



In Liberia, the United Nations is represented by the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), as well as 16 specialized Agencies, Funds, Programmes, and the World Bank. All UN programmes in Liberia are aligned with the national Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). Initiatives are underway in each of the PRS's four pillars: enhancing national security; revitalizing the economy; strengthening governance and rule of law; rehabilitating infrastructure and basic social services; as well as preventing and responding to HIV/AIDS.

Close to 2.4 million people vaccinated against yellow fever in Liberia

The largest immunization campaign ever conducted in Liberia, took place in November 2009, with a massive turnout of nearly 80% of those identified to receive the vaccine. From 23-29 November, some 2.4 million people were immunized against yellow fever, a potentially lethal infection transmitted from an infected person by mosquitoes. In addition to the vaccine against yellow fever, children between 12 months and five years of age received deworming treatment.



School children show off their immunization cards

Over 2,275 teams spread out across 78 districts to assist in the week-long campaign. All Liberians – except pregnant women and children under 9 months – were targeted to receive the vaccine.

In May this year, one case of yellow fever was confirmed in Nimba County and 12 cases were confirmed over the past nine years. The severity of the disease is such that one single confirmed case in a country constitutes an epidemic. There is no cure for the disease but a single injection provides immunity for ten years.

Prior to the campaign, radio broadcasts were used, and community mobilizers dispatched throughout the country to inform the population about the danger of yellow fever and the importance of immunization, as well as providing details on the closest vaccination points. A complex logistic organization supported the vaccination campaign, with supplies being dispatched to some hard to access areas by motorcycles, boats and even helicopters.

The World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and GAVI Alliance supported the Government of Liberia to plan, implement and monitor the large-scale vaccination campaign.

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Volunteer savings and lending associations boost micro-enterprise development

The United Nations Volunteer (UNV) Programme has helped set up four Volunteers Savings and Lending Associations (VSLA) in Salala District, Bong County. The VSLA is a pilot project designed to promote economic empowerment of women at the county level through volunteerism.

The project is designed to enable local community members to pool their financial resources through the purchase of shares in the VSLA, and to provide loans from accumulated profit for business initiatives by its members, according to Nee-Isaac Duanah, Project Coordinator of Liberia Initiatives for Development Services.

Each of the four VSLA established with support from the UN Volunteer programme has a membership of 30, of whom most are women. Under the UNV support project, all 120 members of the four VSLA were provided training in micro-enterprise development, management and operations.

UNV Programme Manager, Rukaya Mohammed, says the project will promote social cohesion and empower communities toward financial independence.



Women financially empowered to meet their family needs

“In the absence of financial institutions in local villages, the VSLA will provide the means of credit for communities. Such initiatives have resulted in the establishment of rural banks in other countries because the project is sustainable and the funds are from within the communities,” she added.

Ms. Volunteer 2008/2009 says “the project will help communities get out of the dependency syndrome, which is prevalent across many parts of the country and has subjected women to all kinds of hardship in society.”

Ms. Victoria Mulbah, the chairlady of the association in Totota community, Bong County indicated that the VSLA has strengthened social cohesion in the community because she now works with people she never even talked with since she came to the community.

Global economic crisis has negative impact on Liberia’s development efforts - ILO Assessment

The global economic crisis has had a negative impact on Liberia's development efforts, according to a rapid impact assessment conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in July 2009. The ILO, in collaboration with other development partners, was requested by the Government of Liberia to undertake a rapid assessment of the global economic crisis and its impact on employment in the country.

The assessment showed that the global crisis has had an impact on the Liberian economy in four main areas: a negative effect on government revenues, decline in exports and commodity prices, a less favourable climate for foreign investment and negotiation of concession agreements, and a reduction in the inflow of remittances. According to the report, The long-term effect of the crisis remains uncertain, and depends on the length and depth of the global downturn.

The findings of the assessment suggest that the impact will be felt most strongly by the hundreds of thousands of individuals self-employed in smallholder agricultural production and those working in informal employment. For small scale enterprises and informal workers, many of whom operate in the service sector catering to domestic markets, the fall in demand will decrease earnings and productivity.

According to the assessment, the consequences for the well-being of the population due to this loss of income will be more far-reaching, since many dependents rely on the earnings from each individual in the labour force. The report points out that the Government of Liberia should build on recent initiatives and points of strength, and focus policy efforts on improving employment opportunities as the single best strategy for reducing poverty, raising living standards, and maintaining social stability.

Over 5,000 children celebrate 20th anniversary of the Child Rights Convention

On Saturday, November 21, 2009, thousands of children in all parts of Liberia participated in the country's first Children's Festival organized by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Ministry of Gender and Development, and partners, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) by virtually all countries. In the capital Monrovia, where the largest of the events was held, over 5,000 children converged at Liberia's largest sports stadium, the Samuel K. Doe Stadium.

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf visited the stadium to meet with the children and thank the nearly 300 volunteers who made the event possible. The Minister of Gender and Development, Vabah Gayflor, the UN's Deputy Special Representative in Liberia, Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu, and other UN representatives also took part in the event.

"A children's festival is a way to look forward and an opportunity for children to take on leadership and make their country friendly for them to grow up in. Let's make Liberia a country where children can play again", said President Sirleaf.

Activities included music, dance, literary and sports competitions, workshops on arts, photography, careers, life skills, radio, nature, books, films and sports. Music and cultural concerts were organized, providing children and young people with a forum to express their views, learn and have fun.

"Today is a day for children to witness what adults have committed to on their behalf 20 years ago", said Isabel Crowley, UNICEF Representative in Liberia. "We hope that the children's festival will serve as a landmark towards making Liberia a beautiful, peaceful and prosperous country for generations to come."

UNICEF also marked the event by launching its special edition of the flagship publication 'State of the World's Children'. The document reviews the major achievements of the last 20 years, and more precisely, of the past 6 years of peace and development in Liberia. It refers to the decrease in child mortality by 40 percent since the end of the civil war.

Other measures to include children's rights in the national legal system have been taken such as the Children's Act adopted by the House of Representatives last February, now awaiting the approval of the Senate.

"Children need to find their place in the Liberian law", adds Crowley. "The Children's Act was adopted by the House of Representatives last February and is now before the Senate. We urge the Upper House to step forward and swiftly adopt this piece of legislation, to ensure that no child is left behind by the legal system."



President Johnson-Sirleaf joins in children's celebration

Liberia Trade Information Centre launched

A Trade Information Centre was launched 18 November 2009 in Monrovia by the Minister of Commerce and Industry. The Liberia Trade Information Center, a component of the Liberia Export Development Project of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, was set up with funding and technical assistance provided by the International Trade Center (ITC) of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The Liberia Trade Information Centre will provide up-to-date Liberia-specific and global trade information, including potential markets, to Liberian businessmen and women and help connect suppliers and markets. The centre will also provide essential legal and trade information on export requirements to those seeking to export local produce. The LTIC is fully equipped with computers, printers, internet access and reference materials.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Treasure Maphanga, Chief of ITC's Office for Africa, said the Center was only the beginning of ITC's support to enhance local capacity and promote Liberia's national export strategy for trade and development.

By January 2010, this initiative is set to be followed by another ITC funded project, "Trade at Hand." This project will allow businesspersons and farmers to trade and market their produce easily and cost-efficiently using short message broadcast systems on their mobile phones.

Putting People First: Liberia Launches Final Report of National Population and Housing Census

On December 17, 2009, the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), officially launched the Final Report of the 2008 National Population and Housing Census, the first in twenty-four years.

"For the first time in twenty-four years, we know where our people live, how many schools there are and how many students are in those schools. We can now use data to effectively plan and respond to their needs," Amara M. Kone, Liberia's Minister for Planning and Economic Affairs noted.

According to the Final Report of the census, Liberia presently has a total population of about 3.4 million inhabitants and a growth rate of 2.1. If this continues, the population is expected to double in 33 years.

To face this challenge, the United Nations Deputy Special Representative for Recovery and Governance and Resident Coordinator, Moustapha Soumaré, highlighted the need for an increase in the provision of social services.

Guests at the event included Cabinet Ministers, the Head of the Council of Chiefs, Members of the Diplomatic Corps as well as other Dignitaries.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), African Development Bank (AfDB), World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Paris 21 supported the census.



Planning & Economic Affairs Minister Amara Kone unveiling final census report

Poverty reduction with a difference

In August 2009, the World Bank approved an additional USD\$ 100,000 toward an innovative communications effort that raises awareness about poverty reduction in Liberia, and garners public support for the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). It is also helping gather feedback for policy options and people-focused development actions.

The ongoing project, known as the 'Lift Liberia Communication Strategy', or the PRS Communication Strategy uses a multi-media approach using radio, television and the print media in a bid to reach as wide a population as possible.

Weekly radio programmes on key radio stations; particularly United Nations Mission in Liberia's radio station (UNMIL) and state-owned ELBC reach the largest audience. State-owned television station (ELTV) broadcasts snippets of development projects under the PRS that are benefitting Liberians across the country.



Local inhabitants gather at a palava hut for information regarding development efforts in their community.

UN in Liberia conducts UNDAF Technical Review and Planning Meeting

The United Nations in Liberia conducted a technical review of its United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) document during a three and a half day review and planning meeting in November 2009. The review was part of preparations for the High-Level UNDAF Annual Review and Planning Meeting to be held early 2010 with the Government of Liberia, donors and other partners. The UNDAF reflects the UN's strategic objectives in support of the Government of Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) 'Lift Liberia'.

Eighty participants representing 16 resident UN Agencies and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) participated in the technical preparatory retreat. Participants took part in extensive review sessions that focused on all of the UN's work in Liberia in 2009, in a bid to assess how the UN's support contributed to achieving Liberia's national priorities articulated in the PRS, with strategic considerations of the Consolidation, Drawdown and Withdrawal Benchmarks of UNMIL.

Five Outcome Groups (OGs) reflecting the UN strategic areas for intervention: Peace and Security, Economic Revitalization, Governance and Rule of Law, Social Services and HIV/AIDS; formulated combined programme results for the year 2010. The combined programme results for 2010 contributes to the achievement of the overall UNDAF outcomes that have been identified for implementation by 2012. Cross cutting themes- gender, human rights and youth - were mainstreamed across the Annual Work Plans for 2010, while peace and security issues were further incorporated into the UNDAF.

Snippets

Legislative training programme. A ten-day legislative drafting training programme was launched in Monrovia on 1 December 2009. The training aims to improve the law-making process by enhancing the skills of legislators, government officials and senior level legislative staff. The workshop was carried out with support from the UN, the Government of Liberia, the UK Department for International Development (DfID), the Liberian Institute of Public Administration and the Royal Institute of Public Administration. The training programme was launched by the UN Deputy Special Representative in Liberia, Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu.

Gender training for UNMIL military personnel. Thirty-eight military personnel attached to the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) attended gender awareness training workshops in Monrovia and Buchanan on 6 and 13 November 2009. The thirty-eight personnel, including 11 female officers, were trained as trainers during these workshops. They will in turn raise gender awareness within their military units and conduct outreach activities on gender related issues. The training was

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conducted by the UNMIL Office of the Gender Adviser and the Force Gender Officer. It is part of a wider effort that raises gender awareness amongst all military and civilian personnel attached to UNMIL and the United Nations in Liberia.

Equipment handed over to Ministry of Post and Telecommunications. The United Nations Development Programme handed over a consignment of office equipment valued at \$50,000 to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications on 28 October 2009. The consignment included desktop computers, laptops, generators and office furniture. The items were procured under the Multi-year Integrated Project funded by the Universal Postal Union (UPU). They are intended to support emergency recovery and development initiatives at the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication.

Child Rights training for Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) personnel – The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Liberia’s Ministry of National Defense signed a Memorandum of Understanding in October to strengthen their cooperation in ensuring that children’s rights are fully respected in the interactions between the military and children, and women living in military barracks. Under the agreement, UNICEF will provide technical experts and provide support to print sensitization material and other documents to inform the military about children’s issues. It will also train officers on child protection and ensure that focal points are designated in each barracks.

Support to LISGIS. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the European Commission (EC) in October 2009 handed over 15 motorcycles to the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Service (LISGIS), for use by County Statistics Information Officers (CSIOs). This is in addition to 15 Desktop computers, office furniture, and GPS units to support field data collection. CSIOs are deployed in offices in every County, where they provide support to local County administration in data collection and monitoring of the County Development Agendas (CDA) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS).

Opening of resource centres. The Bai T. Moore Resource Center at the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism was declared open on 25 September 2009. The Center is one of four resource and research facilities supported by UNDP through the Communications for Development project. Similar support has been provided to the Press Union of Liberia, the department of Mass Communications at the University of Liberia and the Institute for Media Development and Dignity.

Reports

Human Development Report 2009. The Deputy Special Representative of United Nations Secretary General for Recovery and Governance and UN Resident Coordinator in Liberia Mr. Moustapha Soumaré says the appearance of Liberia in the 2009 Global Human Development Index clearly indicates the progress the country is making in re-building a credible data system. Mr. Soumaré commended the government for recognizing the importance of human development in national planning. “The partnership between the government and development partners must be strengthened to achieve the goals of the poverty reduction strategy and the county development agenda initiatives,” he said.

State of World Population Report 2009. The United Nations Population Fund in collaboration with the Liberian Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs launched the State of the World Population 2009 Report 18 November 2009, in Monrovia. The report was officially launched by the Vice President of Liberia, Ambassador Joseph N. Boakai. The report, titled “Facing a Changing World: Women, Population and Climate,” focuses on the human aspect to climate change. The report can be found at <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2009/>

Liberia Market Price Monitor. The Liberia Food Security Monitoring System, funded by WFP under the GoL/UN Joint Programme on Food Security and Nutrition issued two bulletins since November. The bulletin provides a monthly analysis of food and other essential commodities. For details, contact: Tarnue Koiwou -tdkoiwou@yahoo.com, or Cheryl Williams at chersek@yahoo.com.

Rapid impact assessment of the global economic crisis on Liberia. The International Labour Organization (ILO) assisted the GoL in conducting a rapid impact assessment on the effects of the global economic crisis on Liberia. The assessment was carried out in July 2009. The report documents the effects on employers and workers and considers the implications for the realization of the objectives of the Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy (LPRS). For further information, contact Mark Vansteenkiste, Chief Technical Advisor at the ILO on vansteenkiste@ilo.org

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