

Calm Restored in Monrovia After a Three-Day Violence

On October 29, 2004, in the midst of the civil disturbances in Liberia, UNMIL SRSG Jacques Paul Klein made a live appeal on UNMIL Radio. "I urge all Liberians to put an end to violence and work towards unity and national reconciliation and rebuild the country." He further made it very clear that he issued an order to UNMIL police and military troops to react with maximum force to any activities of violence against innocent civilians and property. A 15,000 strong UN peace force stationed in Liberia, the biggest in the world, responded in a timely manner. The unrest was one of the most serious outbreaks of violence in Liberia since former President Charles Taylor went into exile in August last year, as a part of a peace deal to end 14 years of civil war. NTGL Chairman Guyde Bryant issued an immediate 24 hours curfew, which was adapted as the situation improved.

The cause

The civil disturbances began on the night of October 28, 2004 over a land dispute between Mandingo tribe members and local citizens of the Red Light area, Monrovia. Certain groups, some of whom are suspected to be ex-combatants and political elements, took advantage of the dispute, which then escalated into clashes. Houses, mosques and churches were burnt in the Red Light area. The following day, the disturbances continued in Paynesville, Somalia drive, Congo Town and Central Monrovia, involving burning and looting of churches, businesses, vehicles, as well as sporadic shooting.

DDRR

The violent outbreaks have also been linked to the conclusion of the voluntary Disarmament and Demobilization (DD) exercise on October 31, 2004. Over 95,000 ex-combatants, including women and children, underwent the exercise, but critics of the DD have long

The UN has deployed a 15,000 peace keeping force in Liberia, currently the biggest in the world.



95,000 ex-combatants, including women and children, were disarmed during the voluntary DD exercise

argued that only a fraction of those disarmed have actually handed in weapons and they suspect many civilians have been posing as ex-combatants to receive the \$300 resettlement grant. SRSG Klein announced on November 2, 2004 that UNMIL will continue disarming former fighters in remote corners of northern and southeastern Liberia, as UNMIL was not able to reach them during the rainy season. Outside of the targeted areas, those found in possession of a weapon will be arrested and prosecuted under Liberian law.

Victims, arrests, damages

The civil disturbances claimed 18 lives and left 208 wounded. A total of 398 arrests were made, over 200 in the custody of the Liberian National Police (LNP). In terms of material damage, 20 houses and businesses were either damaged or burnt, 14 mosques and 6 churches destroyed. No incidents were reported in other parts of the country.

Calm Restored

UNMIL and Liberian government worked together to restore the calm in the city, and kept appealing to Liberians not to let the recent disturbances affect their peace-loving existence. The schools have reopened, markets are back to normal and the calm has been fully restored in all areas of Monrovia. Current curfew is in force between 22.00 and 06.00 hours.

Grand Cape Mount County Welcomes the first Groups of Returnees from Perry Town Camp

After spending two and a half years in exile in Sierra Leone, and nine months in a Perry Town returnee camp near Monrovia, Banda Musa, aged 56, decided to return to his home in Grand Cape Mount County with the help of UNHCR and Liberian government. He was the first returnee in Perry Town camp, out of 775, to register for the return to Grand Cape Mount County. "I plan to build a house and grow a vegetable garden," explains Musa. He is one of 213 returnees who returned home with the first UNHCR convoy on November 8, 2004. The return is only being facilitated to the areas declared safe by the Liberian government, namely Grand Cape Mount, Bomi, Gbarpolu, Margibi, Bong and River Cess counties.

Mass Info Campaign

Prior to the registration, UNHCR staff conducted suc-



UNHCR Field Officer, Gibson Tulay, was a member of the UNHCR team that conducted sensitization at Perry Town and Seighbeigh returnee camps

cessful sensitization in both Perry Town and Seighbeigh returnee camps where answers were provided on a number of concerns returnees had before making an informed decision about returning home. The sensitization was part of the mass info campaign where once again the voluntary nature of the return as well as various steps of the return process were emphasized.

Farewell to camp life

On the morning of November 8, 2004 Perry Town returnee camp was buzzing with excitement. Returnees were clutching their registration cards fervent to get on one of the six UNHCR trucks that would take them to

the Sinje transit center. Returnees and IDPs re-settling in Grand Cape Mount county were seen off by UNMIL SRSG Jacques Paul Klein, DSRSG Abou Moussa, UNHCR Representative Moses Okello and NTGL Chairman Guyde Bryant. SRSG Klein said that yesterday's dreams became today's realities, as people were ready to reclaim their lives and embark on the journey back home. Chairman Bryant's words were applauded to, as he promised those returning to visit them in their houses. He explained the government has been working hard for the past 9 months to ensure they can take people home safely. The speeches echoed the same message written on the banner hanging at the entrance of the camp "Liberia it is time to return, reconcile and rebuild".

Sinje Transit Center

Once the ceremony was over the trucks set off to Sinje transit center. At the center, the returnees were informed of the assistance packages and secondary travel allowances they were going to receive. Just as it is the case with the repatriation of refugees, the facilitated movement of returnees includes the food and Non-Food Items (NFI) packages as well as the secondary transport allowances, which allow returnees to reach their final destinations.

Future movements

The second UNHCR convoy will be taking returnees from the Seighbeigh returnee camp where over 400 people have registered to be taken back to their homes in Grand Cape Mount.

LIBERIAN REFUGEES WHO HAVE RETURNED SO FAR WITH THE UNHCR ASSISTANCE

Sierra Leone - five UNHCR land convoys had brought back home **746** Liberian refugees since the commencement of the exercise on October 1, 2004.

Ghana - the total of 116 Liberian refugees had returned with the UNHCR assistance.

Guinea - on November 8, 2004, the first convoy with **308** Liberian refugees arrived to Bong County.

Nigeria - **110** Liberian refugees arrived on the first UNHCR facilitated flight from Nigeria on November 8, 2004.

IDPs From Grand Cape Mount Returning Home

The Liberian government in collaboration with the international community in Liberia started re-settling IDPs from camps in Montserrado County back to their homes in Grand Cape Mount on November 8, 2004. The total of 300 IDPs from the Perry Town IDP camp booked their seats on the first convoy eager to go back to their homes and begin a new life after years of displacement. The movement of IDPs is only planned to the areas that have been declared safe by the Liberian government, starting with the Grand Cape Mount and Bomi counties. UNHCR has been actively involved in IDP assistance through inter-agency collaboration since 2002 via deployment of UNHCR staff to monitor the welfare of IDPs in camps, WATSAN and health activities, as well as coordinating shelter and non-food items with ICRC. In addition, UNHCR funded and provided logistics in April of 2004 to the IDP Committee, comprising of representatives from the Liberian government, IOM, WFP, UNHCR and UNMIL, to carry out a population verification of Liberian IDPs residing in 20 recognized camps. The survey yielded the final figure of 261, 886 IDPs receiving help through the joint efforts of IDP Committee members on the principles of collective responsibility and inter-organizational collaboration. The Liberian government and their international partners are making sure that IDPs receive the same assistance as refugees. Therefore, UNHCR is providing expertise, Non-Food Items (NFI) packages, travel allowance, trucks as well as transit centers, to be used as distribution points for the re-settlement packages and transportation allowance. No assistance will be given in the IDP camps. Furthermore, WFP is providing food packages, IOM is taking care of the pre-departure procedures (i.e. registration, manifest etc) and in conjunction with UNMIL, they are also covering the logistics part of the exercise. A mass information campaign was launched on October 8, 2004 to sensitize IDPs about security and humanitarian situation in their counties of origin.



261,886 IDPs currently live in 20 camps

Community Empowerment Projects (CEPs)



Martha Yallah, 80, is the oldest student at the Adult Literacy program conducted by Gbarnga Zonal Women for Progress

Martha Yallah, from Gbarnga Town, Bong County, is 80 years old and she can not read or write. She is the oldest student at the Gbarnga Zonal Women for Progress Organization, which has been running Adult Literacy and Skills Training course for women in Gbarnga Town since August this year. "I want to be able to sign my name on documents before I die," admits Yallah with a smile on her face. She has been a regular student since the commencement of the program, which runs three times a week and hosts 250 women from 18 districts in Gbarnga between the ages of 15 and 80. The program entails skills training, such as tie and dye and sowing, as well as English and math lessons. The idea is that the women attend the program for a year, and after the graduation expand the training in their respective districts. This is one of 432 Community Empowerment Projects (CEPs) endorsed by UNHCR and UNDP countrywide with a goal of empowering communities to take charge of their own recovery process.

In the case of Zonal Women, UNHCR will supply them with stationary, sowing machines, materials for tie, dye and baking, and UNHCR staff will conduct the literacy training. The CEP concept is abolishing the traditional treatment of beneficiaries as passive recipients, and instead puts communities in a position to plan and maintain projects to serve their needs. Furthermore, the CEPs have been designed to ensure the participation of the whole community in the decision-making process, including traditionally excluded groups such as women, youth, disabled etc. The locations were determined based on registered and expected number of returnees, internally displaced people, as well as areas in significant need of community rehabilitation. The CEPs will be covering a range of sectors - health, education, WATSAN, agriculture, gender and community services.

Health

Grand Cape Mount County

In total 4 health facilities rehabilitated by UNHCR are operational - 1 health center and 3 clinics. The health center is in Sinje, Garwula District. Lofa Bridge Clinic in Gola Konneh District, Dambala Clinic (operation, but additional works are being done) in Porkpa District and Sombehum Clinic in Talla District. The rehabilitation of the Robertsport Clinic in Talla District by UNHCR is to commence beginning on November and should be completed in a month. Furthermore, UNHCR implementing partner in this county African Humanitarian Action (AHA) will identify additional 5 clinics for rehabilitations. The World Vision International (WVI) is also operating three clinics in this county.

Bomi County

World Vision International and Save the Children are operating health facilities in the area. Returnees to this county will be using Sinje and Teneh transit centers for medical facilities under the co-ordination of AHA.

Education

Grand Cape Mount County

In the following towns in Gola Konneh District schools are operating - Gbelleh, Baloma (St. Andrew), Massatin, Blain, Gbeni, Lofa Bridge, Than, Weajue, Varguay and Benduma - all of which have been rehabilitated with the help of the German Agro Action (GAA) NGO. In Porkpa District, the following towns have functional education facilities thanks to the GAA aid - Butter Hill, Lofa Congo, Gold Camp and Beh Gondon.

Bomi County

Schools operation in Boiwien Town, Karnga Town, Dagweh Town and Bonjeh Town with the help of UNICEF. GAA rehabilitated school in Beh Town. In Tubmanburg three schools rehabilitated - two by UNMIL and one by UNICEF. UNMIL also rehabilitated schools in Todien and Sass Town. Additionally, several community schools are functioning in the following towns - Moila, Mulbah, Malema, T.K. Village and Youandee - with the help of GAA.

Security

Grand Cape Mount County

UNMIL's presence in the County, and their troops are based in Gbah, Sinje, Robers Port and Bo Water Side. Daily patrols along the main highway between 08.00 and 20.00 hours. Disarmament was completed on September 10, 2004.

Bomi County

UNMIL's presence in the county, and their troops are based in Tubmanburg and Clay. Regular patrols between Tubmanburg and Poo-River Bridge on the main highway (24 hrs), and also in Bopolu and Lofa Bridge. Disarmament completed.

Frequently Asked Questions

I am from Lofa County– when do I go home?

UNHCR is only taking people from the areas declared safe by the Liberian government. So far, Grand Cape Mount, Bomi, Gbarnga, Margibi, Bong and River Cess have been declared safe. Once Lofa County is declared safe we will start taking people back, but even then you have to decide if you want to go home - this is VOLUNTARY repatriation.

I'm a pregnant, single mother - how do I repatriate?

You fall within the special needs group and as such you are not encouraged to repatriate during the facilitation phase until you are advised of the reception and follow-up arrangements in Liberia. During the convoy movement there will be a special truck for vulnerable refugees, as well as a medical escort.

I want to return home, but some of my family members wish to stay behind. Can we separate?

For the sake of protection of family unity, you are encouraged to plan to repatriate together. No children should be left behind in the camps for any reason. If your family has adult dependents who wish to repatriate at different time, you need to present your case to UNHCR for advice. If your request is approved, the VRF will be issued for departing family members only and the ration card will be changed accordingly.

My spouse is from a different country - can we repatriate together?

Yes you can if you are legally married - customary, civil or religious. If your spouse is non-Liberian refugee in the country of asylum then you will be considered the head of the family for repatriation purposes. If you were married and registered together upon arriving to the country of asylum then your spouse will receive repatriation packages. But if you were married during your time in the country of asylum then your spouse will only receive free transport.

I am from Lofa County, but wish to repatriate to Bomi County - will UNHCR take me there?

This is VOLUNTARY repatriation and you are free to return to anywhere you want - UNHCR will assist you. But UNHCR will not come back at a later stage to take you to any other county.

UNHCR Interventions by Counties

UNHCR OFFICES	SACLEPEA	VOINJAMA	ZWEDRU	MONROVIA	TUBMANBURG	GBARNGA	HARPER
COUNTIES	Nimba, Rivercess	Lofa	Grand Gedeh, Sierrone	Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa	Gbarpolu, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount	Bong	Maryland, Grand Kru, River Gee
TRANSIT CENTERS	Ganta Saclepea	Soleyeh Voinjama Zorzor	Zwedru Toe Town	Perry Town	Sinje	Gbarnga	Pleebo Harper
WAY STATIONS	Ganta Yekepa under construction Loguatu under construction				Bobolu Bo Water Side	Salayea	
HEALTH	1) Methodist Hospital in Ganta operating. 2) Catholic-run clinic in Tappita operating. 3) Saclepea community clinic to be rehabilitated by MERC!	1) Borkeza Clinic operational 2) Rehabilitation of Luyema Clinic starts mid-October 3) Kolahun Hospital rehabilitated	Rehabilitated 80% Gorwogba Town Clinic, Kumeh Town Clinic, Polar Gberzon Clinic, Janzon Clinic, Putu Jaiwodee Clinic, Toe Town Clinic, Zai Town Clinic, Zleh Town Clinic, Putu Pennokon Clinic	1) HCR provides two ambulances. 2) UNHCR IP supporting health activities in Perry Town and Seignbeh camps.	Operational: Bobolu Health Center, Henry's Town Clinic, Gbangay Clinic, Tarkpoima Clinic, Kungbor Clinic, Sinje HC, Lofa Bridge Clinic, Damballa Clinic, Sembehun Clinic and Robertsport	1) Needs adequately covered by health agencies.	Basic services: Glofakheh Clinic, Cavalla Clinic, Fish Town Clinic, Rock Town Clinic, Karloken Clinic, Pleebo Clinic, Little Wlebo Clinic Barraken Clinic being rehabilitated
WATSAN	1) Over 30 wells identified for rehabilitation. 2) Six hand pumps available. 3) Several private toilets rehabilitated.	1) Assessment in Lofa for Watsan activities completed.	1) Over 54 hand pumps to be rehabilitated in 13 priority villages. 2) Several hand pumps/few private wells available. 3) 18 hand pumps identified for rehabilitation.	1) 15 wells to be rehabilitated in key districts of Montserrado County and will be involved in community training and slab making for individual family latrines.	1) Hope Int. Mission completed rehabilitation of 4 wells and 7 (two room) latrines in Totoquelle. 2) ADEN and JPF will be constructing wells and latrines in 6 districts in Grand Cape Mount	1) Water points and sanitation facilities have been rehabilitated in five primary schools.	1) Three hand pumps constructed in Karmweaken. 2) ICRC installed 3 new pumps in Harper. 3) In Fish Town 4 hand pumps being repaired
EDUCATION	1) One public school in operation. 2) Mempa and Bellewaley community schools under construction. 3) PWJ rehabilitating 5 schools	1) Several schools rehabilitated as a part of the UNHCR school renovation project. 2) 10 Schools to be rehabilitated in Lofa.	1) 28 schools identified for rehabilitation by community and local authorities.	1) UNHCR partner to rehabilitate seven schools to in Montserrado County with community involvement.	1) Seven primary schools, including education offices in Tubmanburg and Robertsport, identified for rehabilitation by UNHCR implementing partner.	1) Gorpuldolobol Primary School in Belefenai undergoing rehabilitation 2) Rehabilitation of 5 schools	1) One govt. school in Karmweaken 2) Little Wlebo elementary school under construction