census enumeration in 2008, followed shortly by the pres-

entation of preliminary results. Other activities include a post-enumeration survey and computer data processing culminating in the presentation of the final statistical results, detailed thematic data analyses and finally the publication and wide dissemination of the results.

Already LISGIS has begun collecting, compiling and analyzing data from, among others, consumer price indices, production statistics and external trade statistics. It is also involved in preparing the Liberia Demographic and Health Survey as well as undertaking the preparatory activities. Census mapping will be a cru-

No census has taken place in Liberia for 22 years



cial activity of the census as it will provide the information needed to successfully plan and conduct the enumeration.

UNFPA is assisting the Government through the provision of technical assistance, equipment and materials needed to undertake the mapping activities during the first half of 2007. The aim is to develop quality census maps that will contribute to the quality and reliability of census data. It involves the deployment of about 70 field mapping staff to carry out cartographic field work in 10 months and about 15 office staff to computerize the data and to reproduce the required maps. Accurate and adequate enumeration maps will assist in the planning and control of census operations and provide a geographical frame that will form a good basis for producing thematic maps for spatial analysis of the census.

The five-year plan of action puts the overall cost of the census project at over US\$5.6 million, less than half of which will be spent during the phase of census counting or enumeration. As the prepara-

tory stage kicked off in 2006, the UNFPA had secured US\$400,000 of the US\$1 million it has pledged while the Liberian Government also contributed US\$100,000 of the US\$0.4 million it has pledged to begin various categories of work. "There

With assistance from UNFPA, the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), an autonomous body created in July 2005, has developed a five-year action plan for a census to begin in 2008. The plan outlines the various activities that will be carried out during the main phases of the census.

is still a funding gap of about US\$4.2 million," says the Director General of LIS-

GIS, Dr. T. Edward Liberty.

The actual field enumeration is tentatively scheduled for March 2008, while preliminary results are expected to be published in July 2008.

Meanwhile, the MP&EA, in collaboration with the UNFPA, has begun a series of national seminars to discuss the revised version of the National Population Policy. This Policy was enacted into law in 1988 by an Act of the National Legislature but was revised by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly in 2005. The revised version provides a policy framework for advancing national socio-economic goals and prioritizing strategies during the next decade. Recommendations and conclusions from a number of conferences which took place during the period of Liberia's 14-year civil war and had implications on key concepts and paradigms of population did not feature at the time of the formulation of the 1988 National Population Policy.

"Since the end of Liberia's civil war many emerging issues have surfaced," said the Coordinator of the Population Policy Coordination Unit at the Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs, Abel Massaley. "Some of the issues addressed in the revised policy are the issue of HIV/AIDs, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and disabled persons. These are issues of post-conflict Liberia."

Other important issues that have come on the front burner are gender mainstreaming, the environment and others such as ageing and war affected population, particularly women and adolescent boys and girls. These issues are reflected in the revised policy.

The results obtained from the analyses of the upcoming census shall constitute an invaluable database at the disposal of the government, various development partners, including civil society, which will be used to formulate policy and programmes.

Also coming out of the census will be follow-ups and the evaluation of progress made towards the attainment of various regional and international development goals such as the Millennium Development Goals. Others are national programmes such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, including sector related action plans. ♦





Connecting Liberia Before It Rains

By Sulaiman Momodu

“You don’t have to go very far to see the task ahead of us – all you have to do is drive from here to town,” President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said recently while addressing a one-day conference of UN country teams of Mano River Union countries and Côte d’Ivoire. The road conditions were not only terrible in the city, she noted, but they were also deplorable in the counties.

Although the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has since April 2004 undertaken road works on the most critical spots on over 2,000 km of roads throughout the country, more work still needs to be done on Liberia’s road network system, which are mostly unpaved and suffered total neglect during the 14-year civil war.

Taking advantage of the dry season to connect most of the 15 counties before the rainy season sets in, when most roads usu-

ally become virtually impassable, senior members of the Liberian government, the World Bank and the UN, met late last year at UNMIL headquarters where they signed three separate agreements to rehabilitate strategic roads throughout the country, succeeding an earlier accord signed in July 2006.

These agreements aim at rehabilitating one secondary and three primary road corridors at a cost of approximately US\$6.3 million, with US\$4.2 million provided by the WB and US\$2.1 million by UNMIL. The agreements cover four roadways -- Foya to Voinjama, Voinjama to Zorzor, Ganta to Tappita and Zwedru to Fishtown. While UNDP manages the funds provided by the World Bank, UNMIL combines its technical implementation capacity and heavy equipment of its military engineering units with the expertise of the Ministry of Public Works. It is estimated that more than 4,700 skilled and unskilled labourers will be employed at different intervals during the duration of the projects, which are

expected to be completed by July 2007.

Describing the projects as a down payment on President Johnson-Sirleaf’s “dry-season deliverables,” the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Alan Doss, said during the signing ceremony that this was the first instalment of a much larger programme that is needed to get Liberia’s roads back in decent shape. “Roads produce jobs, they generate income, they open up trade, they encourage markets and they bring security,” he stressed, and lauded the agreements as they bring peace-keeping together with peace-building.

Also speaking at the signing ceremony, attended by UNDP Country Director Steven Ursino, the Acting Minister of Public Works, Luseni Donzo, expressed his appreciation for the strong support shown by the World Bank and the UN, which have joined forces to assist in the rehabilitation of the country’s roads. “The alliance between the Liberian Government, the United Nations and the

World Bank in executing these road works represents a new phase of the Bank's rapid response to crises in the construction and employment generation areas," the WB Country Manager for Liberia, Luigi Giovine, said. He pointed out that the projects were in response to World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz's decision to implement faster and better ways to respond to the challenges of reconstruction in Liberia.

Kremena Ionkova, Operations Officer for the Infrastructure Cluster of the World Bank in Liberia, said work is now in progress on Voinjama-Foya; Zwedru-Fishtown and Ganta-Tappita roadways, in addition to the ongoing work on the Voinjama-Zorzor road, which began in September 2006. Although covered by one agreement, the Ganta-Tappita road agreement includes the Ganta-Saclepea and Saclepea-Tappita roadways.

The WB's grant prioritizes rehabilitation of six rural roadways through the rebuilding of bridges and culverts, rehabilitation of critical segments of road surfaces, roadside brushing, de-shading and improvement of drainage systems, among others. Of the six roads, UNMIL is implementing labour-intensive work on five of

them: Foya-Voinjama (67 km), in collaboration with UNHCR, Voinjama-Zorzor (95 km), Ganta-Saclepea (40 km), Saclepea-Tappita (61 km) and Zwedru-Fishtown (136 km). Work on the sixth, the Pleebo-Barclayville (76 km) road is to be implemented by the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) through local contractors. The Bank is also planning to undertake emergency intervention on two major corridors linking Monrovia to Buchanan, and Monrovia to Ganta, near the border with Guinea.

In early February 2007, a three-member mission from the World Bank in Washington, D.C., consisting of Gylfi Palsson, Yitzhak Kamhi and Anne Njuguna, visited Liberia to inspect the Ganta-Tappita stretch and part of the Zwedru-Fishtown road rehabilitation sites. They also held meetings with relevant authorities in Ganta and Zwedru, and were reportedly pleased with the progress achieved thus far.

The principal parties involved in road works meet regularly in a gathering co-convened by the MPW and UNMIL-RRR to discuss operational issues and promote cooperation at both the field and headquarters levels, says Gregory Sanchez,

UNMIL's Rehabilitation and Recovery Officer. As part of the joint project implementation agreements involving the six rural road projects, the WB, UNMIL, Ministry of Public Works and UNDP meet regularly to take stock of the progress and to cooperate with each other in overcoming challenges.

Generally, as the enforcement of construction standards for all public infrastructure is the responsibility of the Government, all organizations undertaking road works, including UNMIL, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector as well as civil society organizations are all cooperating with the Ministry of Public Works, with the World Bank, European Community (EC) and USAID taking the lead in funding major road works. Among the organizations involved in road work, USAID is undertaking drainage works on the Buchanan-Cestos City and the Yapa Town-Greenville roadways. The EC and USAID are jointly working on Ganta-Saniquele roadway, ILO is working on Besonville-Caresburg roadway and on three feeder roads in Grand Kru, while EC is working on the Jajami-Barkedou-Selega-Voinjama roadway. ♦

Repairing Liberia's roads is a national priority



Measles Campaign

A Big Success

By Patrick Slavin

In the remote village of Sakonnedu in Lofa County, just a short walk from Liberia's border with Guinea, mothers and grandmothers brought children to a temporary immunization post for measles vaccinations, Vitamin A supplementation, and Mebendazole de-worming tablets, which were administered to children under the age of five.

"I'm scared of the sickness, that's why I carried my granddaughter, Bendu," said Masuma Mallah, a resident of Sakonnedu. Mallah's granddaughter is among the estimated 51,191 children under the age of five who were targeted in Lofa County alone to receive the lifesaving immunizations, which are administered for free, as part of the National Integrated Measles Campaign across Liberia in January. According to the government's final technical report on the campaign,

50,038 children were reached in Lofa, or 97.7 per cent of the target.

As part of the national campaign, a massive logistics operation went into high gear to protect more than 600,000 Liberian children under the age of five from measles. The campaign, led by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, was held from 22 to 25 January.

"We're very pleased to report that the National Integrated Measles Campaign was a huge success and we reached 97 per cent of our target goal and protected 629,676 children under the age of five from measles," said Walter Gwenigale, Liberia's Minister of Health and Social

Welfare. "There are many partners to thank in this national effort which took place in all 15 counties, but WHO, UNICEF, UNMIL, USAID, and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department have helped us enormously."

UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, was a major contributor to the Government of Liberia's 2007 Integrated Measles Campaign, providing all of the measles vaccines, Vitamin A cap-

workers administered vaccines at 947 immunizations posts. More than 649,000 children received Vitamin A supplementation, which protects young children from blindness and boosts immune systems, and 525,948 children were protected with de-worming tablets.

UNMIL was a major logistical supporter to the campaign. The support included providing storage, freezers, fridges, and power supply at five civilian clinics and 28 hospitals; ten 4X4 light vehicles and 40 trucks for transportation of vaccines and related supplies and distribution of ITNs and monitoring and supervision of the integrated campaign. Vaccines were also airlifted by UNMIL to various hard-to-reach sites in seven counties: Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, Lofa, Maryland, River Gee, Nimba and Grand Kru.

"The Government decided to hold the measles campaign in January because it's the dry season in Liberia -- from July to November



Deputy Minister of Health (Administration) Dr. Mohammed Sheriff vaccinates a child

sules, and de-worming tablets that were administered. UNICEF also provided 27,000 insecticide treated nets (ITNs), to protect women and young children from malaria.

"The county health team and social mobilizers have been spreading the word for weeks that the measles campaign was coming, and we have banners up all over, so now we're getting to work," Lofa County Health Expanded Programme of Immunisation Supervisor Robert Gaygay said when the campaign got underway, after sending off a supply of vaccines by a motorcycle messenger.

Nationwide, more than 1,900 health

parts of the country are cut-off from road access, including areas of Lofa," said UNICEF Liberia Representative Rozanne Chorlton. "Liberia is a global model for success in increasing vaccination coverage in post-conflict countries. With the support from many partners, including WHO, UNMIL, and ECHO, immunization coverage has risen to 87 per cent in 2005 from 31 per cent in 2004, and our support to the government this year will help sustain and improve these life-saving programmes." •

The writer is Communications Officer with UNICEF Liberia

WHO Opens Sub-offices in Counties

By J. Wesley Washington

As the UN's lead agency for health, supporting the government's efforts in achieving priority national health is the primary goal of WHO, which has opened sub-offices in the counties.

The Voinjama sub-office will lend technical support to the county health teams in the supervision and monitoring of health services in Bong, Nimba and Lofa counties while the Harper sub-office covers Maryland, River Gee, Grand Kru, Sinoe and Grand Gedeh counties.

Additionally, the sub-offices will provide technical support in coordinating health services with actors and partners, identifying gaps, conducting health assessments, and mapping disease profiles in the counties.

Liberia's health sector suffered almost total devastation during the civil war. Most of the physical infrastructures were damaged, health personnel dislocated, and there was massive looting of medical equipment, supplies and drugs. National health programmes virtually collapsed during this period.

WHO Country Cooperation Strategy focuses on four strategic areas of intervention: Emergency Preparedness and Humanitarian Response, Strengthening Performance of the Health System, Disease Prevention and Control as well as Improvement of Maternal and Child Health.

While opening the Voinjama sub-office, WHO Representative in Liberia Dr. Eugene Nyarko said the agency's presence in the rural parts of the country will build the capacity of the county health teams, address health challenges experienced by them, and foster close collaboration between the WHO, county health teams and various health partners. "The presence of WHO in the field is an extension of its



support within its mandate to the Liberian Government including county health authorities," he noted.

The presence of WHO in the two counties is a major step in supporting the government and people of Liberia. Already the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), among others, have a presence in these areas.

The two counties where the sub-offices are located, suffered immense destruction during the civil war, and also experience high return of refugees and internally displaced persons leading to a high demand for health services. "We felt that this would be strategic locations for us to work together with government and other stakeholders including UN sister agencies to ensure better health service for the people," the WHO Representative stated.

When in labour, pregnant women in rural areas take a long time to reach the nearest clinic. Many die on the way. The sub-office will thus facilitate and accelerate their movement from their homes in the villages to the nearest clinic or hospital. A makeshift ambulance called "community ambulance service" (a motorbike with a trailer) is available to transport

pregnant women in labor to the nearest clinic. For more serious cases, an ambulance provided by UNFPA will come in handy. If the "community ambulance service" proves to reduce mortality and morbidity in these areas, it could be extended to other parts of the country.

Giving a picture of the health situation in the country prior to the civil war, Dr. Nyarko said in 1989 there were about 240 qualified doctors working in the health system but today there are only between 35 and 40 qualified doctors working with the Ministry of Health. The WHO Representative said not only is there a limited amount of trained doctors but also most trained nurses have migrated to the private sector or are working for non-governmental organizations.

Dr. Nyarko noted that as an immediate priority, a critical issue that needs to be tackled by government and its health collaborating partners is the completion of a new Health Policy for the country which has to be followed by a National Health Development Plan.

International non-governmental organizations and the private sector continue to provide the greater portion of the health care services throughout the country. Meanwhile, in an effort to improve health care delivery in the country, the government has allotted over US\$4.5 million in the current 2005/2006 National Budget. ♦

A New School in Tennebu

By Adolphus Scott

“We all can’t wait to enter our new building and sit on real school benches for the first time,” says an excited Sarah Zubah, a student of Tennebu Public School in Lofa County. That is a sentiment shared by Zubah’s fellow schoolmates. There is good reason for the children’s excitement. Like most of the schools in the rest of Liberia, theirs too is a dilapidated building, lacking even benches to sit on, but now there is something to cheer -- a new school building is being built for them.

Working in partnership with local and county authorities, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is completing the construction of Tennebu’s new seven-classroom school building, just at the back of the present ramshackle structure destroyed during the civil war. School feeding is being carried out by the World Food Programme (WFP), while the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is supporting the school with teaching materials, teacher training, water and sanitation, and separate latrines for girls, boys and staff.

The school also offers the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP), which nationally addresses the needs of an estimated 400,000 children (approximately half of Liberia’s student population) whose education has been interrupted by armed conflict. Launched by UNICEF, the Accelerated Learning Programme con-

denses six years of primary schooling into three years of intensive activities to enable children and youth make up for the lost educational years. In addition to special teacher training, schools that offer ALP can cater to children of all ages and receive additional supplies including recreation kits, school gardens, and other support.

“This is an excellent example of how UN agencies can work together, each with its individual strength to achieve quality results,” says Harriet Matthews, UNICEF Liberia’s Emergency Officer. “This sort of package support by collaborating agencies works very well. Tennebu is now an exam-

ple of a quality learning space.”

drink safe water at school.” The war inflicted extensive damage on Liberia’s education infrastructure. Education, especially for girls, has taken a particularly heavy toll. Net primary school enrollment currently stands at 74 per cent for boys and 58 per cent for girls. At the secondary school level, these rates drop to 22 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively. Addressing the needs of the adolescents and young people who missed out on education during the war is essential for their own well-being as well as for the country’s development.

“We still have more schools in the county that are makeshift structures with dirt floors, where students sit on rocks in class. Some don’t even have school materials to start with,” said Joseph Gayflor, a resident of Tennebu Town. “In the past, most of the classes in our school were held in one big noisy room with partitions. Now we have a modern building, and water and toilet facilities.”

“UN agencies working as ‘One UN’ can be stronger, more responsive, and effective,” said

Tennebu School

UNICEF Liberia Representative Rozanne Chorlton. “As a team using its assets and expertise in support of the government will only strengthen the voice and action of the UN in Liberia’s development and humanitarian assistance.”

“We are very lucky to have plenty UN people fixing our school for us,” says Zubah, eager to enjoy her studies in a real school with real benches to sit on. ♦

The writer is Programme Assistant with UNICEF Liberia



Adolphus Scott/UNICEF

ple of a quality learning space.”

Located along a dusty road 10 kilometers south of Voinjama, Lofa’s capital, Tennebu Public school has a student enrollment of 485, including 204 girls.

“Besides the students from this town, we have others who travel long distances to attend school here at Tennebu,” said James Y. Kota, Principal of Tennebu Public School. “We are grateful to UNICEF, UNDP, and WFP for the work done so far. With the new building being constructed, our children will now leave the dirt floor and sit on school benches and

UN Country Teams Meet in Monrovia

By Sulaiman Momodu

The three Mano River Union countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia all have something in common with Côte d'Ivoire. All of them are neighbours, and all have experienced upheavals over the past two decades.

With the United Nations striving hard to restore peace and security in all these countries, the UN Country Teams (UNCTs) of the four West African states met in December in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, for the 'Fourth Consultation Meeting of UN Country Teams of Mano River Union countries and Côte d'Ivoire.'

The meeting centred on the status of the implementation of the UNCTs Joint Actions Matrix for 2006 and an agreement on thematic areas for the Joint Actions Matrix for 2007 in addition to taking stock of the happenings in the four countries. The three thematic areas of the Joint Actions Matrix for 2006 were: Youth, HIV/AIDS and Cross Border issues.

Held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conference hall, the meeting attracted UNCT participants from the four countries, representatives of governments, Economic Community of West African States, Mano River Union ambassadors, civil society representatives and donors.

While Sierra Leone and Liberia now enjoy peace following successful peace-keeping interventions of the United Nations, Côte d'Ivoire remains a divided country with rebel forces controlling the north. The situation in Guinea remains fluid.

Opening the one-day conference, Special Guest of Honour President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said the choice of Liberia as the venue for the conference "is a clear indication that the country is back on the right track towards normalcy." She applauded the efforts of UNMIL for the restoration of peace and security and pointed out that peace would remain fragile unless regional issues are dealt with.

The Liberian leader pointed out that there are serious challenges to Liberia's transition from recovery to development and noted that as a nation, Liberia will

make the region a safer, more prosperous and a better place.

With the UN having a huge presence in the conflict-torn region, Doss said the UN's focus must be on demand driven deliverables rather than supply driven interventions. He stressed that the focus should be on increasing power and choices for the poor and the vulnerable so that they can become empowered to say what their priorities are for continued development. He noted that the UNCTs can greatly assist in the transition from recovery to development in the region when acting jointly as "one UN."

In his welcome address, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jordan Ryan said few years ago Liberia was always viewed as the centre of trouble. "Now we very much see Liberia as the centre of hope...and a nation that is ready to be partners with its neighbours."



Alan Doss addresses the meeting

establish its own goals and invite partners to work with it to realize them in line with its four pillars of Peace and Security, Economic Revitalization, Infrastructure, and Governance and Rule of Law.

Over the years, instability in any of the four countries had made the other countries vulnerable. "To secure lasting peace and sustainable development, we must look beyond our borders and address common challenges in the sub-region such as youth unemployment, HIV/AIDS, arms trafficking, illicit trade in natural resources and migration," the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Alan Doss, said.

The UN envoy urged participants to work together to help the region "prevent and overcome the legacy of conflict" and

In terms of infrastructure, common use of electricity and water was discussed and UNCTs were encouraged to identify opportunities and specific items that could be moved along by governments in the region.

During conflict in the sub-region, porous borders had always provided easy access to insurgents. The UNCTs reported on results achieved on the three thematic areas of the Joint Actions Matrix for 2006. Discussions on the Joint Actions Matrix for 2007 centred on the four thematic areas of youth and women in peace consolidation, HIV/AIDS, cross border management, and human rights and humanitarian issues. The Fifth Consultation meeting would be held in Côte d'Ivoire in 2007. ♦



Chinese President Pledges More Support

Alan Doss welcomes President Hu Jintao

By Sulaiman Momodu

Visiting President Hu Jintao of the People's Republic of China has reiterated his country's commitment to continue supporting the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Liberia as he met with the Chinese peacekeepers in Liberia during his one-day state visit to the war-torn nation on 2 February. Arriving to a red carpet welcome with the United Nations and Chinese flags flying high, President Hu thanked Special Representative of the Secretary-General Alan Doss for the cooperation between China and the United Nations and reassured his government's continued assistance to cement peace in Liberia.

"Since China began participating in the UN peacekeeping operations in Liberia in 2003, you have done a distinguished job and have made a great contribution to maintaining peace and stability in the

country by working hard. The people in the motherland are so proud of you," President Hu, who was on an eight-nation tour of African countries, hailed the Chinese peacekeepers. He urged the contingent to maintain the existing good relationship between China and the United Nations and encouraged them to work effectively "for the benefit of the Liberian people."

Welcoming the Chinese President, Special Representative Doss thanked the Chinese government for the significant contributions China is making towards the rebuilding and recovery process in Liberia. "Your presence here today is a testimony to the importance China attaches to peace and security and the United Nations," he said.

The UN envoy, in an interview with the Chinese State television, acknowledged the tremendous contribution of the Chinese peacekeepers and pointed out that "they have helped Liberia's recovery by

providing assistance that matters most to the people, such as building roads and clinics."

Chinese peacekeepers began arriving in Liberia in November 2003 and have since provided invaluable services through their engineering, transport, medical and police contingents. Today, there are 576 Chinese peacekeepers in Liberia.

During his visit to Liberia, the Chinese president committed about US\$25 million to Liberia, which would be provided over a two-year period, as well as about US\$15 million debt waiver and signed seven different agreements with the Liberian government. Hu's visit to Liberia is the first by a leader of an industrial power since the visit of US President Jimmy Carter three decades ago. In addition to Liberia, President Hu visited Cameroon, Zambia, Sudan, Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique and Seychelles. ♦

President Hu inspects a guard of honour by Chinese peacekeepers



US Philanthropist, Jordanian Queen Pay Visit

By Sulaiman Momodu

Billionaire philanthropist George Soros, accompanied by Queen Noor of Jordan, arrived in the Liberian capital Monrovia on 1 February, barely three hours after Chinese President Hu Jintao's plane landed at the country's main Roberts International Airport. Both Soros and Queen Noor, widow of the late King Hussein of Jordan, were on a four-day visit to Liberia as guests of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

During their brief sojourn, Queen Noor paid a visit to UNMIL's Jordanian Level III hospital where she was welcomed by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Jordan Ryan, and Jordanian peacekeepers. The Queen, who was visiting Liberia for the first time, toured the hospital and praised its assistance to hundreds of Liberians and UN personnel. She also held discussions with the Jordanian peacekeepers.

For his part, Soros participated in several activities including meetings with President Johnson-Sirleaf, the Vice President and leaders of the National Legislature and the Truth and



Queen Noor meets Jordanian peacekeepers

Reconciliation Commission. The US philanthropist also held a working meeting with the Liberian Cabinet and participated in a ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of a school in New Kru Town in Monrovia. The project is one of several initiatives to which he has contributed over US\$1 million.

In a bid to see the countryside and the development challenges of post-conflict Liberia, the duo accompanied the Liberian leader to Nimba County during which the local branch of the Liberia Bank for

Development and Investment (LBDI) was dedicated in the commercial town of Ganta. They also witnessed the opening of 'The Bangladesh-Liberia Friendship Centre,' which comprises of a skilled training centre and an internet café. The facility in Ganta was built by the Bangladeshi Battalion (BANBATT-10) through funding from UNMIL's Quick Impact Projects with computers provided by the Ministry of Education. Johnson-Sirleaf applauded the efforts of the UN mission "for going beyond the call of duty to help young Liberians to gain skills."

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Alan Doss, who turned over the facility to the Liberian authorities, described the project as "a small, but symbolic gesture of a much larger ambition to give Liberian youths hope for the future".

President Johnson-Sirleaf and Soros have had a long-standing professional relationship spanning over two decades when the Liberian leader was working at the United Nations. Liberia's Assistant Minister of Information Gabriel Williams described the visit of Soros and Queen Noor as "part of the growing confidence that people have in Liberia and part of the growing international goodwill." ♦



George Soros with Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf

Denmark Supports Liberian Women

The women of Liberia have received a significant boost for their economic empowerment as the Danish government signed a project agreement worth US\$ 834,500 with the United Nations Development Programme in mid-January. The project, to be implemented in Lofa County, aims to provide skills to community women to enable them achieve quality livelihood in line with the Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

The Danish Ambassador accredited to Ghana, Flemming Bjork Pedersen, signed the agreement on behalf of the Danish government while the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNDP Resident Representative,

Jordan Ryan, signed on behalf of UNDP. Under the agreement, UNDP will manage the Danish contribution over a two-year period to ensure the effective implementation of the project. The project will be implemented by the Zorzor District Women Care (ZODWOCA), a local organization, through the Community Cooperative Credit Unions (CCUs).

The Economic Empowerment of Women project was introduced by UNDP in 2006 to support women significantly affected by the 14-year civil war. The purpose of the project is to develop skills of the targeted women in marketing and consequently assist in the creation of livelihood for them and their impoverished families.

Presently, over 500 women in seven

districts in Bong and Nimba Counties have accessed micro-credit under the project while over 1,000 beneficiaries including men and women have received training in various aspects of business establishment and the management of CCUs. The programme provides women an initial credit of US\$ 80 which is repaid over a period of thirteen weeks.

The latest contribution from the Danish government will support the expansion of this project into Lofa County over the next two years. The project will provide training opportunities for the women of Lofa, facilitate establishment of CCUs and provide micro-credit.

The Government of Denmark is also providing support through UNDP for the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Liberia. ♦

UNHCR Turns Over Police Station; Begins New Market Construction

The United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, has turned over to the Liberian government a newly renovated police station in Sacleapea, Nimba County.

The head of the UNHCR Sub Office in Sacleapea, Madam Ndaye Ndour Mbaye said the project is part of the agency's contribution to capacity building of the law enforcement organs in the country. "The construction of this police station is a step forward towards re-establishing the rule of law and a pull factor for refugees who want to return home," she said at the hand-over ceremony. The estimated renovation cost of the facility is US\$20,000.

Dedicating the project, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf commended efforts of the

international community to support Liberia's agenda and recognized UNHCR's contribution. She especially commended the UNHCR's Community Empowerment approach and expressed interest in copying the CEP's model, which prioritizes community participation at all levels of the development initiative.

As part of a nationwide tour to appraise development initiatives, Johnson-Sirleaf also broke ground for the construction of a market building in Sacleapea that is being constructed by the UNHCR. The agency plans to construct a four-compartment sanitation facility on the 15-acre site earmarked for the market construction. UNHCR is also actively involved in key sectors including health, agriculture, shelter, education and roads repair to enhance

the government's capacity to offer services to citizens.

Like the UNHCR, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) through its Quick Impact Projects (QIP) funds community-oriented, small scale but highly visible infrastructure projects aimed at helping Liberia recover from its prolonged war and improve the living standards of the people. QIPs across the country include education, rule of law, water and sanitation, road rehabilitation, health, economic activity and shelter.

Overall, a total of 288 such projects totaling US\$4 million have been undertaken over the last three years. Of these, 249 projects have been completed, while 39 are ongoing. ♦

Creating Livelihoods in Rural Communities

By Anthony Selmah

With the restoration of peace and the completion of the resettlement process of internally displaced persons, creating livelihood is the new challenge that stares at the people of Liberia, especially those who live in the rural areas.

UNDP Liberia is responding to this challenge under the framework of the Economic Empowerment of Women initiative, a project that began in 2006 targeting women in rural areas, especially those severely affected by the civil war. The project aims to build the capacity of women in developing marketable skills that will enable them to begin livelihood activities. The project has provided training to 1,000 beneficiaries in the areas of business establishment and management of Cooperative Credit Unions (CCU).

The CCU is an organization of women's groups with membership from the District Development Committee providing support to women through the

establishment of solidarity groups and engaging in literacy activities. The Economic Empowerment of Women project received an initial funding of US\$245,000 from the Japanese Government. A total of 420 women including 360 from Bong County and 60 from Nimba County have received micro-financing loans through the project.

The women receive an initial amount of US\$80 each in loan which is repaid over a thirteen-week period. Upon repayment of the loan, they become eligible for a higher amount of up to US\$1,000 in credit.

"You have joined yourselves together in an effort to achieve social cohesion through the CCU and through the same CCU to put your small resources together in order to help each other. This must help support livelihood of the poor households of Panta District" said UNDP Deputy Resident Representative for Programme Elizabeth Oduor-Noah as she made the initial disbursement to beneficiaries in Foequellah Town, in Bong County's Panta District

With the success achieved in the first year of operation, the project has received additional funding from the Government of Denmark. The Danish Government through its embassy in Accra, Ghana has committed US\$845,500 to support the Economic Empowerment of Women over the next two years.

The goal of the Economic Empowerment of Women project is to provide rural women with the skills and knowledge that will enable them to engage in the creation of livelihood activities and contribute to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. The project will also promote gender equality and empower women. These are part of the Millennium Development Goals, a set of eight goals and targets agreed by world leaders at the Millennium Summit in New York in 2000 to be achieved by all nations by 2015. ♦

The writer is National Information Officer with UNDP, Liberia

LIBERIA ASSURED OF UNCDF SUPPORT

The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) will continue to invest in Liberia and assist the government in building an inclusive financial sector, said Richard Weingarten, the organization's Executive Secretary, during a recent visit to the country.

"Here in Liberia we will be working in both areas, in microfinance and local development and we will be working with governmental agencies in these areas. We will have specialized teams working with our government colleagues as well as our UNDP colleagues," Weingarten said. UNCDF's investment in Liberia would focus on microfinance through support to building an inclusive financial sector, and decentralization and local development.

Accompanied by the UNCDF

Regional Technical Manager for West and Central Africa, Makarimi Adechoubou and the Portfolio Technical Manager for South and East Africa, Anziz Said Attoumane, Weingarten was speaking in Monrovia during a technical workshop for stakeholders in the microfinance sector in Liberia.

"We are committed to continuing to work here. We are starting to think about an investment timeframe of 2008 – 2011," he said, urging the participants in the workshop to build a shared vision of inclusive finance that focuses on a broad range of institutions, infrastructure and capital.

Weingarten challenged the participants to build a workable plan out of the shared vision, which will be supported by the relevant government institutions including the Central Bank of Liberia and financial

institutions. The Executive Secretary said UNCDF was established in 1966 with a mandate from the UN Security Council to make investment and work exclusively in least developed countries in an attempt to reduce poverty. UNCDF is active in 28 countries.

At the workshop, the Technical Advisor on Microfinance at UNDP, Kenyeh Barlay outlined three concepts that underpin the programme -- micro-credit, micro-finance and financial inclusion. Barlay noted that the programme must incorporate best practices and a sound governance and management structure free of political interference with particular focus on women living below the poverty line. ♦

Irish Soldiers Win Kudos for Service

By J. Wesley Washington

Ireland is among the 47 troop contributing countries to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). First deployed in November 2003, just a month after the start of the peacekeeping mission, the Irish contingent of 450 military personnel is part of the UNMIL Quick Reaction Force (QRF), which provides the Force Commander with a credible capacity to address all potential threats and contingencies within the country. This elite force also acts as a reserve force to provide rapid support for Sector Commanders at the shortest notice, deployable by land, air or sea.

The personnel currently in Liberia are the seventh Irish contingent since the Irish deployed in 2003. In December 2006, this 96th Irish battalion was reinforced by the 20th Frontier Force of the Pakistani Army as part of the QRF, replacing the Swedish Mechanized Infantry Company which had

been a part of the QRF since March 2004. The Swedish pulled out last September.

The Irish battalion, which was scheduled to have departed in November 2006, has been persuaded to stay on for another six months following pleas to the Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the Liberian President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The Irish are now expected to depart the country by mid-2007.

Come May 2007, the Pakistani contingent

takes over the QRF altogether with the departure of the current Irish contingent.

Since their arrival in Liberia, the Irish peacekeepers have come to be known for their dedication and excellence in their services to the country. Along with their Swedish colleagues earlier, they conducted major long-range exercises to all parts of Liberia including the border with Sierra Leone, Guinea and most recently Côte d'Ivoire to prevent the instability in that country spilling over into Liberia. The joint QRF also played a major role in providing comprehensive security following the arrest and later transfer of former Liberian President Charles Taylor to Freetown and later to The Hague. During the holiday season recently, the QRF carried out 24-hour patrols in Monrovia and its environs and other parts of the country.

"Your work is recognized and highly valued by the UN mission's leadership, but especially by the people of Liberia. They can now go about their everyday activities safely and without fear because





Members of the Irish Quick Reaction Force at work

of the secure environment provided by UNMIL, and by the QRF, in particular,” said the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Alan Doss, while addressing the Irish peacekeepers recently.

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The Commander of the Irish Contingent, Lt.-Col. Michael Kennedy, says that this mission has been a very successful one from an Irish perspective as, having been deployed in 2003 at the outset of the mission, the Irish contingent has been at the coalface when the security situation was too fragile in the country.

Officer-in-Charge of the joint QRF, Lt.-Col. Kennedy said as UNMIL is entering its consolidation phase, the Irish Government decided to end the force’s involvement here and look to other hotspots where their experience and expertise might be needed more. “We look to the end of the mission with a mixture of sadness and happiness. Sadness in that we

are leaving a country where we have made many friends and valued colleagues and we must depart from them. This sadness is tempered by happiness in our recognition of the success to date of the mission, our own contribution to that success, and our belief that this success is well placed to build upon and developed towards a positive and self-sustaining country,” he said.

Since the Republic of Ireland joined the United Nations on 14 December 1955, the country has sought to promote effective international action on global issues including disarmament, peacekeeping, human rights and development. Since 1958, the Irish Defence Forces have been involved in peacekeeping missions with troop contributions to the First Observer Mission to Lebanon (UNOGIL). Ireland’s longest contribution is to the Peacekeeping Mission to Lebanon (UNIFIL), to which the country provided troops since its inception in 1978 until 2001. Between 2001 and 2006, Ireland retained a small presence at UNIFIL Headquarters, but Irish troops are now back in Lebanon since 2006 as part of UNIFIL II. Currently, 10 per cent of the Irish Defence Forces serve in 17 different countries world-wide.

The Irish are no stranger to Africa. As far back as 1960, Ireland provided troops

to the First Peacekeeping Mission to the Congo (ONUC). Currently, in line with their commitment to conflict prevention and crisis management in Africa, Ireland has contributed military observers serving with the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC); military observers serving with the UN Mission in Côte d’Ivoire (ONUCI) as well as observers serving with MINURSO in Western Sahara.

Additionally, the Garda Síochána (the Irish police) first participated in UN peacekeeping in 1989, when a 48-strong contingent was sent to Namibia with the UN Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG). Since then, approximately 400 members of the Garda Síochána have served with various UN missions throughout the world, including 20 personnel currently serving with the UN in Cyprus.

Ireland’s participation in peacekeeping operations has promoted a positive image of Ireland and its Defence Forces both within the international community and among all sides in the mission areas. Unfortunately this service has not been without cost. To date 85 members of the Irish Defence Forces have given their lives in the cause of world peace. ♦

LIBERIANS

What Do You Expect From I

"First of all I think, the government is underpaying the new Liberian police and the job they do is quite difficult.

So I would like them to be better paid so that they can be committed to the job and the discharge of their duties. Government also has to issue the new Liberian police with arms in order to perform effectively.

Criminals, most especially armed robbers, are many and the police can only perform better if they are adequately armed to deal with these bandits."

Caroline Dennis (EXSECON Security)



"I would like to see a disciplined and tolerant new Liberian police focused on the rule of law. Those now being trained should take the public as a friend and not an enemy. I want to see a refined police which will serve the interest of the masses; where those in trouble and distress can run to and not run from. Yes, a police that can protect and defend the public. That's the kind of police I'll like to see."

Cyrus W. Mulbah (Businessman)



"For me, the new police have to be there for the people. The police must be well trained and must be taught how to read and interpret documents that they must inspect regularly as part of their job. A lot of them have gone through various phases of training; but they still do not know how to read and interpret vehicle documents for example. They have to be more polite to the public they serve, even if the person is a criminal, they will have to respect his human rights. They have to be trained in human psychology and they must be people friendly. If there is a problem somewhere, the police must be the first person that someone might want to run to. However, the bulk of the people you talk to tell you not to go to the police. Why should that be?"

Linda Dean (Educator)



"The new police should engage in community activities that will put hundreds of wayward and idle Liberians to work. My area is infested with hundreds of unemployed youths doing nothing but engaging in unwholesome acts. The new police must therefore design strategies that will sway these fellows from the streets towards productive ventures."

Mohammed Ashour
(Lebanese Businessman)



"We expect that since the police force is one of the 24-hours service, the new police should extend their patrols throughout the city and its environs, especially at night. Government should provide the new police with the necessary logistics to immediately respond to emergency calls from the public at all times. Most times a person in distress will call the emergency number and help from the police will not be forthcoming."

Tony Faissal (Businessman)

SPEAK

Liberia's New Police Force?



"I expect to see the new police respond to emergency calls from the public at all times, especially those areas that are crime prone. Most police officers stop only on the main road and crimes most often take place in secluded areas of communities. Another thing I'll like to see is the new police smartly dressed; the police needs to be respected and this is one way they can gain that respect."

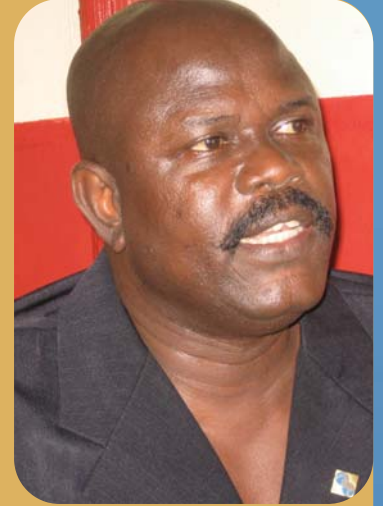
Alzena Dorley (Saleslady)



"I expect a decent police force that respects the rule of law, the rights of people that they protect. Overall, I expect a professional police that will be community driven."

Moses Zangar, Jr.
(Liberian Journalist/UNMIL)

"Being a former Deputy Director of Police for Operations, we expect professionalism across the board in the new Liberia National Police (LNP). The new LNP should uphold the rule of law; respect for the citizenry, as well as operate in a way that they will build their lost integrity. They need to gain the confidence of the public to report crime without fear."



"Secondly, bribery has been a problem within the LNP. We expect our new police to desist from these unwholesome acts; rather, they should be firm and fair in the discharge of their duties; most importantly not to manufacture crimes against citizens which can erode their integrity. Anyone arrested and charged should be charged properly and handled according to due process of law."

Anthony Kromah (Minister of National Security, RL)

"I think there's a way forward for the new Liberian police. I think with aid from the international community as well as the Liberian Government, it is incumbent on the new Liberian police to perform to expectation. They should be disciplined, respectful and humble in the discharge of their duties. Let them see the public as a friend and not a foe."

Francis Lloyd (Liberian Journalist)



"I expect that the new police will be very swift in responding to calls especially when one is in distress. Last year I lost all my belongings to armed robbers. Police help was not forthcoming even when we called their hotline. They told us to wait and we never saw them."

Patience Jappah (Student, University of Liberia)





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