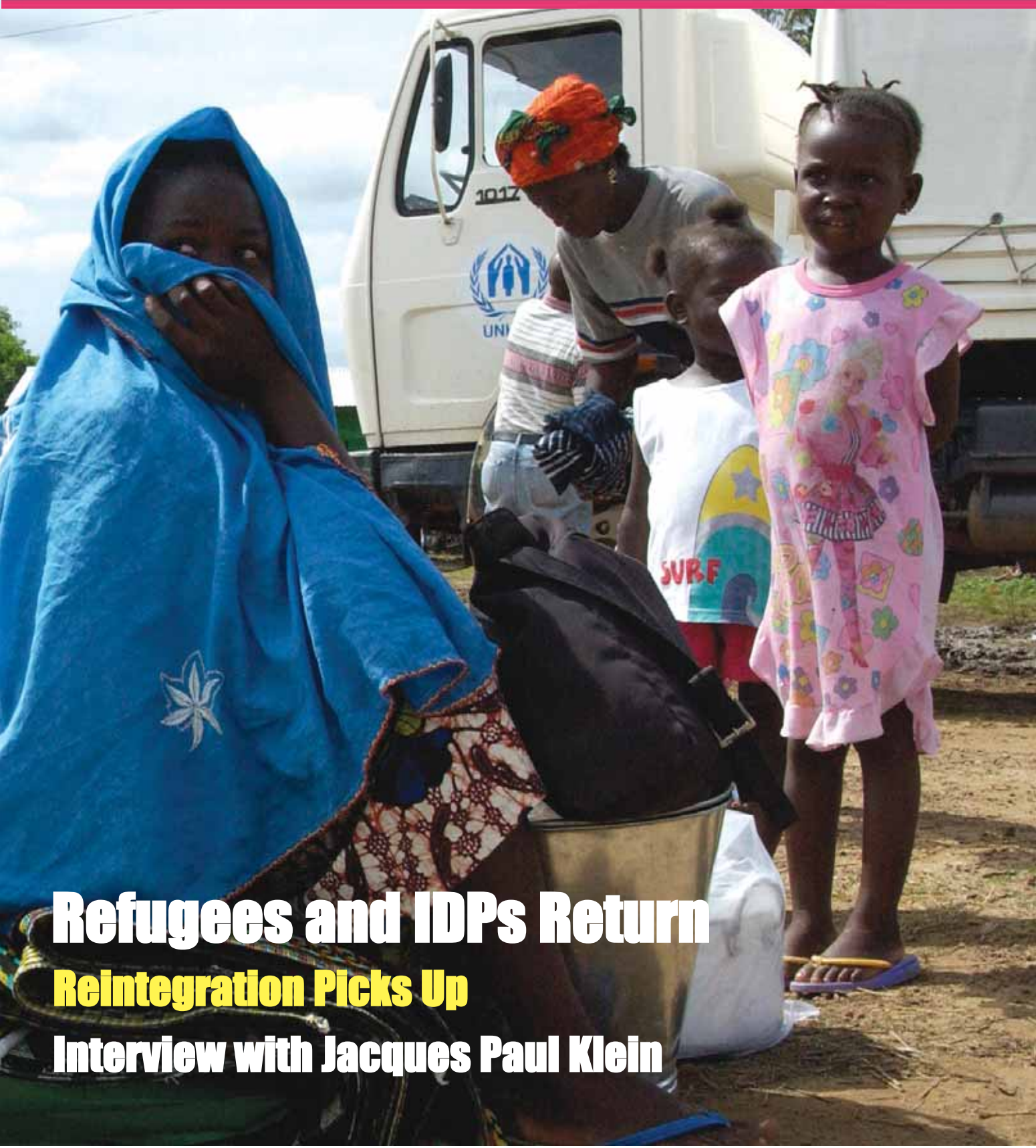


UNMIL FOCUS



Vol. 1, No. 02

February 2005



Refugees and IDPs Return

Reintegration Picks Up

Interview with Jacques Paul Klein

UNMIL Mandate

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was established by Security Council resolution 1509 of 19 September 2003 with the following mandate:

Support for Implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement

- ▶ to observe and monitor the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and investigate violations of the ceasefire;
- ▶ to establish and maintain continuous liaison with the field headquarters of all the parties' military forces;
- ▶ to assist in the development of cantonment sites and to provide security at these sites;
- ▶ to observe and monitor disengagement and cantonment of military forces of all the parties;
- ▶ to support the work of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC);
- ▶ to develop, as soon as possible, preferably within 30 days of the adoption of this resolution, in cooperation with the JMC, relevant international financial institutions, international development organizations, and donor nations, an action plan for the overall implementation of a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and repatriation (DDRR) programme for all armed parties; with particular attention to the special needs of child combatants and women; and addressing the inclusion of non-Liberian combatants;
- ▶ to carry out voluntary disarmament and to collect and destroy weapons and ammunition as part of an organized DDRR programme;
- ▶ to liaise with the JMC and to advise on the implementation of its functions under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the ceasefire agreement;
- ▶ to provide security at key government installations, in particular ports, airports, and other vital infrastructure;

Protection of United Nations Staff, Facilities and Civilians

- ▶ to protect United Nations personnel, facilities, installations and equipment, ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and, without prejudice to the efforts of the government, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities;

Support for Humanitarian and Human Rights Assistance

- ▶ to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance, including by helping to establish the necessary security conditions;
- ▶ to contribute toward international efforts to protect and promote human rights in Liberia, with particular attention to vulnerable groups including refugees, returning refugees and internally displaced persons, women, children, and demobilized child soldiers, within UNMIL's capabilities and under acceptable security conditions, in close cooperation with other United Nations agencies, related organizations, governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations;
- ▶ to ensure an adequate human rights presence, capacity and expertise within UNMIL to carry out human rights promotion, protection, and monitoring activities;

Support for Security Reform

- ▶ to assist the transitional government of Liberia in monitoring and restructuring the police force of Liberia, consistent with democratic policing, to develop a civilian police training programme, and to otherwise assist in the training of civilian police, in cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), international organizations, and interested States;
- ▶ to assist the transitional government in the formation of a new and restructured Liberian military in cooperation with ECOWAS, international organizations and interested States;

Support for Implementation of the Peace Process

- ▶ to assist the transitional government, in conjunction with ECOWAS and other international partners, in reestablishment of national authority throughout the country, including the establishment of a functioning administrative structure at both the national and local levels;
- ▶ to assist the transitional government in conjunction with ECOWAS and other international partners in developing a strategy to consolidate governmental institutions, including a national legal framework and judicial and correctional institutions;
- ▶ to assist the transitional government in restoring proper administration of natural resources;
- ▶ to assist the transitional government, in conjunction with ECOWAS and other international partners, in preparing for national elections scheduled for no later than the end of 2005.



From the Editor



As the curtain came down on 2004 and Liberia ushered in the New Year peacefully, there were genuine reasons for Liberians to celebrate.

The past year was a watershed in the country's history as Liberians decidedly turned a new leaf by disarming and demobilizing. In collaboration with the UN, over 100,000 combatants -- protagonists of the civil war that had brought the country to its knees -- disarmed.

With the destruction of over 27,000 weapons, 29,700 pieces of ordnance and more than 6.1 million small arms ammunition, Liberia has effectively parted ways with the culture of violence that ruled the country for decades. Today, thousands hands that once wielded weapons are busy ploughing fields, laying bricks, stitching clothes, baking cookies and writing notes in classrooms. Elsewhere in this issue we describe how the Rehabilitation and Reintegration programme is reshaping the lives of disarmed combatants.

gramme is reshaping the lives of disarmed combatants.

The voluntary disbandment of the three warring parties -- LURD, MODEL and ex-GoL -- in line with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was yet another milestone on the path to lasting peace in the country. Liberians from all walks of life have hailed the dissolution of the factions. They hope the nation's destiny will be decided in the future through free and fair elections, never again by power-hungry war-lords.

Meanwhile, as peace prevails, many of those who had to abandon their homes and flee during the civil war have begun returning. Over 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have already returned spontaneously while another 30,000 have been assisted by the UN to return to their places of origin. As of mid-January, UNHCR had helped more than 7,500 Liberian refugees return home from neighbouring countries.

"A new day is upon us. Yesterday's dreams are today's realities," as Special Representative to the

Secretary-General Jacques Paul Klein had said, flagging off the first group of homebound returnees. The return of refugees and IDPs will pick up more speed in the coming months and, hopefully, a large number of them will be able to participate in the elections scheduled for October 2005. The hopes, aspirations and angst of those who are returning home after years of forced exile are captured in our cover story on refugees and IDPs.

Huge challenges remain. Many Liberians are still in exile. Additional donor assistance is urgently needed for the rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for the ex-combatants. Unemployment and poverty levels are unacceptably high. Yet, with peace prevailing in the country and the prospect of democratic elections in sight, Liberians have every reason to be optimistic about a better future. You will sense that optimism in the stories we bring you in this issue.

Mathew Elavanalthoduka

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Published by the Public Information Office, United Nations Mission in Liberia

Printed by Buck Press Ltd., Accra, Ghana

As the first group of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees return to Grand Cape Mount, one of the 13 counties declared 'ready for return,' Ashim Choudhury accompanies them on their journey home.

The Homecoming

Perrytown IDP camp was abuzz with excitement on the morning of 8 November. In the clearing near the camp crowds of men, women and children were thronging. It was a special day. The first group of IDPs was returning home. Lending to the festive mood was a woman playing the foot-tapping *sa-sa*. "Give me ten dollars, I'll hold it. Give me 100, I'll take it," she sang to bemused members of the international community gathered there. The children were thrilled, posing for pictures in front of cameramen who had descended in droves on this otherwise sleepy community of displaced persons. Flagging off a convoy of 15 buses and five trucks were Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jacques Paul Klein and the NTGL Chairman Charles Gyude Bryant. Mr. Klein aptly said, "A new day is upon us. Yesterday's dreams are today's realities."

For Saidu Gulaf Ali, 56, it was indeed a dream come true. He was returning to his home in Grand Cape Mount. After spending two and a half years in Sierra Leone and then nine months at Perrytown, this was the day he was waiting for. Despite the fact that he was fasting for Ramadan, he had a spring in his step. Was he happy? "Yeah..." He broke into a grin as if asking, "Do you have any doubts?" Also waiting at the returnee departure tent, Hawa Kamela wasn't exactly grinning, but was nevertheless glad this day had finally come. "Yes, I'm happy to go back. It's my own country," said the widow, 30, echoing the sentiments of her two daughters accompanying her. It didn't matter that her



Returnees wait eagerly for the trucks

home was destroyed; her *ma* was there, waiting for her.

But it was not that easy for all. As the returnees scrambled on to the trucks and buses that would take them home, two

It didn't matter that her home was destroyed; her *ma* was there, waiting for her.

anxious persons could be seen clutching their WFP ration cards. A man was holding on to his son who was not on the transport manifest, while a woman worriedly eyed her two little daughters, only one of whom was registered. They could not board the truck that would take them home. The two parents were desperately pleading with the officials. Thanks to the intervention of an UNHCR officer, they could finally board the truck, and the smiles returned to their

faces.

As the convoy rolled out of Perrytown past swamps, rubber plantations and verdant countryside, the mood was jubilant. Nearly an hour and a half later, we were nearing the Sinje Transit Camp. As the convoy entered the camp, the returnees spilled out of their trucks and buses with their belongings. This was the last stretch of their journey home. They headed for the reception hall where they were given their first two-month food ration (they would pick up the second one later) courtesy of WFP, while UNHCR was providing the non-food items. The returnees also received five US dollars each to help pay for the final leg of their journey home.

For Pappa Baye, a woman in her sixties, it was a long day as she and her family of five waited in the queue for the food and other 'goodies'. Her husband had died

Forced to Flee

The civil war that began in 1989 led to a massive displacement of Liberians. The first wave of Liberian refugees fled to border towns in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Others found themselves displaced within the country, hoping to return soon. But as the war intensified and dragged on for years, most of those who fled across the borders remained in those countries, and were granted permanent refugee status. There were three major waves of displacement during Liberia's 14 year civil war - in 1990, 1999 and 2003. Thousands of Liberians also moved on to countries, like Ghana, Togo, Gambia, Senegal, and Nigeria with which Liberia did not share common borders. According to estimates, nearly half of Liberia's three million people fled into exile. UNHCR registered about 350,000 Liberian refugees in the various countries of asylum. Another 464,000 became IDPs of which some 262,000 registered at official camps mostly around the capital Monrovia, the rest living in unofficial squatter camps or staying with friends and family.

But as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) started efforts to broker peace in Liberia, some of those who had fled began returning. The signing of the Comprehensive

Peace Agreement in August 2003, which ended Liberia's back-to-back civil war, saw many Liberians return spontaneously. To date nearly 100,000 have returned spontaneously, while UNHCR has facilitated the return of more than 7,500 refugees and 30,000 IDPs. This year, an estimated 150,000 Liberian refugees are likely to head back home, mainly from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

UNHCR has committed \$14 million to help the return and reintegration of IDPs in Liberia this year as seven more counties have been declared safe for return. Of this, over \$5.5 million will be spent on non-food items and extra distribution outlets for returning IDPs, \$3.5 million on providing transportation allowance to get them home, and \$5 million on reintegration projects in areas of return.

With the seven newly-cleared 'safe' counties - Lofa, Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Montserrado, Grand Bassa, River Gee and Maryland - 13 out of the 15 Liberian counties are now ready for return, paving the way home for 98 percent of the Liberian refugees living in West Africa. Grand Kru and Sinoe are the only two counties yet to be cleared for return. ♦

By Tom Winston Monboe

before the war and her house had "fallen" to the fighting. But now with her sons in tow she was beaming at the prospect of

She could not leave her children unattended to go fetch her rations and non-food items.

returning home. Another woman whose loss of her husband left her in charge of the family was not as lucky. With a suckling child at her breast and another tiny tot tugging at her skirt, she looked distressed. Her problem was that she could not leave her children unattended to go fetch her rations and non-food items. "How can I go?" she was pleading with nobody in particular. Alice's husband had died in the war. And here she was, left to fend for herself, lost in the melee of returnees and aid

workers. One can only hope that some good samaritan helped her out of her dilemma.

For 35-year old Famata, the problem was even simpler - she and her three little sons were hungry. "I will talk, but I'm hungry," Famata said when queried about how she felt. Her husband was away at the tent where WFP was distributing the food rations. After some prodding she said that her house in Dukabongoma was "broke down" but that she would manage the first few days sleeping at a friend's house. Her parents were killed in the war, but her spirit was not broken. She had already made

plans to grow fruit and vegetables on her two-acre plot of land. "Me, will plant cassava. Will you give me brush and machete?" she wanted to know.

Likewise, Musa Perry wanted to know if he would get farm implements. With his old mother, wife and three grown-up sons, he had received several items to carry back home. Surveying his newfound 'wealth' he said, "Me happy...Thank God." Earlier in the day we had met Musa leaving his

A promise kept

Chairman Bryant made a very short 'speech' to the IDPs and refugees gathered at Perrytown camp on that Monday morning. He said that he was invited to visit them in the camps, but steadfastly refused to do so. Why? "Because this is not your home," he said. "I will visit in your homes on Friday. The food you eat, I will eat. The place where you lay your head, I want to lay my head too. Let's hurry and get home." The short speech had a big impact. The camp dwellers and members of the international community present cheered at the sheer simplicity and appeal of the message. Some doubted whether he would keep his promise. But come Friday the Chairman and his cavalcade set out for Grand Cape Mount. Dressed in an informal yellow shirt, he met the returnees. Not in their homes as promised, but in the Sinje Transit Centre where they had gathered. They offered him white fowls, a token of their affection and respect. He reciprocated with a sack full of 250,000 Liberian dollars "to help you return home." The returnees cheered, "Oio! Oio! Oio!!"



Chairman Gyude Bryant and Jacques Paul Klein flag off the convoys



Perrytown 'home' where he had lived for four years. "This one was born in the camp," he said, pointing to his toddler son. Later that afternoon we found him again outside the Sinje Transit Camp. He and his family had been waiting with their belongings on the side of a road for a vehicle that would finally take them home, but on that day none came. That night, they slept at a relative's house in Sinje Town. There was hugging and embracing, and they felt they were almost home.

Unfortunately, some, like Walakewon Saye, had no relatives in Sinje who they could stay with. With his wife and five small children he wondered - "How do I get home,?" concern writ large on his tired face. It was a long wait on the roadside. The children were hungry. But there was no sign of any taxi or truck going to Macca Town where Saye lived. It was an hour's drive, and it was dusk already. We started chatting. He was an "instructor", teaching mathematics and social studies. It was a voluntary job that did not earn him any money. But it gave him satisfaction and a certain standing in his community. And what did he need to start a new life? Taking a long pause, he said, "Zinc and nails." Zinc was for roofing his house. Nails, to fix the wood and bamboo frames. It was so basic, the need for a home!

He would also seek the help of his students to brush and till his land. "Anywhere you make farm. In Macca Town you don't buy land." The NGOs were already on the ground, ready to help. Earlier in the day Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General and Humanitarian Coordinator for Liberia Abou Moussa had said, "We have to move from emergency food assistance to sustainable food security. We have to provide seeds and agricultural implements and seize the planting opportunity provided by the dry season." That was reassuring for the likes of Saye and thousands of others returning to their homesteads after a prolonged absence.

Saye and his family finally got home that evening. Not by a taxi or a pick-up van, but a UN car! Seeing the plight of the family a UN vehicle going in their direction gave them a lift. Despite the bumpy ride, it was a happy end to a hard day for Saye. The family reached home before the last rays of the setting sun had fallen on Macca Town.

Even at that late hour, Sinje Transit Camp had not yet emptied entirely. Returnees were still trickling out of the facility, and it was already dark by the time last ones left. Tomorrow, more would arrive, and the process of return would continue. ♦

What's in a name?

"What's the difference between IDPs and refugees?" Actually none. Just that refugees flee *across the borders* of their country. IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons), on the other hand, flee their homes but *remain within the country*. Refugees are people who flee to a foreign country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. Refugees have duties to the country in which they seek asylum. They have to conform to the laws and regulations for maintaining public order in the host country. Unlike IDPs, it is more difficult for refugees to return home since they have to cross international borders.

Like refugees, IDPs too are victims of war and other threats. However, unlike refugees, IDPs have no internationally defined legal status. Liberia's IDP situation was triggered by years of intermittent civil war. As the war moved towards the capital, so did the displaced population. Some 20 camps were established around Monrovia while a dozen others were set up in other parts of the country. Nearly 300,000 IDPs are living in camps while the rest reside in local communities. At any given time there are far more IDPs in the world than refugees.

As peace began returning to Liberia following the deployment of UNMIL, the IDP-return movement kicked off on 8 November 2004. Since then, nearly 30,000 IDPs have been assisted to return. However, UNHCR does not have the mandate to take the lead in IDP assistance. The agency is nevertheless, heavily involved as part of the Joint Planning Team (JPT), including UNMIL, WFP, IOM, LRRRC and NGOs. JPT coordinates the trucks, non-food items and a local transportation allowance to facilitate the movement of people to their homes. WFP leads the food distribution effort. Justin Bagirishya, WFP Country Representative said school feeding programmes would play a key role in encouraging IDPs to return home. "Many people will feel reluctant to return if they are unsure their children will be fed," he said. ♦

With inputs from

Tom Winston Monboe

A young returnee





By Francesca Fontanini

As uprooted Liberians head home following the end of a 14-year civil conflict, they are finding out that it takes more than resilience to begin a new life in the face of so much destruction and lack of income earning opportunities.

The task of rebuilding is immense. The scars of war are everywhere. In former battle zones, most houses and buildings are roofless or pocked with bullet holes and destroyed by bomb blasts. Rain forests have swallowed villages left empty for years. In many areas, only stubbles of concrete can be seen poking through thick foliage where once churches and government buildings stood. Schools, hospitals and basic facilities are in ruins.

Despite the daunting conditions, the Liberian refugees are not waiting for ideal circumstances to return. Despite their enthusiasm to begin a new life back home, some have ended up in camps for displaced people, unable to proceed to their homes because the government has yet to declare some areas safe.

Juliet Massaquoi, a 24-year-old mother of four children, returned to Ganta in northern Liberia on her own initiative. "I came with nothing. My relatives and friends are helping me, but I need food to feed my children," Massaquoi said. Despite the difficulties, she is happy to be home after spending years in a refugee camp in Guinea. "Even if my house is riddled with bullets, I can finally sleep under my own roof," she said.

Reconstruction is evident everywhere in Ganta, a bustling commercial center near the border with Guinea, 230 km northeast of Liberia's capital Monrovia. In the last several months following deployment of peacekeepers in Ganta, many refugees have returned and begun rebuilding the town. Today, many restaurants, beauty parlors and shops filled with goods brought in from just across the border with Guinea have reopened in Ganta.

Outside the town, farm lands have been cleared and planted with rice and maize. In



**"To sleep under
my own roof..."**

lower Nimba County, Liberians are returning to their homes following UNMIL's successful disarmament and demobilization programme. "Peacekeepers' deployment in all parts of Liberia allows all of the refugees and IDPs to resettle," said Moses Okello, UNHCR Representative in Liberia.

The return of stability to Liberia and the efforts of the humanitarian community to restore basic services in areas of return led UNHCR last October to launch the organized repatriation of Liberian refugees to areas declared safe by the Liberian government. Refugee camps in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana host some 350,000 Liberians some of whom first went there in late 1989 when Charles Taylor began an insurgency against the government of

President Samuel Doe. As of mid-January, more than 6,500 Liberian refugees have been repatriated by UNHCR.

With 13 of 15 Counties in Liberia declared safe, this year, an estimated 150,000 Liberian refugees are likely to head back home, mainly from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

In 2005, UNHCR will initiate more than 1,000 community empowerment projects in collaboration with local partners and the communities as part of the 4Rs initiatives - Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction. UNHCR has set up 19 transit facilities countrywide in anticipation of a large number of refugees and IDPs who are expected to return before the rainy season. ♦





When the Ivorians Came

By Ashim Choudhury

Liberia was just about returning to peace and normalcy. People who had fled to neighbouring countries were beginning to return spontaneously or assisted by UNHCR. It was a time to feel good and prepare for the return of the Liberian refugees. And then a sudden turn of events in Côte d'Ivoire early November overtook everything else. The first group of Ivorians fled to Liberia on 5 November 2004 (this was not the first time that Liberia was hosting refugees in the middle of its own crisis. In 1991 many people from Sierra Leone fled to Liberia to escape civil war in their country).

What began as a trickle soon became a tide. By the end of November UNHCR had registered over 10,000 refugees. According to estimates more than 13,000 Ivorians had crossed over into Liberia, mostly into Butuo and Gborplay in Nimba county. In all they were coming in through some 20 crossing points. The influx continued even weeks after the guns in Côte d'Ivoire had fallen silent. Was it the fear of a possible war that was forcing Ivorians to flee?

We traveled to Butuo, on the border with Côte d'Ivoire, to find out. On that late November afternoon the otherwise sleepy town centre was teeming with activity.

The UNMIL Force Commander Lt.-Gen. Opande was expected, as was the BBC media team. There was an air of expectancy when we reached the under-construction temporary shelters. Hundreds of refugees were huddled under the shade of trees, mostly women and children. "As in most cases, the women and children have come first," explained a UNHCR official. For every woman there were at least four children, mostly bare bodied, playing happily. There were few men.

Florence Doua, a young woman with a suckling child, said she did not know the whereabouts of her husband for more than a week. "Men are targets, so he fled to the bush," she said. Did her husband know of her whereabouts? She could not tell. In most cases the women were alone. The men had stayed back to protect their homes and harvest the crops. Like many other compatriots, Florence had walked for weeks before crossing over to Butuo. Like the others, she too was hungry, waiting for the food that would be distributed in due course. "Waiting on a hungry stomach isn't easy," she said.

Among the milling crowds around the refugee shelter Ernest Kpan, 40, stood out because he spoke English. "I've spent more years in Liberia than in Côte d'Ivoire. I've done my education here," he said. With his wife and six children,



Ivorian refugees at the temporary shelter

Ernest was staying with a friend in the community. He had fled Pepleu which was some 60 kms inside Côte d'Ivoire along with five other families. "Once we hear the shooting we run." It took his group some three days to reach Butuo, going from "bush to bush."

But travel to or from Butuo was not new to Kpan or other Ivorians like him. Many of them have inter-married and keep crossing the Cestos river that divides the two countries. They even speak a common language. Ghio in Liberia is the same as Yakuba in Côte d'Ivoire. So for most of the Ivorians crossing over to Liberia, it was a bit like being at home. Most of them lived with friends or relatives in the community. It's another story that the host community in Butuo had meagre resources for themselves, which they readily shared with the 'guests'. It was intriguing, why the Ivorians had fled.

We traveled to Bin-Houye inside Côte d'Ivoire. Three kilometers into the country we met Ouyabi Dehi Etienne. He spoke

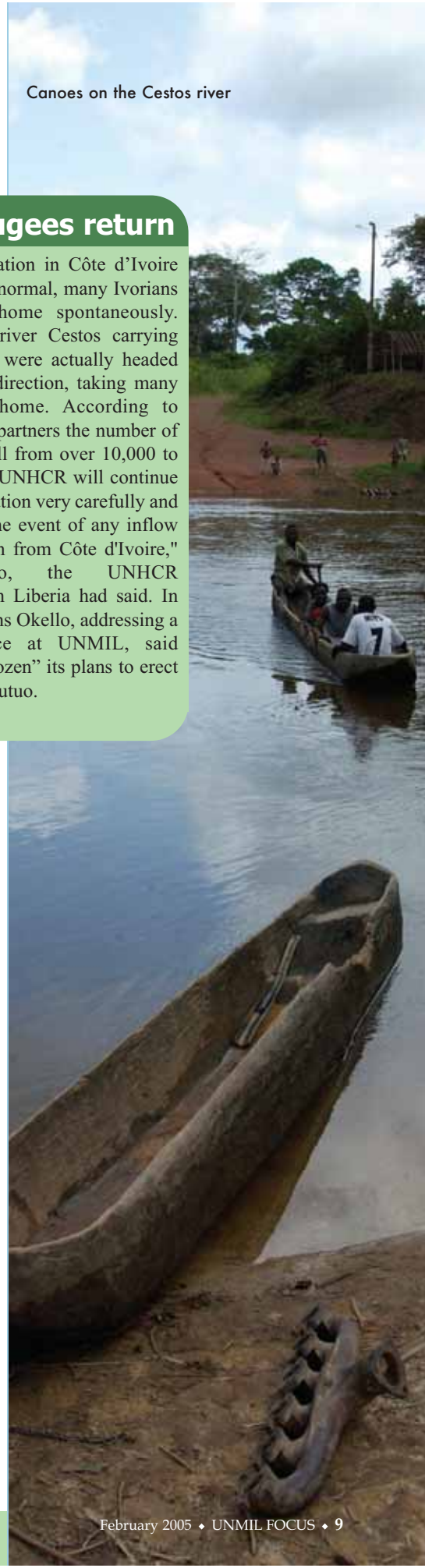
both French and English and freelanced as an interpreter with the Bangladeshi peacekeepers. Like those who had fled, he too was a Yakoba. He had sent his Liberian wife and six children to Butuo. What was he afraid of? "In the last war in 2002 they killed my parents. How can I be sure they will not kill me this time?" he asked. However, Etienne agreed that things were once again falling into place, and people were returning. Earlier, the Mayor from Bin-Houye had even sent his representative to Butuo, asking people to return.

Next morning, the refugee shelter looked almost deserted (most refugees stayed in the community). The few women clustered around the fires were cooking fufu and curry. Children played happily. The men were out in the bush to collect wood or plant cassava. One of the women complained, "Life this side too hard." But despite the hard life Liberians themselves faced, they were glad to offer shelter to their brothers and sisters from across the border in their hour of need! ♦

Canoes on the Cestos river

Most refugees return

With the situation in Côte d'Ivoire fast returning to normal, many Ivorians have returned home spontaneously. Canoes on the river Cestos carrying Ivorian refugees were actually headed in the opposite direction, taking many refugees back home. According to UNHCR and its partners the number of refugees soon fell from over 10,000 to less than 6000. "UNHCR will continue to watch the situation very carefully and be prepared in the event of any inflow of refugees again from Côte d'Ivoire," Moses Okello, the UNHCR Representative in Liberia had said. In view of the returns Okello, addressing a press conference at UNMIL, said UNHCR had "frozen" its plans to erect a new camp in Butuo.



By Lucas Cibor

The arrival of UNMIL peacekeeping forces in October 2003 put an end to hostilities in Liberia but not to the suffering of its displaced people.

While Monrovia slowly returned to a state of calm, for a while the rest of the country remained at the mercy of rag-tag gangs of former rebel fighters. Any displaced person deciding to go back to the interior was doing so entirely at his or her own risk. For most, staying back in the camps was the only real option.

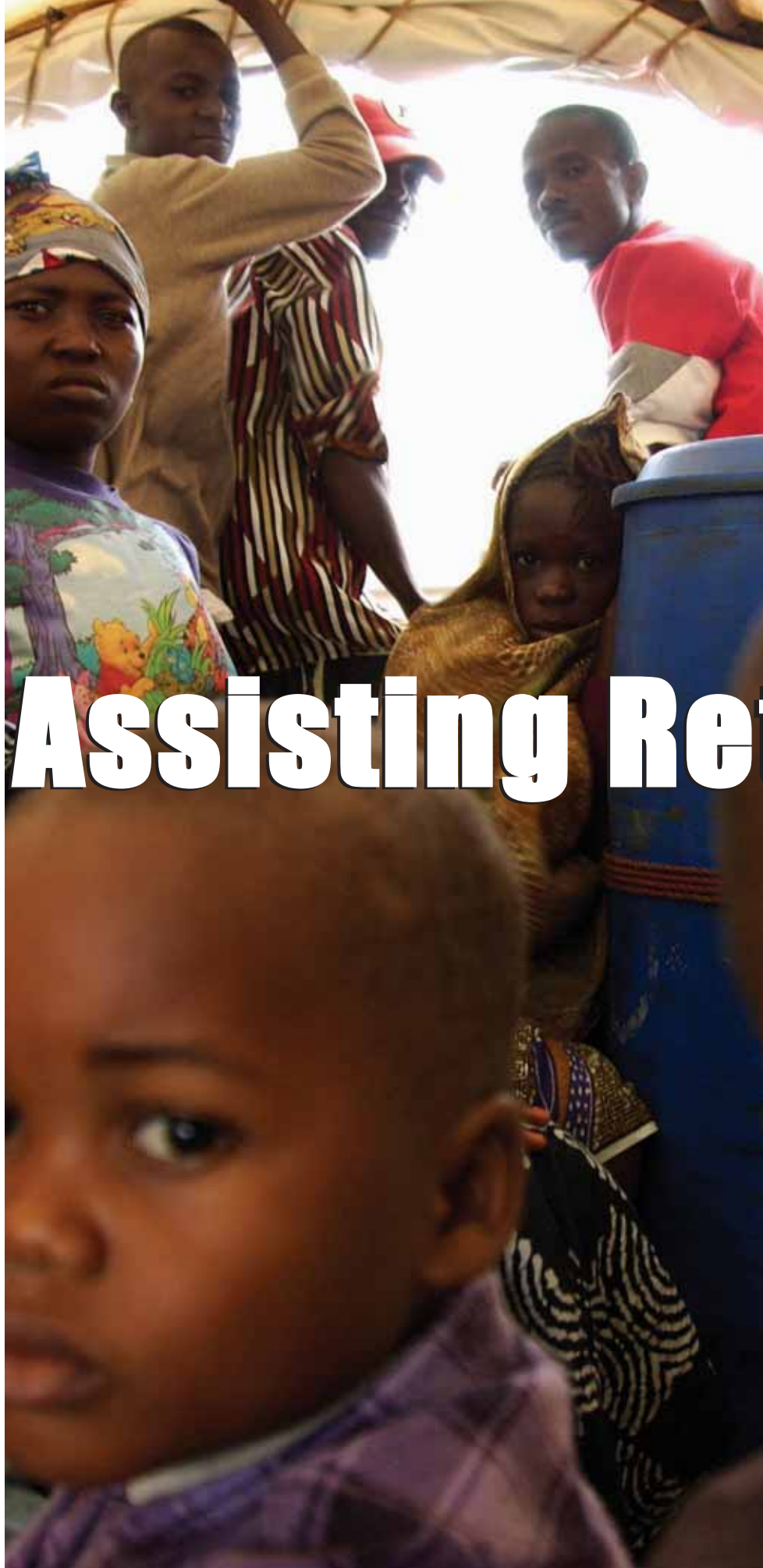
Not all IDPs depend on the UN for transport to return home. Many are willing and able to make the journey on their own, once their county is declared ready to receive them. They are the “spontaneous returnees”

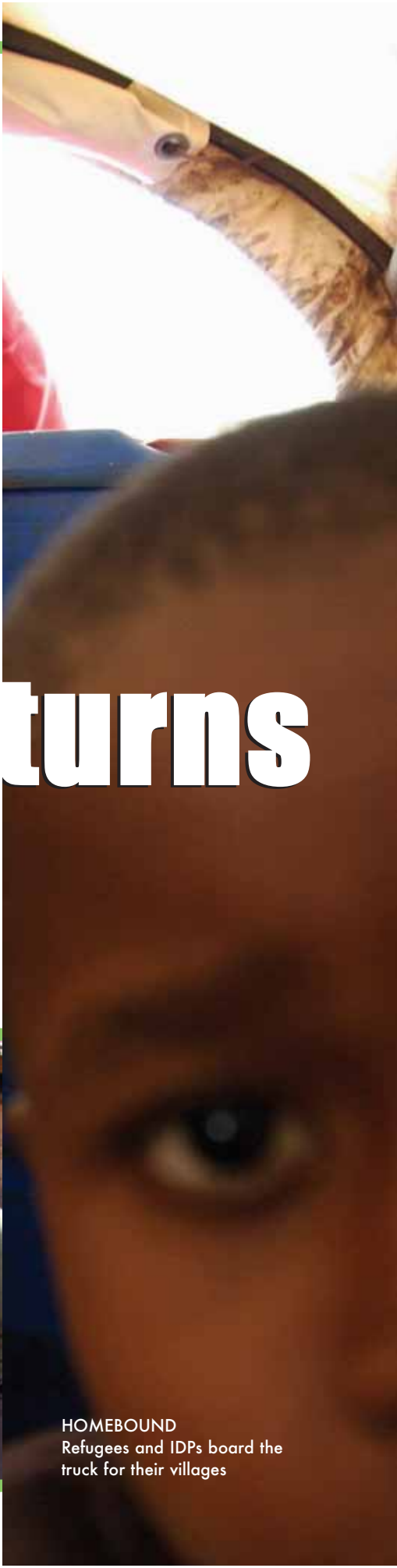
At the peak of their occupancy, the 20 officially recognized IDP camps and 14 or so spontaneous settlements around Monrovia hosted over 464,000 IDPs. Although the Liberian authorities and international community did their utmost to alleviate the suffering of the displaced, living conditions in the camps were undeniably difficult.

Overcrowding, shortages of basic supplies, rudimentary sanitation facilities and occasional insecurity (especially for the women and girls) were routine fare for thousands of IDPs. These difficulties were compounded by high levels of unemployment, brought on by the very nature of an IDP camp which makes finding a job very challenging.

Many of these problems continue to be addressed on an ongoing basis thanks to the hard work of organisations responsible for the management of the camps. Nevertheless, many IDPs can ultimately succumb to a feeling of dependency on others for survival, which frequently takes away their dignity and self-worth.

The best way to avoid this pattern is to leave the camps and return home. Accordingly, the UN Family in Liberia has begun facilitating IDP returns to those





turns

HOMEBOUND
Refugees and IDPs board the
truck for their villages

areas of the country declared ready to receive them. As in previous such scenarios throughout the world, attention has focused on providing the IDPs with transport, food and household items as part of their return package.

But given the large numbers of IDPs still living in camps around Monrovia (approximately 300,000) and the short time remaining before the 2005 rainy season and elections, the traditional approach of trucking people home may prove inadequate. The resources available for transporting IDPs home are limited - not all those who want to go will find a place on the IOM and UNHCR trucks.

In response to this, the UN has decided to offer more assistance to all those IDPs who are willing and able to make the journey home on their own. These "spontaneous" returnees organise their own transport back and are often the first ones to arrive in villages and begin rebuilding facilities and restarting food production. This makes it easier for their communities to cope with the occasionally large influx prompted by facilitated return programmes. It is estimated that 100,000

Importantly, spontaneous returnees are not unassisted. Provided they hold a valid WFP ration card, they will receive their allotment of a four-month food supply, Non-Food Items (NFIs) as well as a transport subsidy from one of the multiple distribution points set up in the counties of return.

IDPs have already gone back spontaneously throughout Liberia.

Importantly, spontaneous returnees are not unassisted. Provided they hold a valid WFP ration card, they will receive their allotment of a four-month food supply, Non-Food Items (NFIs) as well as a transport subsidy from one of the multiple distribution points set up in the counties of return. This process is now likely to accelerate, with the recent declaration of seven additional counties as "ready for return" (all except Sinoe and Grand Kru, bringing

the total to 13). As more facilitated and spontaneous returnees stream into the hinterland, it is critical that they arrive to find a functioning local administration. The NTGL is currently working with the UN Family to ensure that county and district level officials are in place and working effectively.

A part of these funds will go towards providing additional assistance to IDP camps, but the majority is targeted at creating acceptable living conditions in rural areas through various community-driven programmes.

The UN is also well aware of the significant gaps in the provision of basic services and other key sectors which returnees are likely to face in their towns and villages. To help address these, the Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator published the Integrated RFTF Humanitarian Appeal in December 2004, soliciting US\$246 million from donors to intervene in the most urgent areas. A part of these funds will go towards providing additional assistance to IDP camps, but the majority is targeted at creating acceptable living conditions in rural areas through various community-driven programmes.

Much of this early development work will be overseen by District Development Committees and Town Development Councils. The two will be supported by the UN Development Programme which will help communities decide on development priorities and organize themselves to achieve them. They will work to empower the local inhabitants, taking care to include returnees, ex-combatants and other previously marginalized groups in the decision-making process.

By mid-January, over 30,000 IDPs had been assisted to return home, while some 67,000 more had registered for the return process. To date, most of the returnees have gone back to Bomi County. The Joint Planning Team (JPT), an UNMIL-led inter-agency group which includes UNHCR, IOM, WFP, UNMIL, LRRRC and an NGO representative, is coordinating their return. ♦

“WE RESPOND TO THEIR

In a candid interview with Editor Mathew Elavanalthoduka, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Coordinator of UN Operations, Jacques Paul Klein, recounts the work of the Mission and reveals his plans to take up a teaching position at Princeton University soon.

You have been at the helm of the Mission for more than 15 months. What would you say are our major achievements?

I think the single major achievement of UNMIL was the disarmament of over 100,000 ex-combatants. I was told when I came here that there were 35,000 combatants. The actual number turned out to be almost three-fold! Over 6 million rounds of ammunition have been collected and destroyed, 27,000 weapons and almost 30,000 pieces of ordnance. We are talking about mortars, machine guns, rocket propelled grenades...

Over 22,000 disarmed combatants were women and more than 11,000 were children. The child soldiers, although I was told could be over 30 per cent, were only 11 per cent. What's most important about the child soldiers is that we have reunited 95 per cent of them with their families or parents.

Now, what else do we do here? We feed every day 600,000 people. We've immunized 1.5 million children against measles, 230,000 against yellow fever, 900,000 against polio. Thousands of teachers are being trained and schools are running as normal. Businesses are opening and GDP is way up as compared to last year. We have now a lower crime rate than most of the countries of Western Europe! These are some very positive developments since UNMIL came in.

In 1997, we had a similar attempt at bringing peace to Liberia and it failed. It was mainly attributed to the failure of the reintegration and rehabilitation of combatants. Now, the rehabilitation and reintegration phase is experiencing a serious financial crunch. So, are we going to fail a second time?

No, I think we will find the money but it is troubling as you said. In other words, among those 100,000 ex-combatants were combatants from previous wars. The failure the last time was not to collect all the weapons, not to destroy all the ammunition and they failed to fully disarm them,



CRIES...

but to leave them as structured organizations. This time we disbanded them on 1 November. LURD, MODEL and the Taylor people went out of business.

The US government has come through with substantial help for rehabilitation and reintegration and some 8,000 ex-combatants are benefiting. We, the UN, are funding a very sizable group as is the European Union. The EU will probably come with some additional money, perhaps as high as 50 million dollars, in the next two or three months. So I hope to get over the RR problem.



The recent tsunami disaster in Asia has diverted a lot of donor attention in that direction. Could this affect the much needed donor assistance to Liberia?

Oh, it has. You see, someone told me recently, "You had your tsunami. Your tsunami was between August 2003 and February 2004." Had the warring factions come together, put a package together with the National Transitional Government, gone on the road saying "the war is over, we are dedicated to building a better future for Liberia," donors would have come. Instead, they were busy jostling for power internally. Compounding the situation now is cor-

ruption. Not the whole government certainly, but there are ministers and various departments that are corrupt. That's also a problem leading to donor fatigue.

You have repeatedly said that there is a "deficit of political commitment" on the part of some members of the transitional government in fulfilling the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Could you elaborate?

One group does not want elections because under the Accra Accords, the current Ministers and the Chairman and Deputy Chairman cannot run for office. So, some of the Ministers are saying: "If we cannot run for office, do we need an election at all? I'm very comfortable being a Minister. Couldn't we have a two or three-year UN mandate, then the elections?"

But we have been fairly adamant. The African Union, ECOWAS, UN, donor countries, all agree that elections should take place in October this year in line with the peace agreement.

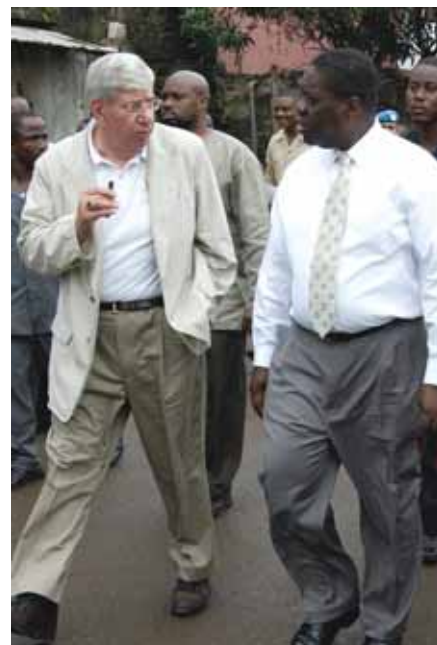
Are the preparations for elections on course?

Oh yes, I think we are in good shape. The people that we have here have done elections in South Africa, Croatia, Angola, Mozambique and Haiti, so we have a good electoral team within the Mission. We have the expertise and we are working in close collaboration with the Elections Commission. We will be hiring about 4,000 Liberian students for voter registration, and probably several thousands more to be poll watchers around the polling stations.

Can you assure a secure atmosphere during the elections?

Certainly. We'll have 15,000 military personnel, 1,200 Civilian Police and 400 members of the formed police.

We are also training a new Liberian Police Service although this has been a real challenge because Charles Taylor had criminalized the police, they were instruments of oppression. So back in May we began recruiting candidates for a new 3500-strong police service. We are working with the Belgian Government. They will provide the fire arms that we need to arm the police. The U.S. Government is



paying a large part of the tab for the other equipment, the crime laboratory, etc. We expect to have 1,900 police officers trained and deployed by the time of the elections.

You have a tough, taxing job. We often see you working even on holidays. How do you cope?

You see, when I came here I was a retired General, a retired Ambassador. I was about to go to Princeton to teach. Then Secretary-General Kofi Annan invited me to come to Liberia so the Princeton assignment was deferred in 2003 and again in 2004. It cannot be deferred any further so I will definitely be leaving soon.

Now, are we doing any good here for those thousands of Liberians in those IDP camps that we're feeding, for the many children in orphanages that we are arranging a home for, for the several thousands of students that we're providing school bags for?

We respond to their cries. Then you sit at your desk at night and put your feet up and ask: "What did I do today that was useful?" Of course, it is a rewarding, satisfying experience. We do this collectively in this Mission, our staff come from over 100 countries, different religions, races and yet we all find a way to work together under the UN and do the right thing. ♦

A Second Chance



CAKEMAKERS
At the confectionery workshop

With the disarmament and demobilization phase of DDRR over, the emphasis now is on successful rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants. The Booker Washington Institute is among a handful of organizations in Liberia trying to give the former fighters a second chance in life.

By Ashim Choudhury

The Booker Washington Institute (BWI) in Kakata, founded in 1929 and named after the African-American educator, was one of the few institutions that “survived” Liberia’s 14-year civil war. Today it stands as one of the few symbols of hope for Liberian people, particularly the 777 disarmed and demobilized ex-combatants who are training there alongside regular students in agriculture and various vocational courses.

The youngest beneficiary of the UNDP-sponsored RR program is teenager Edwin Slocum, who is on the verge of fin-

ishing his course in electrical work. “I’ve finished training in house wiring...I can rewind a motor,” he says with a proud grin. It’s difficult to believe that this little boy was part of the fighting forces not so long ago. Mulbah Jackollie, the Principal of BWI, is very proud of his youngest student. “He’s very good, very skillful,” he says about his favourite pupil. After the training Edwin also attends night classes. “I want to go for academics,” says the precocious 15-year old.

Like little Edwin, many of the ex-combatants (a moniker they hate) in BWI are working overtime to prove to the world, and to themselves, that they are eager to get back to a normal and productive life. And if the proof of the pudding lies in the eating, the cakes that Mercy Gaye, 26, and Tina Tokpah, 23, had brought us tasted delicious, proving their baking acumen. “They should get ten out of ten,” someone who had eaten a piece of the cake said. No one objected to the full marks. Both Mercy and Tina, former combatants, had learnt to make cakes, jam and peanut butter at the BWI bakery. Some of them had even started working on birthday and wedding orders. In all BWI’s RR program had some 125 women, most of them training in ‘Home Economics,’ which included tailoring, hairdressing, cosmetology, soap making and, of course, baking.

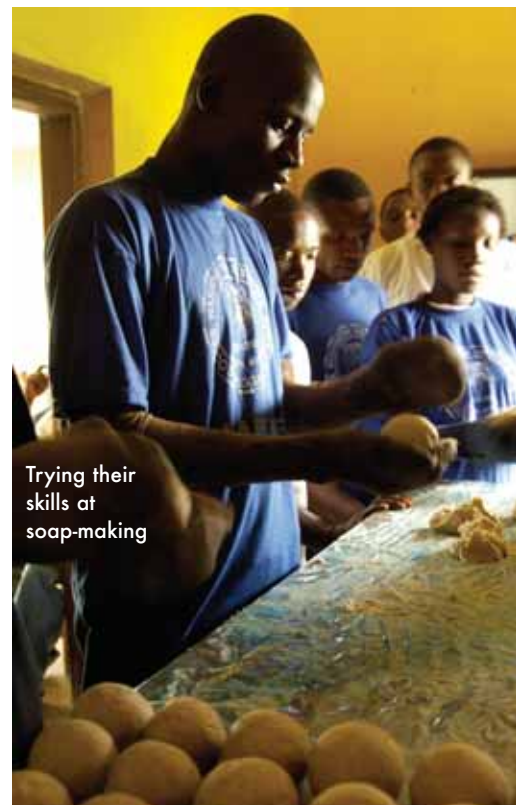
In all there were seven vocational courses for the RR students including Auto Mechanics, Masonry, Carpentry, Electricity, Electronics, Agriculture, Poultry Farming, Animal Husbandry and Home Economics. The eight-month courses which began in June 2004, will come to an end in February, 2005. Unlike the regular courses, which last four years, the RR courses are short.

“The RR curriculum, because of the short duration, lays greater emphasis on the practicals and less on theory,” says Bernice Williams, who heads the department of Home Economics. And to test their skills the students have often worked for the Institute itself. For instance, Ms Williams’ fancy hairdo was the work of a student of cosmetology. The students had also undertaken major repair and electrical work in two of the BWI buildings. The Principal’s office has an ingeniously

designed rattan computer table produced by students from the furniture workshop. One of the rattan furniture students was actually catering to small orders in Kakata, where he lived. “I waiting for UN to help me open shop,” he said.

Not everybody was waiting for help. Kpannah Dunorr, who was bent over a skirt on her sewing machine in the tailoring workshop, said she was already making “small money” stitching clothes for people from her village. The tailoring class had 19 girls and 11 boys. Steven Kamara, the instructor, was happy that his students had picked up their ‘threads’ very quickly. “They stitch both men’s and women’s outfits. Many bring materials from their homes and take them back, stitched here,” he said. It was the same at the auto workshop, where the ex-combatants repaired cars belonging to BWI staff. At the time of our visit, the RR students at the auto workshop were working on a major project, assembling a car from scratch (read scrap). “After two weeks, this will be running,” their instructor assured us. At the electronic workshop another RR student was trying to fix a DVD player alongside regular students.

So when Principal Jakollie said, “We’re very confident that our students will make



Trying their skills at soap-making



Engineers in the making

a good beginning,” one knew it was not an empty boast. “We have a very strong evaluation system, and we will give two different types of certificates,” Jakollie said. Some 90-95% students would get “Achievement” certificates while the remaining 5-10%, not attending classes regularly, would only get “Participation” certificates. The students, mostly from around Kakata, though happy to have accomplished their courses, were also eager to know if they would get a “start-up package” once they had completed their training. Jakollie was aware of the expectation and had requested funds from the Joint Implementation Unit (JIU/UNDP) that was implementing the programme.

“We’ll give seed money on a case to case basis, for the ones who want to start an individual or cooperative enterprise,” the Principal said. He was engaging private companies to work out ‘campus placement’ strategies. The idea of allowing the RR students to provide services to external customers at subsidized rates was also being considered. That would not only make the programme self-sustaining but also give the students better experience. Meanwhile, for the agriculture students there may already be some good news. Of the 487 of them, some 200 are likely to be absorbed into an 18-month rubber and palm oil nursery project with Liberia Community Infrastructural Project (LCIP), funded by USAID. When that happens, BWI could take some genuine credit for the rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants. Liberians, particularly prospective employers, should make all efforts to absorb the RR students, so they can truly participate in the reconstruction of Liberia. ♦

Children, some as young as ten years, were used as soldiers, cooks, messengers, or even sex slaves during Liberia's civil war. Mohammed Wayee, now 24, was one among them but today he is a transformed person. J. Wesley Washington met him.

“Mohammed 15 Gate”

He was an innocent 10-year old in 1990 when he joined the “Wild Geese” Small Boys Unit (SBU) of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The SBU boys were guarding Charles Taylor who was then residing in the executive mansion in Gbarnga. The brutal boys were part of what was called the Executive Mansion Guard Battalion.

Mohammed was in the fifth grade when he picked up the gun. It was pressure from peers that forced him to become a child soldier. “I joined because I was continuously being harassed and intimidated by boys of my age who were soldiers in the Small Boys Unit. One morning while accompanying my mother to the market, I again encountered them and was humiliated. That’s when I made up my mind to join them,” he said. ‘I would have my own gun to protect myself from further harassment and intimidation’, Mohammed told himself.

Around 1993 Mohammed had already gained notoriety. By then he was head of the “Wild Geese” Small Boys Unit that was assigned the Kakata-Monrovia highway at “Firestone’s 15 Gate”. That’s where he got his new name “Mohammed 15 Gate” - as a ruthless and uncompromising SBU commander who, like many other child soldiers, committed untold atrocities against civilian men and women. He was brutal in ensuring that no arms left the frontline or entered NPFL controlled territory from 15 Gate.

Why was he so ruthless and uncompromising? “I was under the influence of drugs. We did that to be seen as being vig-



METAMORPHOSIS
“15 Gate” at BWI

ilant, effective and fearless,” Mohammed admitted. It is a well-known fact that child soldiers were forced to take drugs by their adult superiors in order to make them fight ruthlessly.

In 1996 with the initiation of the peace process, Mohammed was disarmed and demobilized by the ECOMOG forces. He was back at school. But then he heard his friends saying, ‘Pappe calling us back.’ Moreover life was hard without any source of income. So by 2000 he was back in his old unit. And all that mattered then was that he could once again address President Charles Taylor as “Pappe”. As the conflict escalated in 2003, he fought alongside the ex-Government of Liberia (ex-GOL) forces during the more recent episode of Liberia’s civil war.

When he was again disarmed last year by UNMIL he opted for a vocational course in carpentry at the Booker Washington Institute (BWI) Former Combatants Rehabilitation & Reintegration Project. "I was one of the few ex-combatants selected to assist in the construction of cantonment sites before the disarmament and demobilization process commenced. And that's how I developed an interest in carpentry," he said. Mohammed, who shortly finishes the eight-month training in carpentry, says he's ready to assist in reconstructing what he helped to destroy.

Even the BWI principal, Mr. Mulbah Jackollie speaks highly of him. "When he first enrolled here, he was indisciplined and a law unto himself. But now, he has transformed into a leader of his student colleagues. When they want to cause problems here, it is he who calms them down and pleads with them to respect the rules of the school." Mohammed, still sporting his dreadlocks, is a transformed Christian.

Now he is a member of the Youth Department of the Transient Bible Church in Kakata, Margibi County. During a recent church conference the repentant former combatant requested his pastor to accompany him within the community so that he could plead for forgiveness from those he had offended during the war. And which, he said, they accepted in good faith. "I feel a free man now, ready to look in the direction of a better Christian life," he said. "Mohammad 15 Gate" urges all former ex-combatants to emulate his example and ask forgiveness from those they offended during the war.

Mohammed, who prior to the most recent fighting was a tenth grade student at the Effort Baptist School, wants to continue his education after graduating from the BWI RR project. "I hope that if we are given start-up kits after graduation, I'll like to join some friends and open a small carpentry shop. I also want BWI to give me a scholarship so that I can do the regular academic programme. I think I need an academic education to supplement my vocational skills," he says.

Like the once notorious "Mohammed 15 Gate", the RR programme expects to transform many former fighters into responsible citizens eager to contribute to Liberia's reconstruction and rehabilitation. ♦

Reintegration Projects

In keeping with Article VI of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the UN is implementing rehabilitation and reintegration through the JIU/UNDP in concert with Liberia's National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR). Several projects supported by the UNDP Trust Fund are being undertaken to provide agricultural training, vocational skills training, formal education and on-the-job training including psycho-social counseling, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. Parallel programs supported by the European Commission (EC), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other donors are also being implemented to give ex-combatants the chance for a new beginning.

Of some 20 such ongoing projects, ten are funded by the UNDP Trust Fund, two by the EC and USAID is funding public works projects. Currently some 14,591 former combatants are being covered for training programmes, while another 18,000 are expected to be covered soon. In addition some 7,798 ex-combatants are enrolled in 103 schools for formal education. A total of 11,869 ex-combatants are targeted for this programme. Students undertaking the programmes are also given a US\$ 30 subsistence allowance per month besides educational materials.

Meanwhile, UNICEF is handling the formal education needs of ex-combatants through the Community Education Investment Program (CEIP) where participating schools are assisted with educational materials and sanitation support in exchange for enrolling students. This program is also being supervised by the Ministry of Education. Most of the RR programs are implemented by local or international NGOs and training institutes such as the BWI. Of some 100,000 combatants who have given up arms the current RR program is covering only about 20,000. Needless to say, there is a huge funding need to include the remaining ex-combatants for reintegration.

By J. Wesley Washington

The Zoegowee Elementary and Junior High School, in Gbehlaygeh District, Nimba County, over 750 kilometers from Monrovia, was built in 1956. It was renovated in 1976. Twenty-nine years on, the building had nearly collapsed, in part due to Liberia's 14-year civil war. Moreover, being the only junior high school within the district, the school also could not host the growing student population, particularly as the refugees and IDPs began returning. Nearly 500

Quick

kindergarten, elementary and junior high school students now attending the school had to congregate under the shade of trees in the yard. And when it rained, the school had to close down.

Much of all that has changed now thanks to the UNMIL Quick Impact Project (QIP). Presently, three of the school's buildings, which will have 11 classes and two offices are being renovated. "The QIPs have liberated the students from their suffering." This had, for long, affected learning in this area," says E. Daniel Mahn, principal of the Zoegowee School. A seventh grader from the school, Yah Dahn, summed it up: "Thanks to UNMIL for the assistance. As the words "quick impact" suggests, we have seen quick results."

The Zwedru Multilateral High School (ZMHS) in Grand Gedeh County, a vocational school, constructed in April 1978 with help





School building under renovation

Impact

from the World Bank, was also vandalized during the war. Equipment, training tools and much of the infrastructure was looted or damaged. Again, it was the UNMIL QIP that salvaged it. "Had it not been for UNMIL that rescued this institution when it was drowning, we would not have commenced school," said T. Marvin Goah, a senior student.

After the renovation, the student population climbed to over 613 students. Many of the students here are ex-combatants and former child soldiers. Many more students would like to enroll, but due to limited capacity admissions are currently closed. Christina Gobah, 20, an ex-combatant and aspiring computer scientist, expressed her gratitude to UNMIL for making learning better at the institution. As a follow up to the renovation, the

school's administration and the United States Agency of International Development (USAID) funded Liberia Community Infrastructural Programme (LCIP) recently signed a MoU to train nearly 1,500 ex-combatants in technical and vocational skills.

QIPs are now focusing on facilitating the resettlement of returnees into their communities. In Bong County, for example, 12 water wells around Gbarnga City were rehabilitated, chlorinated and provided with hand-pumps giving some 24,500 people access to safe drinking water. To make it sustainable, some community members were also trained in hand pump repair and maintenance.

In Lofa County, the Curran Lutheran Hospital in Zorzor, which provided basic health facilities to locals and people from neighbouring Guinea was totally destroyed. This rehabilitated hospital now provides out-patient, immunization, and other health services to the community as

well as returnees. "UNMIL's renovation of these facilities has created a positive impact on the health of the people of this area," says general coordinator of the OPD, Timothy C. Cleta.

These are just a few of the 112 projects undertaken since the start of the QIP programme over a year ago, totaling US\$1.23 million. Sixty-two of these projects costing US\$575,000 have been successfully completed and handed over to local communities. The educational sector constitutes 63 percent of the total projects. With a budget of US\$ 1 million for the year 2003-2004, QIPs provide emergency relief in the areas of education, health, water and public sanitation.

With improved security and the subsequent disarmament throughout the country, UNMIL QIPs, initially limited to Monrovia, have now spread to other counties including Bong, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Lofa and Margibi where over 25 schools were rehabilitated benefiting nearly 20,000 students.

In addition, over 30 school rehabilitation projects are currently underway in Bong, Bomi, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi, Montserrado and Nimba counties and will benefit close to 45,000 students, many of them ex-combatants. Rivercess, River Gee, Gbarpolu, Sinoe and Grand Kru are some of the new counties to be targeted soon.

The QIP Unit has meanwhile sensitized community leaders and local organizations throughout the country on the availability and funding mechanism of QIPs. As a result, over 700 project proposals for critical needs are being currently reviewed. ♦



QUENCHING THIRST
A water well in Gbarnga

More Funds from Sweden

Demonstrating Sweden's commitment to peace and stability in Liberia, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs recently contributed an additional 10 million Swedish Kronor (ca 1 million Euro) for the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) efforts of former combatants in Liberia. This is in addition to an earlier contribution of 14 million Swedish Kronor to the UNDP Trust Fund. "The peace process in Liberia, with a comprehensive implementation of the DDRR-programme, is of outmost significance for stability in the whole region," said the Swedish Minister for Development Cooperation Carin Jämtin. As the DD part of DDRR is over, the challenge now is of rehabilitating and reintegrating more than 100,000 ex-combatants.

Apart from the contribution to the DDRR Trust Fund, Sweden is participating in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) with 240 troops in the Quick Reaction Force as well as Civilian Police and staff officers at the UNMIL headquarters. Over the years, Sweden has consistently supported humanitarian and reconstruction efforts, contributing approximately 88 million Swedish Kronor (about 9.3 million Euro) last year alone. The country is also taking an active part in the peace process in Liberia and the region as a whole. The Swedish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr Hans Dahlgren, is assigned as the Special Representative of the Presidency of the European Union to the Mano River Countries. He also co-chairs the International Contact Group for Liberia (ICGL). ♦



One way or another they all contributed to bringing Liberia down to its knees, leaving a trail of death and destruction, poverty and displacement. They are the most recent protagonists of Liberia's back-to-back civil war that ravaged the country for 14 years. A little over a year ago, they were all bitter foes.

But there is always a chance to say enough is enough, and turn a new leaf. That is what they did, collectively, much to the relief of Liberians who had borne the brunt of the protracted civil strife.

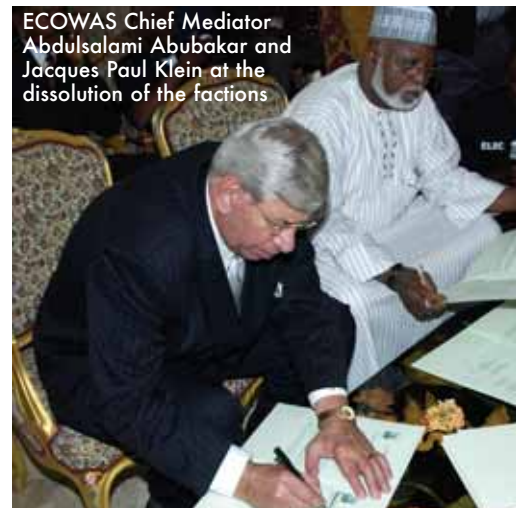
It was 3 November, three days after the nearly year-long disarmament of over 100,000 ex-combatants had officially come to an end. The venue: Executive Mansion, Monrovia.

Leaders of the three warring parties -- Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and forces of the former government of Charles Taylor (ex-GoL) -- came together to announce the dissolution of their fac-

Swedish troops play a crucial role in Liberia



ECOWAS Chief Mediator Abdulsalami Abubakar and Jacques Paul Klein at the dissolution of the factions





Warring Factions Disbanded

tions, marking a historic milestone in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Witnessing the ceremony were Chairman Gyude Bryant, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jacques Paul Klein, ECOWAS Chief Mediator Abdulsalami Abubakar, Members of the Transitional Government and the Assembly, members of the diplomatic community, and a host of other religious and civic leaders.

In a joint announcement, the three factions stated that their fighting forces and military commands had been “completely disarmed and disbanded” and that all weapons and war material in their possession had been surrendered to the UN Mission in Liberia.

Having ceased to exist as military forces, the factions agreed not to “own, use or carry” any weapons or instruments of war and vowed “not to engage in any use of force, either individually or in concert for any reason whatsoever.” They

also agreed to refrain from any acts that would adversely affect the implementation of the peace accord.

Calling it a “historic day” for Liberia, the top UN envoy said the signing of the joint declaration by the warring factions is a reaffirmation of their “desire for peace.”

“The international community will continue to assist the good and decent Liberians to achieve a stable, prosperous and peaceful Liberia. We will continue the work we have set out to achieve and we will honour the promise we have made to this country and its people,” Mr. Klein said.

Chairman Bryant applauded the “honourable, bold and courageous” step taken by the former warring parties to disband themselves for the sake of peace in the country. He praised the role played by the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS) in the Liberian peace process and commended the United Nations, particularly the

peacekeepers, for upholding the Accra Peace Accord.

Nigeria’s former Head of State and ECOWAS Mediator for the Liberian peace process, Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar, urged the erstwhile factions and the people of Liberia to “forgive and forget” and to engage in “politics without bitterness.”

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, signed in Accra on 18 August 2003, called for the dissolution of the factions upon completion of disarmament and left open avenues for them to join mainstream politics by not imposing any restrictions to form their own political parties.

“It is great for this country that the factions have been dissolved and they are promising to work for peace,” says Patricia Chea, 34, who was forced out of school due to war and lost her brother to the guns. “It is time for all of us to move forward as Liberians, as one people.” That is one sentiment echoed throughout Liberia today. ♦



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

SIERRA LEONE





Outgoing UNMIL Force Commander Lt.-Gen. Daniel Ishmael Opande in conversation with UNMIL FOCUS just before his departure.

As you leave Liberia, what are your thoughts about the security situation in the country?

I leave at a time when we have improved tremendously on the security situation since last year. Throughout the country, one can now travel from one corner to

through police, customs, or administration. In total, the security in the country has improved a lot.

In the transition from anarchy to peace, what do you consider as your memorable moment in Liberia?

It was when we completed disarmament. The time I was convinced that the majority of the ex-combatants had been disarmed, I breathed a sigh of relief. So when we completed disarmament, I felt one phase of our main task was completed. I was happy also because of the eagerness that I saw in the eyes of the ex-combatants. However, it raised another question. I said, 'Are we going to be

people have nothing to eat, they have no future, they feel that they are not represented in the Government. The government must respond to the aspirations of the people. Just taking away guns from the ex-combatants will not make the country peaceful. For peace to be sustained, there have to be more meaningful elements.

Apart from the troops, how important is the Force Commander's relationship with the government, people and the bureaucracy?

My relationship with the government, the people of various counties or political leadership has been excellent. I don't

"Security in the country has improved a lot"

the other without harassment by armed people or ex-combatants or be in fear of being lynched or attacked whether during the day or night. In the countryside villagers are no longer afraid of somebody knocking at their doors to take away their belongings. We have made it possible for the Government to re-establish its authority - whether

equally successful in reintegrating them into society, meeting their hopes and aspirations for a better future?"

How important is that aspect to sustain peace?

That is a major factor to maintain lasting peace. Because it is one thing removing the weapons, it's another thing giving them hope for the future and turning them from violence to be responsible citizens.

The peace in Liberia is often described as "fragile" how can we make it more enduring?

I think that is something that is not only for UNMIL but it is a combined effort of everyone -

UNMIL, the Government and the people of this country - to work

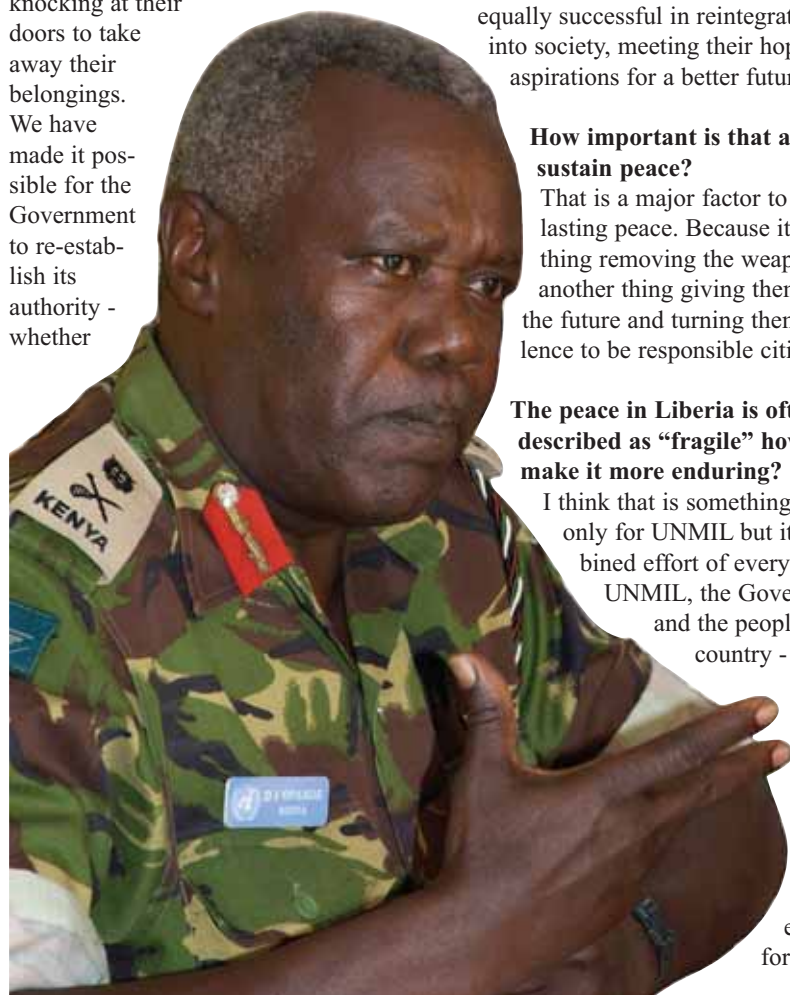
together to make peace more enduring. Peace cannot be more enduring, if for example,

know if I'm a people's general. But I've had access to nearly every leader that I needed to work with, whether they were in the diplomatic service, or in government or Liberians from various political backgrounds. I also got a lot of support from certain leaders in ECOWAS. The Chief of Defense Staff invited me every time they held their own meetings. I could go and share my views with them on what we were doing here, and what they were doing in the entire region. I thank all those who have given me support.

To the new incumbent, what's your advice?

Let me say my successor is a very seasoned General, well trained, professional soldier. He's been in peacekeeping before. From day one when he arrived here, he's been in the heat of everything. On the day he arrived here the balloon went up in Monrovia, I think it was 7 December, 2003. I was in New York. So he arrived in a crisis situation. Straight away, he got down to helping calm the storm.

There is nothing new that I would like to offer him. I would expect that our political leadership will give him maximum support just as they have given to me



because it's not a one-man's job. Being at the top of a Force, like this one, is not a very easy task. You need the support of everybody, the administration, the logistics... Without that it is not easy to succeed.

To the people of Liberia, what's your parting message?

I am humbled and honored to know that my little participation in the peace process has been appreciated by many in this country. My appeal to the people of Liberia: The way in which they have handled themselves this one year, craving for peace and ensuring that peace returns to Liberia, it should be the same manner in which they should work to ensure that we finally have sustainable peace. The government has the moral obligation and responsibility to respond to the cries of so many who are now saying 'yes we have peace but we have nothing to eat, no jobs, no schools, no hospital.' ♦

UNMIL Troop Contributing Countries



The New Force Commander



command and staff appointments. They include the Armour Communication Instructor and Technical Courses in Pakistan, the Armour Basic and Instructor Courses in Britain (1976) and the USA (1981), the Junior and Senior Staff Courses in Nigeria and the Advanced Adjutant General's Course in the USA. He is also a graduate of the National War College, Abuja. He holds diplomas in Public Administration from the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria and the University of Kentucky, USA and a Master of Science degree in Strategic Studies from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

His command and staff experience include appointments at Squadron, Battalion, Divisional and Army levels. He was the Training Director at the Nigerian Army Training and Doctrine Command

and the Director of Administration at the Defence Headquarters.

Lt.Gen. Owonibi was the Commander of the first Reconnaissance Company in support of the Nigerian Battalion in the United Nations Mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the Coordinator of the Nigerian Army Training Group which handled the reorganization and training of the Gambian National Army from 1992 to 1994. Prior to his appointment as the Deputy Force Commander he was the General Officer Commanding, Third Armoured Division of the Nigerian Army.

The seasoned 3-star General has three daughters and a son. He enjoys listening to classical and Christian music and also plays golf. ♦

Lieutenant General Joseph Owonibi was named Force Commander of United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in January by Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Until his new appointment, he was the Deputy Force Commander and Chief Military Observer of the Mission from its inception.

Lt.-Gen. Owonibi was born on 6 May, 1949 in Aiyetoro - Gbedde, Kogi State, Nigeria. He began his military career in January 1971 as an Officer Cadet in the Nigerian Defence Academy. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in June 1973. During his over 33 years of meritorious service, he has undergone military and administrative courses with various

By Ismene N. Zarifis

The creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was provided for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed by Liberia's warring parties. The Commission was essentially meant to investigate root

causes of the armed conflict in Liberia and recommend measures to rehabilitate victims of human rights violations. It will investigate issues of impunity, human rights violations and war crimes during the country's armed conflict starting from the rice riots in 1979 right up to 2003 when the civil war, that began 1989, ended. Though not a court of law, the TRC may

be authorized to carry out prosecutions in the future, particularly for gross human rights violations and war crimes.

Developing the draft TRC Act, which would give the Commission its legal mandate, became one of the first tasks for UNMIL's Human Rights Section. The crafting of the draft TRC Act began in July 2004 through a national consultation

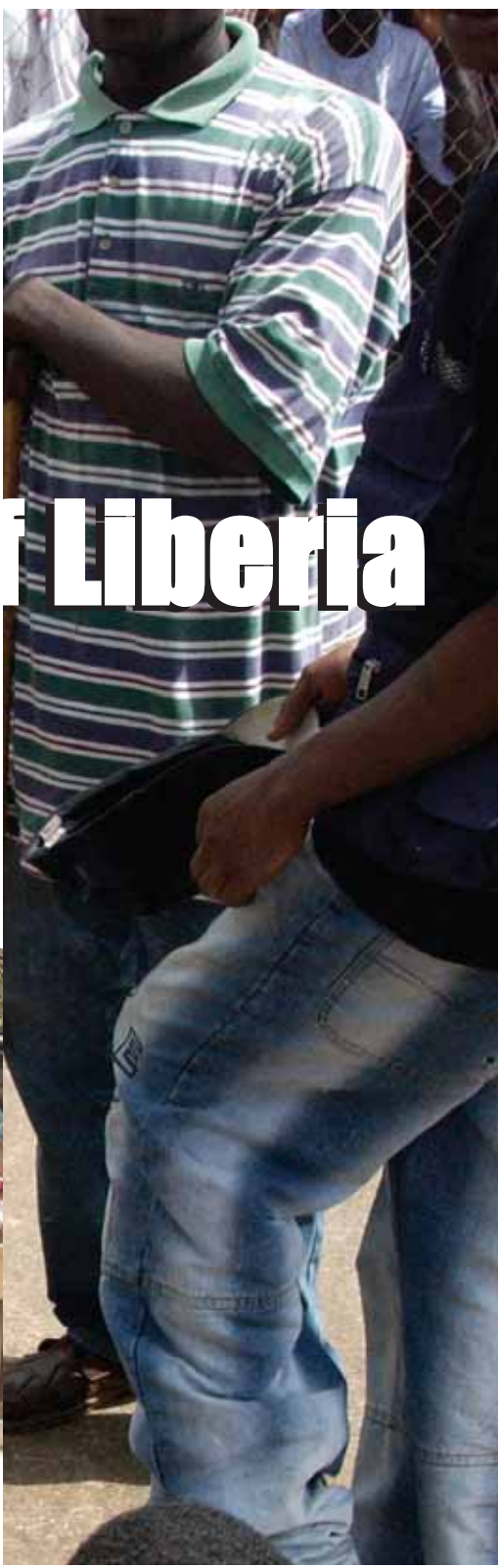
LOST LIMB
Thousands of Liberians
suffered atrocities
during the war

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Hand in Hand with the people of



aimed at assessing Liberians' views and expectations of a truth commission. The TRC Draft Act, presented to the National Transitional Government and currently awaiting adoption, is one of the first pieces of legislation in Liberia that was part of a consultative process with the people and civil society of Liberia.



After the national consultations, a workshop was held involving a large representation of NGOs, guided by national and international specialists in the field. It discussed specific issues relating to the creation of a truth commission in Liberia. It produced recommendations on the functions and powers of the proposed truth commission, the requisite characteristics for commissioners, types of reparations to be granted, and finally, the special treat-

People wanted the TRC to be an impartial body, unbiased, trustworthy, transparent, competent and independent.

ment to be given to women and child victims. In the final phase, drawing on the views expressed by Liberians during the national consultations and the workshop, a draft Act was produced during a two-week session. The draft bill was formally presented to the National Transitional Government of Liberia in September 2004.

One of the key questions that Liberians -- mainly in Montserrado, Margibi, Nimba, Ganta and Bong counties -- were asked during the national consultations in July 2004 was: "Why have a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Liberia?" Answers varied. Some said, "The TRC was necessary to address the atrocities and other inhumane acts committed in Liberia." Others said, "A TRC is necessary to look into the war years, expose the evils perpetrated against innocent and unarmed civilians, investigate crimes against humanity, and expose those responsible for the crimes." Yet another respondent stated, "A TRC will give people the opportunity to tell their stories and to recommend reforms in order to prevent recurrence in the future."

The consultation team, including human rights officers from UNMIL, TRC commissioners and NGO representatives, traveled by road to remote communities even in the rainy season. "What do you understand by reconciliation and how do you want it to be achieved?" This was another central question asked. Answers included: "Reconciliation is a process by which both perpetrators and victims come together to attain genuine peace." Others said, "Reconciliation is an attempt to

resolve differences among people. It is the admission of guilt between individuals." Yet others said, "Everyone must be willing to admit their wrongdoing, forgive and accept those who wronged them."

Generally, people wanted the TRC to be an impartial body, unbiased, trustworthy, transparent, competent and independent. As one respondent put it, "A truth commission should make sure that no wrong committed goes unnoticed, that absolute documentation of all activities be done, and that all activities be conducted in full transparency."

Considering that the TRC is not a court of law and that it cannot be expected to issue criminal sentences, respondents were asked how they would like perpetrators of human rights abuses or war crimes to be treated. The general recommendation was that the accused should appear before the TRC for investigation, and those admitting guilt, and asking forgiveness, should be absolved. However, those found guilty of gross human rights violations should be banned from holding public office for at least 10 to 14 years and prosecuted, some felt.

These views were taken into consideration when formulating the draft Act, which designates the TRC to cover crimes from 1979 to October 2003. It also stipulates specific criteria for the character of commissioners and their selection process. Commissioners can investigate human rights violations by reviewing documents, interviewing victims and perpetrators, conducting historical research, and conducting public hearings. The TRC will also be empowered to subpoena particular individuals who it feels can provide the commission with necessary information to identify the root causes of the conflict and address issues of impunity for human rights violations. Amnesty will be available only to those not found guilty of grave human rights violations and war crimes.

As the TRC draft Act awaits adoption by the Transitional Legislative Assembly, civil society organizations have launched a massive awareness and advocacy campaign for the passage of the bill. As the Liberians say -- softly, softly catch monkey -- the road to national reconciliation may be long, but one that will be traversed hand in hand with the Liberian people. ♦



The outgoing Civilian Police Commissioner, Mark Kroeker, recalls his experiences and challenges during his tenure in a frank interview with UNMIL FOCUS.

What was the law and order situation like when you arrived in Liberia?

I arrived in Liberia in early November 2003. Disarmament had not yet begun. There was a semblance of peace in Monrovia coinciding with the initial deployment of peacekeepers, yet there was disarray in terms of law and order as the Liberian National Police (LNP) could at best be described as a dysfunctional police force. The years of conflict had destroyed not only the physical and logistical capacity of LNP to provide even basic services to the public but it also lacked basic competencies of democratic

policing. They were, in the eyes of many, associated with the wrong doings of the past, rather than the righting of the wrongs. Public confidence in the LNP did not exist, corrupt practices flourished, and morale was non-existent.

How would you describe the situation now?

We have made significant progress. Police officers in field training, both serving LNP and new recruits, can be seen throughout the streets of Monrovia, and in several outlying areas serving the public. Bi-lateral donations by the US and China in terms of donations of equipment have begun to arrive in the country. With support from the US government UNMIL has renovated and opened the Liberian National Police Academy.

We continue to undertake several core initiatives designed to enhance the professional competencies of those qualified to continue in police service while jointly developing and implementing policies and procedures within LNP to raise the institutional standards.

counties, is it sufficient to meet the requirements in the country?

It is the beginning of a long process. Such deployments alone will not suffice in providing sound policing throughout Liberia. We must deploy trained officers, we must ensure democratic policing methods and we must bring to an end corrupt practices to which the citizens of Liberia have been subjected. It is also important that effective prosecution supports the efforts of the reformed police services of Liberia. We must let the citizens and communities know that the police are there to serve them. We must elicit support from donors to revitalize the completely run-down or non-existent police stations throughout the country.

What are the major challenges for the new LNP?

The greatest challenge will be in delivery of a community-based service that restores public confidence. This is essential. Gaining experience that is reflective of democratic policing and built on the solid foundation of training received at the Police Academy will be another chal-

"I will remember the

What were your major challenges in achieving what we see now?

The main challenges lie in the willingness of the NTGL, and just as importantly the Ministry of Justice, to support the re-establishment of the rule of law in Liberia. This must not be "cosmetic," it must be an inherent change in policy, it must include ensuring that public safety of all citizens is the overriding principle. Strong anti-corruption measures and democratic application of law are equally important.

One of your main assignments was to train the LNP. How much have you achieved towards that end?

The training programme is well underway with seven classes currently enrolled, five of which have been commissioned into Field Training assignments. Class Eight began on 24 January 2005. You will see the first full-fledged classes of trained officers on the streets in April 2005.

The deployment of the police to the

challenge. I am sure there will be many who will seek to undermine this process and return to the old ways which include corrupt practices. We cannot let that happen, and I have confidence that those who have undergone the training at the Police Academy have the courage and integrity to stand up for the people of Liberia, not the bad practices of the few.

What are the major policing issues as far as the elections are concerned?

We are speaking not just of elections, but free and fair elections. This requires the fostering of civil reconciliation and the building of community confidence that their environs are safe and secure in support of the installation of a democratically elected government. The training of the new police and subsequent deployments will play a key role in this. Further, we must train the police as to their functions during the election periods in line with the implementation of election laws, they must know their roles in terms of security

measures during voter registration and the actual election. We can also expect an increase in the number of political rallies and also demonstrations in the pre-election period. The police will continue to play a vital role as the first responders or detailed officers at these events.

How do you look back at your tenure in Liberia?

I can only say that this has been a truly positive, productive, and rewarding experience. I have approached this mission with a heartfelt energy in support of not just re-establishing the rule of law, but giving back to the communities and the people of Liberia a police service in which they can be proud, of which they do not fear, of which they can approach without hesitation. And I hope that this is what I have achieved, or at least laid the foundation for. I will remember the smiles of the people, the richness of the culture. I may be moving on to another posting, but the people of Liberia will always remain in my thoughts. ♦

e smiles"

Civilian Police Contributing Countries

	Bangladesh		Philippines
	Bosnia-Herzegovina		Poland
	China		Portugal
	Czech Republic		Russia
	Fiji		Samoa
	Gambia		Senegal
	Ghana		Serbia-Montenegro
	Jordan (FPU)		Sri Lanka
	Kenya		Sweden
	Kyrgyzstan		Turkey
	Malawi		Uganda
	Namibia		Ukraine
	Nepal (FPU)		Uruguay
	Niger		United States
	Nigeria (FPU)		Yemen
	Norway		Zambia
	Pakistan		Zimbabwe

LNP heads for the counties

More than 230 police officers, including 95 Commanders, from the Liberian National Police (LNP) were deployed early December to all the 15 counties of Liberia, signifying rapid improvement in the rule of law in the country. On the occasion, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Jacques Paul Klein urged the officers going back into the outlying areas to embrace the LNP's recent policy on community policing. "Work in partnership with your communities, solve your problems together, improve not only the security environment within your communities, but do your utmost to improve everyone's quality of life," he said.

In his keynote address Charles Gyude Bryant, Chairman of the NTGL recalled past instances, when the police

had been the "source" of the problem. "I hope that you will respect the civil liberties of the people of Liberia and protect their rights, and not suppress their rights and in turn become the primary oppressors of the Liberian people." The first phase of deployments was completed by 19 December 2004, and was later supplemented with probationary police officers who underwent field training. The deployment is yet another step in the restoration of police authority and rule of law in all areas of Liberia and would help implement a true command and control system. Acting Director of the Liberia National Police Col. Joseph Kerkula expressed concern over the lack of infrastructure that was hampering the efficiency and effectiveness of the police to enforce the rule of law. ♦



Jacques Paul Klein addressing the LNP officers



Motorcycles donated to LNP by the Chinese Government

Guess who was there in Liberia even before UNMIL stepped in? It was the Nigerians.

In August 2003, they were here as part of a multinational Inter-Positional Force (IPF) under the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL). The 1,500-strong IPF was made up of two Nigerian battalions, a battalion from Guinea Bissau and a company each from Ghana, Mali, Senegal and Togo. The ECOMIL Force Commander Brig.-Gen. Festus Okonkwo was also a

THE NIGERIAN CONTINGENT

Keeping the Peace in Monrovia

Nigerian.

"It would not be wrong to say that we (Nigerians) paved the way for UNMIL to come into Liberia," says Col. Ezekiel Olofin, Acting Commander of Sector I at its headquarters at Spriggs Payne airfield. At that time Monrovia was a city under siege. The bridge connecting Vai Town was under LURD control, Central Monrovia was under the government forces and the area around Paynesville 'belonged' to MODEL. With each faction preventing free movement of people and commodities it was a logjam. It was the Nigerians who first removed the road-blocks and facilitated the flow of commodities specially food, of which there was a grave scarcity in Monrovia.

The Nigerians, along with troops from other sister ECOWAS nations, deployed progressively through RIA, Monrovia City, Bushrod Island, Po River, Red Light and Careysburg right up to Kakata. With UNMIL coming into being on 1 October 2003, all the ECOMIL troops were assigned to what became Sector I, including Montserrado and Margibi Counties and Bong Town in the Bong County. Brig.-Gen. Festus Okonkwo became the Commander of Sector I. On 2 June 2004 he handed over the mantle to another Nigerian, Brig. Gen. L N Yusuf. Since September 2004, Sector I has two Nigerian battalions and one battalion from Ghana after the others had repatriated. A Pakistani Engineering Unit provides engineering support. Approximately 67 per cent of the operational commitments of the Sector are held by the Nigerian contingent.

One of the core tasks of Sector I was to ensure that the parties to the CPA comply with the ceasefire agreement by breaking tactical contact between opposing military forces. NIBATT units maintained the security at key and vulnerable points through robust foot and mobile patrols in areas that were not covered by physical deployment of troops.

Several checkpoints were also established at critical locations throughout NIBATT's area of operation. Regular searches at checkpoints helped recover several vehicles that were snatched by ex-combatants. The very presence of peacekeepers was reason enough to deter poten-

security outfits for enhancing VIP protection and crime prevention. During the factional struggles within the LURD in August 2004 NIBATT II maintained all-round security surveillance around those involved. At the same time the Sector headquarters engaged the aggrieved parties, bringing them to a peaceful settlement.

In the DDRR process the role of NIBATT, like the rest of UNMIL military, was to collect the armed combatants from designated pick-up points and transport them to Disarmament and Demobilization sites. Troops also provided static security at these locations and escort protection for



Nigerian peacekeepers direct traffic on the streets of Monrovia

tial hostile acts by the warring factions.

With nearly 60 percent of Liberia's population falling in Sector I, the "security blanket" provided by the Nigerian peacekeepers was critical. No wonder then, if there is trouble in Monrovia they are often the first to be called in. "They're simply good," says an admirer. What makes them tick? A foot soldier from NIBATT perhaps has the answer, "When we begin to make peace, we don't stop. We don't fear death." Col. Olofin says, "Our soldiers are gallant. Even the ex-combatants say they can face anybody but the Nigerians!"

Nigerian soldiers guard key installations like the two airports and the Free Port of Monrovia. Even when it comes to VIP security, including the NTGL Chairman and Vice Chairman, it's nobody else but the Nigerians. NIBATT also collaborates

all movements. Nigerian peacekeepers helped to put down the crisis that came up during the first DD exercise carried out in early December 2003.

When it comes to humanitarian assistance the Nigerians do not lag behind. NIBATT assisted UN Agencies, such as WFP, UNHCR and several NGOs to provide security at the 12 IDP and three refugee camps located in Sector I. The peacekeepers' community-based programmes include assistance to market unions, orphanages and schools. In addition to presenting gifts to some schools for the blind and orphanages, the peacekeepers have also helped in clearing the Duala market in collaboration with the market unions. "Winning the hearts and minds of the Liberian people is also at the core of our mission here," says Col. Olofin. ♦

By Marjorea Ballada

It never ceases to surprise how the villagers, especially children, get so excited when they see UN vehicles passing by their communities. They wave their hands frantically and run next to the road just to get a closer look at

FROM THE FIELD

Peace Dawns in Central Liberia

the passengers inside. “Bangladesh! Bangladesh! Bangladesh!” they usually cheer in chorus. This just about illustrates how residents of Grand Bassa, Nimba, and Bong Counties have become so familiar with the United Nations peacekeepers from Bangladesh covering this area.

It was just over a year ago that Bangladeshi Sector-I (BANSEC-I), the largest peacekeeping contingent in the mission, deployed outside the capital city of Monrovia. The peacekeepers set out for Gbarnga, Bong County on New Year's Eve 2003 and soon came face to face with the harsh realities on the ground. The smell of gunpowder still hung heavily in the air. The entire county was in shambles. There were no standing structures and properties lay looted. With no power supply, all movement in the town would cease after sunset. The people who had fled to the bush for safety remained in hiding, too traumatized to venture out and face the marauding gangsters on the streets.

But this did not deter the peacekeepers from Bangladesh, now the largest troop contributing country of the UN, from accomplishing their mission. In less than three months, over 3,000 Bangladeshi soldiers were deployed all over Central Liberia. Their first task was to rid the whole area of weapons. It was critical to ensure that the disarmament and demobilization exercise resumed in an orderly manner. Any failure could jeopardize the peace process in the country.

Initial tasks included screening of ex-combatants, camp management and disposal of unexploded ordnances (UXOs). Officers and soldiers undertook mock rehearsals to familiarize themselves with the disarmament and demobilization

process. They also collaborated with local community radio stations to sensitize ex-combatants about the disarmament programme.

From April until October 2004, BANSEC-I successfully disarmed a total of 29,900 ex-combatants, including 6,646 women and 3,048 children. This was about 30 percent of the total ex-combatants dis-

goods from the farms to the markets and it was possible to travel in Central Liberia again because of the improved road conditions. In a country where there is no electricity, this is nothing short of a miracle.

The Bangladeshi Medical team (BAN-MED-I), with a pool of 13 medical experts, also opened the doors of their Level II hospital and provided free med-



Bangladeshi peacekeepers in Gbarnga

armed in the whole country. They received several thousand weapons, UXOs, and small arms ammunition which, if left in the wrong hands, could trigger another

From the very start the Bangladeshi peacekeepers set out to win the hearts and minds of the people.

war. But recovering guns from ex-combatants was only the first step as thousands of civilians and demobilized soldiers had to return to communities that lacked basic services and infrastructure. And this was when the Bangladeshi army proved its extensive peacekeeping experience in Africa and elsewhere in the world by offering critical assistance on several fronts.

Apart from constructing disarmament and cantonment sites in Gbarnga and Ganta, the Bangladeshi Engineering unit (BANENGR-I) implemented a “community support scheme” aimed at repairing roads and bridges in Gbarnga, Voinjama, Ganta, Sanniquellie, Saclepie, and Tapeta. The military engineers assisted the entrepreneurs in setting up local markets in every area. People were able to bring their

ical support to civilians. Everyday, local Liberians visit the hospital for health check and free medicines. Since BAN-MED-I started their operations in October, it has treated more than 48,000 people.

From the very start the Bangladeshi peacekeepers set out to win the hearts and minds of the people. However, it was not because of the free chop-chop (food) they regularly shared with the locals. Neither was it the soccer games they played with the ex-combatants nor the books they distributed to children in schools. It was the unique Bangladeshi hospitality and charisma that forged the lasting bond. It was the sincerity of their actions and the warmth of their smiles that made their sacrifice priceless.

With the arrival of the new batch of Bangladeshi peacekeepers, Liberians remain assured that the legacy of hard work and professionalism exemplified by the former group will continue. The people of Central Liberia, especially the children, will always find time to wave and smile at the passing UN vehicle. And when they remember the soldiers who helped establish the new-found peace in their land, surely they will cheer in chorus, “Bangladesh! Bangladesh! Bangladesh!” ♦



VOINJAMA

No Longer a Dangerous Place

By Alexactus T. Kaure

In 2003, Voinjama made it onto the list of “the world’s most dangerous places” in a book by Robert Young Pelton that goes by the same name. During that time, Government forces and LURD fighters were battling it out for the control of the town that saw horrified local people flee in all directions, becoming refugees in neighboring Guinea and Sierra Leone or displaced internally.

The town changed hands several times during the 14 years of civil war that left it devastated and broken. That violent past has left some deep scars on the city -- its infrastructure in ruins and its people traumatized. The once prosperous city that used to boast a population of about 30,000 now has an estimated 11,000 people.

But despite the fact that Lofa County

rolling hills shrouded in the early morning mist.

About 400 km from Monrovia, Voinjama is only 48 km away from Macenta, the nearest border town in Guinea. When there is trouble in Guinea, the first point of entry for refugees is Voinjama, and vice versa. In peaceful times both Voinjama and Guinea stand to gain in a symbiotic fashion.

Most of the traders in Voinjama get their supply of goods from Guinea, and in turn sell their agricultural produce there. The three major roads that emanate from Voinjama - the Monrovia Highway, the Kolahun Highway and the Macenta Road - are all in a deplorable condition. Before the civil war, Lofa County used to be the bread-basket of Liberia, providing the rest of the country with rice, coffee, cocoa, fruits, palm oil etc. With peace slowly returning, Lofa might regain its lost status.

A plethora of both local and international NGOs have been arriving.

And so have some agencies of the UN System -mainly UNHCR and

WFP. The spin-offs are evident. They

have been renovating some of the houses that were not so badly damaged, to use as offices, store-rooms or for accommodation, thus providing some badly needed employment to locals. The NGOs and UN agencies on the ground have also been providing water points and wells, latrines and building materials. They are also rehabilitating and renovating schools and conducting workshops in a variety of critical skill areas for the benefit of the local population. One of the major projects in

was the last to disarm, Voinjama is today relatively calm. Both the Pakistan Battalion II and UNMIL Civilian Police here concur that things are fast returning to normal, with no major crimes reported in the administrative capital of Lofa, Liberia’s second largest county that shares a very long stretch of border with both Guinea and Sierra Leone. However, the name Voinjama still invokes a sense of fear and anxiety, belying the town’s beauty - tucked away in a valley, surrounded by



Voinjama, to date, has been the renovation of the Voinjama Public School, with funding from UNHCR and execution by Peace Winds Japan.

Things are also looking up on the health front. In addition to the Pakistani Battalion Level I hospital, the ICRC has also set up a clinic, both of which provide free medicines. ICRC is also renovating the old Tellewuyan Hospital, at an estimated cost of US\$100,000. Once completed, it would represent a massive boost for the

Before the civil war, Lofa County used to be the breadbasket of Liberia. With peace slowly returning, Lofa might regain its lost status again.

health sector in the district and in Voinjama in particular.

What is happening here is a multi-pronged development approach through the work of the Pakistani peacekeepers and UNMIL, in conjunction with NGOs and other UN Agencies. Ongoing projects include, among others, rehabilitation of the district's infrastructure such as roads and bridges and provision of lights in the main street of Voinjama.

With peace now holding and hopefully irreversible, the civil administration is also slowly returning to Voinjama. First came the immigration officers, the tax collector, and now a development superintendent has also been posted from Monrovia. But the town's overall superintendent was still

to be appointed at the time of writing.

UNHCR is frantically working to complete the reception centers in Voinjama and busy rehabilitating the roads, paving the way for the eventual return of IDPs and refugees to the county. Much of the social dynamics of the town has changed over the years because of the war and exile. The town, traditionally a Loma centre, is now bereft of them as they fled to other parts of Liberia or neighboring countries. Interestingly, Voinjama is named after 'Voinja' - a Loma word referring to a small creek that runs through the district.

In place of the Loma have come people from other parts of the district and are said to occupy buildings and land that belongs to the refugees. To make matters worse, a good number of the newcomers currently in the town, according to locals, are Guinean nationals who have come this side of the border to escape poverty in their country. And they might be right, because one would expect a Liberian to be able to speak a modicum of Liberian English. However, most people on the streets of Voinjama converse either in their vernacular or some rudimentary French.

Old residents of Voinjama welcome the idea of returnees which they see as a potential boost for economic recovery and rehabilitation. Already, Peace Winds Japan is providing sinks and other building materials for people who are either renovating their houses or building new ones.

One hopes this potential source for conflict will be resolved soon. If that happens, Voinjama would be permanently erased from the list of the world's most dangerous places. ♦



Top peacekeeping official visits Liberia

Liberia's national elections scheduled to take place in October this year are vital to ensuring the country's successful emergence from a decade and half of civil war and violent anarchy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guéhenno said during a three-day visit to Liberia in late November 2004.

Stressing the inalienable right of the people of Liberia to elect "accountable" leaders, Mr. Guéhenno said the post-election scenario should not lead to a "winner-takes-all" attitude on the part of the victors.

"Elections will be the foundation for peace only if those who win do not crush those who lose. Democracy is not only about deciding who rules by majority vote but is also about respecting the minority."

UN's top peacekeeping official praised the UN Mission in Liberia for the "remarkable progress" achieved in such a short time, citing the disarmament of over 100,000 combatants and the disbanding of the warring factions as "important milestones." However, Mr. Guéhenno cautioned that a lot of work remains to be done, especially in the area of reintegrating disarmed ex-fighters from Government and rebel forces into society.

Referring to the gap between pledges and money "actually in the kitty," Mr. Guéhenno said shortage of funds could hurt reconstruction and reintegration, a "critical part" of the disarmament and demobilization programme UNMIL has been engaged in for the past year. But he cautioned that donors would be unwilling to offer funds unless there was confidence that "the government structures, the judiciary, the basics that make a country trustworthy" were in place.

Mr. Guéhenno said the

Jean-Marie Guéhenno, with Jacques Paul Klein and Abou Moussa



"real work" must be carried out by Liberians themselves and the international community would stand by as "good partners." He also urged the transitional government to make an increased effort to mobilize all sources of income to be used for improving the lives of the people of the country.

During his three-day visit to Liberia, Mr. Guéhenno held discussions with Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jacques Paul Klein, the Country Team, the Acting Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, Wesley Johnson, Members of the Cabinet, the International Monitoring Committee and members of the diplomatic corps. He also met with Force Commander Lt.-Gen. Daniel Opande, Civilian Police Commissioner Mark Kroeker, and UNMIL civilian staff. ♦

With members of the diplomatic community



Irish President Comes Calling

Irish President Mary McAleese, who was on a one-day visit to Liberia on 14 December 2004, held discussions with UNMIL leadership and met with NTGL Chairman Gyude Bryant. She also visited the 400-strong Irish peacekeeping contingent deployed in the country.



UN West Africa Envoys Meet

João Honwana, Head of UN Mission in Guinea Bissau; Ahmedou Ould-Abdullah, SRSG and Head, UNOWA; Jacques Paul Klein, SRSG UNMIL



Ahmed Jalazo/UNMIL

The heads of the five United Nations peacekeeping and political missions in West Africa recently decried attempts to derail elections in Liberia and called on the parties in Côte d'Ivoire to break the "perennial impasse" in that country's peace process. Their statement came in a communiqué issued in Monrovia at the end of the third high-level meeting of the UN envoys in West Africa, held in early December.

The envoys welcomed progress made in the peace process in Liberia, but voiced deep concern at the existence of a "coalition of the unwilling" who seek to derail the scheduled national elections in October and the entire peace process. The meeting stressed the importance of enact-

The envoys voiced deep concern at the existence of a "coalition of the unwilling" who seek to derail the scheduled national elections in October and the entire peace process.

ing "on an urgent basis" an electoral law that is in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that led to the end of the prolonged civil war in the country.

West Africa's top UN envoys also expressed concern over the lack of adequate funding for the reintegration of demobilized combatants. They also stressed the need for resources to facilitate the return and reintegration of internally displaced persons as well as Liberian refugees who fled to neighbouring countries during the civil war.

On Côte d'Ivoire, the UN officials appealed for good faith on the part of all Ivorian parties to ensure that they live up to commitments undertaken before the international community. They also emphasized the importance of freeing the State-owned media to ensure "equal access to all parties and all views."

On Sierra Leone, they stressed the

necessity for a smooth and realistic exit strategy for the UN and welcomed the transitional plan aimed at moving from peacekeeping to peace-building.

On Guinea Bissau, the meeting called on the need to address immediately the issue of security sector reform and the strengthening of state governance as a prerequisite for sustainable peace-building and post-conflict recovery.

The UN envoys reaffirmed their commitment to inter-mission cooperation and cross-border activities including integrated border strategies and cooperation on humanitarian issues.

The meeting was hosted by Jacques Paul Klein, Head of the UN Mission in Liberia, and chaired by Ahmedou Ould-Abdullah, Head of the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA). Other participating officials were Albert Tévoédré, head of UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, his counterpart in Sierra Leone, Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago, and João Honwana, Head of UNOGBIS, Guinea Bissau.

High-level meetings were organised following a request by the Security Council for UN peace missions in the region to take concrete action towards implementing a regional approach, including pulling together UN assets across and exploiting synergies among the operations to achieve greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness. ♦



Matthew Elaventhoduku/UNMIL

Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago, SRSG UNAMSIL; Albert Tévoédré, SRSG in Côte d'Ivoire

News Briefs

UNMIL raises \$25,000 for Law School

Piano maestro Sasha Toperic from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who had waived his concert fee, played at a charity concert

organized by UNMIL and raised US\$ 25,000 for the renovation of University of Liberia's Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law, the country's only institution teaching and training law stu-

dents. Handing over the cheque to Cllr. Wilkins Wright, the Acting Dean of the Law School, Special Representative Jacques Paul Klein said, "Let this concert be another small step in bringing Liberian society back together." Thanking Toperic on behalf of all Liberians, NTGL Chairman Gyude Bryant said, "The fact that you have come to help us recover, it's gratifying and appreciated. We will remember it and I'm sure the university will carry your name in their archives." The Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law, named after the late Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia, was founded in 1951 and was one of the leading institutions of legal education in West Africa. The funds raised will enable the law school regain its position as a center of excellence for legal scholarship and training. ♦



Jacques Paul Klein and Sasha Toperic hand over the cheque to the Acting Dean of the Law School

Matthew Elwanah/Photo/UNMIL

"Operation Pothole" launched

"Operation Pothole," a programme to rehabilitate storm drainages, damaged bridges and potholes along streets and major supply routes in Liberia's capital of Monrovia, was launched on 28 January 2005. The project, first of its kind since the cessation of hostilities, was launched by UNMIL in collaboration with USAID/LCIP and the Government of Liberia. Speaking on the occasion, the Special Representative of Secretary-General Jacques Paul Klein said, "The rehabilitation of the various streets that only 18 months ago

saw battles, brutality and desperation is appreciable furtherance towards recovery and normalcy."

United States Ambassador, John W. Blaney said, "When people see that their environment is becoming more functional and clean, they have more desire to build peace, normality and prosperity." Speaking at the launch function Liberia's Transitional Government's Chairman, Gyude Bryant thanked UNMIL, the US Government, and LCIP for their "generosity, concern and interest." ♦



SHOWING THE WAY
Jacques Paul Klein, Gyude Bryant and John Blaney



UNMIL RADIO

When the kids took over

Sunday 12 December was an incredible day for some 60 children and a few friends, who came to UNMIL Radio, to take over the airwaves of 91.5 FM. After a careful screening process the number had whittled down from over 400 to 50. The children had been put through their paces by the UNMIL Radio staff the day before, and nominated for the programmes they wanted to do. Rehearsals, recordings and test readings, all took place in one long day, in preparation for the big event. At 8 a.m. Sunday they started arriving, and the invasion continued until airtime.

The International Children's Broadcasting Day (ICDB) finally commenced at 9 a.m. with 'OUR WORLD', a programme for young children, presented by them featuring the Rights of the Child, Story time, Q&A with Ambassador Marron Cassels, Amazing Facts, a news bulletin for young listeners and, of course, lots and lots of music. At 10 a.m. the first of the hourly news bulletins was read. The second programme of the day was 'PROBLEMS and SOLUTIONS'. It looked at problems of the young from their own perspective, and came up with a few incredible solutions to some of the issues they

were discussing.

With the phone lines opened some young callers had interesting suggestions to make. At 10.30 it was a chance for the children to let their parents and friends know that they were at UNMIL Radio for the ICDB, which gave all the young broadcasters an opportunity to say a quick hello to their family and friends, and play them some music. After the 11 a.m. news it was SMART TIME, a quiz programme designed to test the children's academic skills and IQ, battled out live on air.

ICDB POSTBAG featuring five presenters was an opportunity for the children to pose some hard questions to the adults invited. In a quick-fire session which took the adult guests by surprise the children put them through a formidable test. Adults facing the barrage of questions in this programme included Minister of Transport, Dr Vamba Kanneh, UNDP DDRR Policy adviser Dr. Charles Achodo, UNICEF Rep. Angela Kearney, UNMIL's Gender Policy Adviser, Joana Foster and Minister of Education Evelyn Kandakai.

CHOICES was an entertaining discussion, with supporting drama, on the issue of peer pressure, temptation and what wrong decisions or choices could lead to. This programme for teenagers was fol-

lowed by diverse opinions from call-in contributors. That was followed by a thirty-minute programme featuring as studio guest Col. Joyce Puta, UNMIL HIV/AIDS Policy Adviser. The topic 'AIDS and the Teenager', addressed the issue of how to deal with stigmatisation and misconceptions linked with HIV/AIDS. At 2.30 p.m. there was a brief respite as the next thirty minutes was spent listening to some popular tracks on the station whilst the children took time off to feast on a well deserved late lunch and prepare themselves for the final stages. After the 3 p.m. news brief, listeners were treated to VOICES on ICDB, a series of short debates on three issues - "the pen is mightier than the sword", "street kids", and "sexual exploitation" - once again with some surprising views and enlightening comments from the budding radio journalists.

After a long and tiring day, and with the sun going down, the ICDB broadcasters hosted their final programme from outside the studio. This was 'GREETINGS,' giving the children a final chance to get back to the microphone and send out messages to their friends and loved ones. The curtains came down with a live on-air presentation of certificates and prizes and speeches by the organisers and representatives of the children. Finally the goodies: All participants received books donated by the United States Embassy, T-shirts from UNICEF, and specially printed certificates. Prizes were also given out to the "youngest presenter," the "most helpful," "most punctual," "best male voice", "best female voice," etc. The programme was an occasion for UNMIL Radio to identify a pool of talent to build on as future broadcasters of Liberia. ♦



LIBERTANS SPEAK

"What Do You Think About the Diss



Alice K. Kemokai, 30, Office Assistant, Voinjama

"I'm very happy that they have been dissolved and to have an elected government come October. People can now move freely and IDPs and refugees would be able to return."



Henry Varmon, 40, Construction Worker, Monrovia

"I am pleased that at least this time around, ex-combatants received benefits which are now putting to use by engaging in small business ventures. I'll like to thank UNMIL and others who initiated the idea."



Dumuwa Ballah, 32, Petty Trader, Voinjama

"We can say thank God that all this is history. As an IDP residing in Bong County, the latest development in the peace process has made it possible for me to return home and I'm very grateful."



Oscar Sayeh, 40, Police CID, Butuo

"I feel very fine. We don't go to war again. It will bring freedom of movement and true liberty to the people of Liberia."



Musa Fiah, 12, Ex-combatant

"We are feeling fine about the way the peace process is progressing in Liberia. Now that the war is over, for me, a child soldier, I want to return to school."



Albert B. Geninyan, 47, Police Officer

"Things are improving in Lofa County and people have begun returning because of progress in the peace process. Before now, it would have been unthinkable to have been assigned as a policewoman in this area. It shows that we are now moving back to the rule of law"



Cecelia Massaquoi, 21, University Student, Morovia

"The exercise was worthwhile and I'll like to commend UNMIL for doing a good job in seeing to it that the warring factions were disbanded and that ex-combatants were disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated into society."



Nasea Luar, 70, Carpenter, Butuo

"I happy. Earlier I hide in the bush because of the fighting between them. It was problem. Now I can do my work as a carpenter."

olution of the Warring Factions?"



Kollie K. Kamanda, 35, Voinjama

"There should be no more support for the warring factions; it's good that they have been dissolved."



Seleke V. Balloh, 53, Transport Union Official, Voinjama

"During our 14-year war, civilian transportation to rural Liberia was severely hampered; but with the former factions disbanded, refugees and IDPs are gradually returning to their original communities here in Lofa"



Sabah B. Kollie, 39, Secretary, Monrovia

"I think the exercise was good to have disbanded the ex-warring fighters and that the country is now united. Also, now that the ex-combatants are disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated we can live peacefully and move the country forward."



Deddeh Jackson, 21, University Student, Monrovia

"I'm happy about the outcome of these ex-combatants. At least after a war, these ex-combatants are benefiting from packages including vocational and skills training while others are doing small skilled businesses. I think that this fine. As it relates to the disbanding of former warring factions, I think it's a good idea so that we can have an integrated society after this war."



Musa V. Kelleh, 27, LURD ex-combatant, Voinjama

"Our reason for taking up arms has been achieved. As such, my next objective is to do something for myself. I will take advantage of some basic skills training and become a productive citizen."



Borley Massaquoi (32) Security - INTERCON, Monrovia

"That was very fine because those guys had molested us for so many years. It's good that UNMIL came in and took the arms from them. I'm very impressed that majority of these ex-combatants are in skills building schools or seeking some formal education."



John Kollie, 32, Journalist, Monrovia

"You could have never brought sanity here if you had the rag tag military structure that was in place in this country because they would have still had the feeling of leadership of their various rebel groups in our country. They would feel that they are a parallel power to the sitting government in this country."



Ansu M. Konneh (26), Youth Leader, Voinjama

"We thank God that our county is returning to normal after war. What has gone wrong with us is behind us and events in the peace process over the last year are encouraging to say the least. We, the youth, have a challenge ahead of us to build on this so that it is sustained."

Deputy Special Representative Appointed

The United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has appointed Steinar Bjornsson as the new Deputy Special Representative for Operations in Liberia. A native of Iceland, Mr. Bjornsson has had a long and distinguished career with the United Nations. He served most recently as Director of Administration in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) between January 2003 and July 2004.

Prior to that Mr. Bjornsson served as Director of Administrative and Common Services and Deputy Director-General at the United Nations Office in Vienna from September 1999 to May 2002. Between September 1997 and August 1999, he served as Deputy Director in the Field Administration and Logistics Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). He was Director of Administration in the United Nations Peace Forces in the former Yugoslavia from September 1995 to August 1997 and in the United Nations Operation in Somalia from June 1994 to August 1995.



Earlier, Mr. Bjornsson worked in the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Secretariat in New York. He has also served with the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group between 1990 and 1991, and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force from 1991 to 1992.

A 1967 graduate of the University of Iceland, majoring in Economics and Business Administration, Mr. Bjornsson was born on 11 February 1942.



New Chief of Public Information

Christine B. Koerner joined UNMIL in January as the Chief of Public Information. Until her new appointment, she was Director of the United Nations Information Centre in Harare, Zimbabwe. Her association with the United Nations first began in November 1978 when she joined UNICEF in New York as Information/External Relations Officer for the International Year of the Child (1979).

In 1981 she joined the UN Department of Public Information, serving in various capacities as Writer, Editor and Media Liaison Officer. In 1986 she was promoted to Senior Editor and Deputy Chief Editor of the Yearbook of the United Nations.

In 1989 she was leader of a mobile team, monitoring registration of voters and elections in Namibia. In 1993, she went on mission to Somalia, to do



research on how to strengthen the information capacity of UNOSOM.

Author of several publications on Albania and Kosovo, Ms. Koerner was a Research Fellow at the University of Munich (1976-1977) on Political and Social Developments in Southeastern Europe.

She graduated from the University of Munich with a Ph.D. (with great honours) on how Albanian nationalism expressed itself before and during Communist rule. Her dissertation, published in 1981, received an award from Suedosteuropa Gesellschaft for best dissertation in its field.

She also studied at the Universities of Vienna, Rome and Prishtina (Kosovo). Born in Germany, Ms. Koerner has spent most of her adult life in the United States.

Timeline

1 October 2003

Day One of UNMIL, ECOMIL troops “rehatted” as UN peacekeepers.

6 October 2003

First meeting of Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) comprising representatives of all factions under UNMIL auspices.

14 October 2003

National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) takes office.

1 December 2003

UNMIL stages a symbolic destruction of arms and formally launches the DDRR Programme in Liberia at Camp Schieffelin, Monrovia.

7 December 2003

UNMIL begins disarmament at the first cantonment site at Camp Schieffelin, Monrovia.

18 December 2003

Following discussion with Liberian political and military leaders, UNMIL announces the suspension of the disarmament and demobilization process to allow for the creation of more capacity and the upgrading of living conditions at the sites.

23 December 2003

SRSG Jacques Paul Klein addresses the Security Council on the first report of the Secretary General concerning the situation in Liberia.

27 December 2003

UNMIL Pakistani contingent deployed at Clay Junction, marking the first military move into LURD-controlled area.

31 December 2003

UNMIL expands its presence to Buchanan and Gbarnga, deploying over 650 Bangladeshi peacekeepers.

12 January 2004

The Interim Police Training Course (IPTC), designed to provide provisional training to current members of the

Liberian Police is launched by the UNMIL Civilian Police with the enrollment of the first class of 24 men and one woman.

5 - 6 February 2004

Liberia's Reconstruction Conference held in New York to address short and mid-term reconstruction and development needs. US\$520 million pledged.

15 April 2004

DDRR programme resumes. Disarmament begins in Gbarnga.

20 April 2004

Disarmament begins in Buchanan.

25 April 2004

Disarmament and demobilization begins in Tubmanburg.

5 May 2004

SRSG Jacques Paul Klein and NTGL Chairman Gyude Bryant formally launch the recruitment campaign for the new Liberian Police Service.

6 May 2004

Disarmament recommences for ex-GoL militias at Kakata.

10 - 11 June 2004

Force Commanders of UN peacekeeping missions in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire meet in Monrovia to enhance regional coordination.

24 - 25 June 2004

UN Security Council mission visits Liberia.

9 July 2004

Disarmament begins in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County.

12 July 2004

NTGL Chairman Gyude Bryant and SRSG Jacques Paul Klein launch the training programme for the new police service of Liberia at the newly reopened Police Service Training Academy in Paynesville, Monrovia.

17 August 2004

Disarmament begins in Ganta.

29 September 2004

Disarmament begins in Harper.

01 October 2004

UNHCR launches the voluntary repatriation. 500 refugees make the first trip home from Ghana and Sierra Leone.

20 October 2004

The NTGL declares six counties -- Grand Cape Mount, Bomi, Gbarpolu, Margibi, Bong and Rivercess -- ready for the return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

31 October 2004

The Chairman of the NTGL announces the official end to disarmament.

3 November 2004

Liberia's three warring factions officially disband themselves marking an historic milestone in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

8 November 2004

The first group of 500 internally displaced persons and returnees begin their journey home, marking Liberia's ongoing transition from conflict to recovery and rehabilitation.

20 - 22 November 2004

UN Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guehenno visits Liberia to review UNMIL activities and the peace process.

30 November 2004

The Liberian National Police begins its deployment to all 15 counties of Liberia, signifying rapid improvement in the rule of law in the country.

14 December 2004

The National Transitional Legislative Assembly adopts a revised electoral reform law.

