



HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR'S SUPPORT OFFICE
HUMANITARIAN HIGHLIGHTS 2007

1. Highlights of 2007

The humanitarian situation in Liberia continued to improve in 2007. The Government of Liberia, with the assistance of the United Nations and the entire humanitarian community, maintained focus on urgent humanitarian needs while engaging in efforts to ensure that Liberians enjoy the benefits of development in an atmosphere of peace and stability.

Notably, the Government of Liberia is increasingly taking on responsibility to provide for its population and promote the overall coordination of humanitarian and development assistance. The United Nations Mission in Liberia, through the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator's Support Office (HCSO), actively engaged with both the Government and the broader humanitarian community in a continuing effort to ensure attention to urgent humanitarian needs.

The overall environment remained positive though it must be noted that Liberia still faced serious humanitarian challenges in 2007, particularly in the health, education, food, and water and sanitation sectors. Morbidity and mortality remained high. In this regard UNICEF ranks Liberia's under-5 mortality rate as the fifth highest in the world. Access to vulnerable and isolated populations, particularly during the long rainy season, remained a critical challenge. Access to basic health services, education and road infrastructure were all identified as top priorities in the recent country-wide County Development Agenda consultations that were undertaken as part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy development process.

Remaining unmet humanitarian needs, as identified through the CHAP process in 2007, underline the need for sustained humanitarian efforts in 2008 to complement ongoing development planning processes. Liberia presents an urgent case to ensure there is no gap between humanitarian and development efforts.

1.1. Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) for Liberia

The Government of Liberia is committed to advance a serious development agenda. As part of the initial steps the Government with support of the donor community formulated an interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (iPRS) that was launched in 2007. However, the Government and the international community recognized that development assistance can be subject to delays. Against this background it was determined that Liberia warranted an appeal to address the most urgent humanitarian needs in 2007.

The humanitarian community, led through the efforts of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Country Team, decided to engage upon a CHAP process rather than undertake a full blown CAP. This decision was made in large part to reflect the transitional nature of the humanitarian situation in Liberia and also to foster a greater complementarity with the iPRS. The key humanitarian needs identified included the lack of basic health care, water/sanitation facilities and food security. The humanitarian requirement was estimated at US\$ 117 million.

In July, key partners met to conduct a Mid Year Review (MYR) of the 2007 Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) for Liberia. The MYR reiterated the strategic priorities for addressing the humanitarian needs in Liberia, but revised total funding requirements to US\$110 million for the remainder of 2007. This reduction was mostly due to the revision of unfunded activities to cover the remainder of the year. To date the CHAP has received US\$ 68 million which represents some 62 percent of the overall revised funding requirement of US\$ 110 million.

Liberia Partners' Forum held in Washington, DC

The Humanitarian Coordinator attended and addressed the Partners' Forum held in Washington on 13-14 February, hosted by the UN, USA, EU, World Bank and the African Development Bank. The Government of Liberia took the opportunity to present its interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and to lay out its intended plans for the next 18 months. The 2007 CHAP was also introduced at the Forum, following endorsement by the Ministry of Finance and those Ministries which provide basic social services. Meetings were also held with international NGOs operating in Liberia.

1.2. UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)

A total of 24 CERF projects (totaling US\$ 4 million), allocated through the 2006 CERF under-funded emergencies window, were completed by the end of June 2007. The projects were allocated to the following Clusters: Health (\$2 million), Water/Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion (WASH) (\$1 million) and Food Security/Agriculture (\$1 million). They covered a wide range of humanitarian activities including: primary health care delivery services, measles and neo-natal tetanus immunisation campaigns, maintenance/ repair of water and sanitation facilities, food and seeds distribution, and emergency pest control.

Liberia received a grant of US\$1,461,597 through the UN Central Emergency Response Fund's under-funded emergencies' window in October. The grant is funding seven priority projects identified through the IASC Country Team and the Health and WASH Clusters. The CERF funded projects include immunization of children and pregnant women, distribution of reproductive health kits to vulnerable women and the provision of safe drinking water. The projects are located in areas with high levels of morbidity and mortality with a particular emphasis on remote and under-served areas (primarily the south east of the country). UNICEF, WHO, and UNFPA are implementing the projects in collaboration with NGO and Government partners. Project implementation commenced in early November.

Under the 2007 grant, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, supported by WHO and UNICEF, completed the vaccination of women and children against maternal and neonatal tetanus in Liberia funded through the CERF. In the period 1-12 November 2007, 521,904 women of childbearing age were vaccinated against maternal tetanus. Vitamin A and de-worming tablets were administered to 394,260 and 365,311, respectively. In addition, 44,399 insecticide treated mosquito nets were distributed to women and children in Sinoe and River Cess Counties. WHO and UNICEF provided technical and logistical support to the campaign and UNMIL assisted in transporting vaccines and personnel.

1.3. Repatriation of residual refugee case load

UNHCR officially ended its repatriation programme on 30 June. Launched in October 2004, the UNHCR operation repatriated more than 112, 256 refugees by the end of 2007. A further 45,499 persons returned home unassisted during that period. Following a post-voluntary repatriation verification exercise by UNHCR in late 2007, it was estimated that a caseload of 75,509 registered Liberian refugees remained in asylum countries. A key remaining challenge is to successfully reintegrate displaced people into communities in areas of return, while at the same time meeting their most urgent needs.

1.4. Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey for Greater Monrovia launched

The humanitarian community has focused on the issue of food security and nutrition. In this regard the Ministry of Agriculture, with the support of the United Nations and NGOs, has led efforts to analyze and understand the situation in greater depth. Considerable survey work at both the rural and urban levels has been undertaken.

One output of this effort has been the Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (CFSNS) for Greater Monrovia. The CFSNS report, a joint collaboration between the Government of Liberia, WFP and humanitarian partners was launched on 20 July. Key recommendations included efforts to improve access to safe water and sanitation facilities and interventions to improve the nutritional status of vulnerable populations. It also recommended the creation of social safety net strategies to target vulnerable households and individuals, and the promotion of girls' education. The major vulnerable groups identified in the report were the elderly, disabled people, large households with high number of dependents, and households that had recently moved to Monrovia.

1.5. Natural Disasters in Liberia and the Humanitarian Response

In 2007, there were over ten reported cases of flooding in five counties. In the same period, strong winds damaged 44 homes and other structures in two counties. Fire also destroyed 43 homes in two villages in two counties. Overall, more than 21,000 people were affected by these natural and man-made disasters.

Although these recent disasters are not of the scale as other major natural disasters in some parts of the world, poor response and inadequate absorptive capacity had an extraordinarily negative impact on affected communities. The HCSO supported the Government of Liberia's response to these events by providing guidance and mentoring to the National Disaster Relief Commission's (NDRC) in their efforts to coordinate responses. The HCSO also provided information management services, filling a crucial gap in the NDRC's capacity. The combined efforts of the humanitarian community, including national and international NGOs, local and international members of the Red Cross Movement, UN agencies and Government of Liberia line ministries were crucial in minimising the impact of these events.

1.6. National Disaster Management System - Disaster Risk Reduction

UNMIL, the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and UNDP are supporting the Government of Liberia to develop a disaster management system, including disaster risk reduction policies and plans, through the National Disaster Relief Commission. As part of these efforts a UNDP/BCPR disaster risk reduction specialist was brought in for a period of three weeks to provide guidance and facilitate the development of a disaster management system. A capacity assessment has been undertaken, and a number of workshops and consultations have commenced with a view to generate an understanding of, and support for, disaster risk reduction policies and developing a disaster risk reduction and response framework. The process will continue through the first half of 2008. The Government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Internal Affairs, is coordinating and leading this effort.

1.8 Dynamic Atlas, Who Does What Where Database 2007 is launched

The first edition of a comprehensive GIS based humanitarian/recovery database, including 182 thematic maps, was produced and launched in February 2007. The Atlas enables the user to overlay and juxtapose basic social indicators with social and physical infrastructure and humanitarian and recovery activities. The database thus provides a tool for improved planning and

targeting of vulnerable populations. It was produced with the support of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA), UNHCR, the Government of Liberia and humanitarian partners. SRSA provided a consultant to develop the technical side of the Atlas. Partners in all 15 counties were trained in the use of the Atlas by SRSA.

A second edition of the Dynamic Atlas was launched on 18 December. The second edition included new features – based on feedback from users, additional data sets and expanded coverage of activities. The Atlas logs some 24,000 activities that can be expressed in some 200 thematic maps.

1.9 Civil Military Coordination (CIMIC) Activities

The HCSO and G-5 CIMIC developed specific CIMIC guidelines for Liberia in late 2006. These guidelines were implemented throughout 2007. The HCSO together with G-5 CIMIC continued to facilitate the transport of humanitarian actors and cargo, enabling access to remote areas of Liberia.

In 2007 UNMIL organised 98 medical outreach activities providing treatment to more than 24,000 patients. G-5 CIMIC and the HCSO have coordinated to tailor medical outreaches to better target underserved populations and meet the priorities set by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. In 2007 the medical outreaches also incorporated participation from NGOs and the Ministry of Health, as well as medical inputs from UN agencies.

2. Issues relating to protection of civilians

2.1. Local integration for more than 3,500 Sierra Leonean refugees

At the end of November 2007, Liberia had hosted an estimated 10,327 refugees from Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and other countries. In November, UNHCR in collaboration with LRRRC and Christian Children's Fund organized a three-day assessment mission for Sierra Leonean refugee representatives to some of the local integration sites in Montserrado County. This was part of the on-going activities to integrate 3,563 Sierra Leonean refugees in communities in Liberia. This is also in accordance with the regional Local Integration Strategy - for Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees who opt to remain in countries of asylum. UNHCR is providing community-based support (construction/rehabilitation of shelter, water and sanitation; livelihood initiatives) to the reintegrated refugees and receiving communities. Durable solutions for the integration of Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia are being sought in collaboration with ECOWAS and the Government of Liberia.

3. Other humanitarian issues / challenges

3.1. Government alarmed over 'high infant and maternal mortality'

In September the Government of Liberia expressed concern over the high maternal and infant mortality rate in Liberia, estimated at 900 per 100,000 live birth and 157 per 1,000 live births, respectively. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare attributed the high mortality rates to the lack of qualified medical workers and inadequate health facilities in the country. A flight of health personnel during the war, low incentives, and poor health infrastructure have all contributed to the current state of the nation's health delivery system. The lack of resources available to the Government means that NGOs either assisted or operated 77% (300 out of 389) of functioning health facilities. The Government is considering requesting additional doctors from neighboring countries and providing incentives for medical personnel to work in rural areas.

3.1 Transition from IASC-led Clusters to Government-led Sector Coordination

The IASC Country Team continued as the main body to coordinate the humanitarian community's support to the Government of Liberia, and also providing oversight and guidance to humanitarian Clusters. The Cluster Approach was utilised both in terms of humanitarian needs assessment, planning and response through both the CHAP process, as well as in the articulation of CERF projects to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs in the country.

In 2007 the process of transitioning humanitarian Clusters to Government-led sector coordination commenced. UN lead agencies have been supporting relevant ministries taking on this task and building their capacity to take on a coordination role.

4. Pending issues/Challenges in 2008

A key challenge in 2008 will be to maintain remaining humanitarian issues at the forefront of the national agenda and to ensure that humanitarian action is seen as complementary to the Government's drive for development. Focus will be given to advocate for and encourage humanitarian action in underserved areas, particularly in the south east of Liberia. A key challenge will be to mobilize resources for this purpose, as many traditional humanitarian donors will cease humanitarian funding for Liberia in 2008.

It is expected that the Government will call for an increased focus on issues of food security and water and sanitation. These areas are both at the center of a humanitarian response called for by the analytical work carried out under the auspices of the IASC CT.

It is against this background that the IASC CT, engaged with other humanitarian actors in Liberia, has decided to engage in innovative approaches to keep attention on the Liberian situation and in particular on humanitarian needs. While the stakeholders in Liberia do not currently intend to engage in a comprehensive Consolidated Appeals process, the IASC CT and Government both are acutely aware that significant unmet humanitarian needs remain. In addition funding through the PRS mechanism is not likely to be "on-stream" until late 2008/early 2009. The IASC CT has therefore decided to develop a prioritized gap analysis, limited in scope and focus both with respect to priority needs and geographic areas. The intent is to focus on a limited number of activities that are critical priorities and urgently require funding.

The gap analysis will form the basis of a targeted and specific documentation of humanitarian needs to international funding agencies. It is intended to bridge the gap between the 2007 CHAP and the Liberia PRS. The timing of the launch of the appeal is February 2008 prior to the completion of the PRS process, and well before funding is delivered through the PRS mechanism.

In addition, the Humanitarian Coordinator and the IASC CT hope that funding will continue to be made available to respective United Nations agencies, including through the CERF mechanism which has proved useful in Liberia. The Humanitarian Coordinator calls on the continued support of the donor community and United Nations system, including the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in meeting urgent humanitarian needs as well as assisting Liberia in this important moment of transition.