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A year after its operations began, the Gbarnga Regional Justice and Security hub comes under the scanner to reveal that the lessons learned, if applied to the additional hubs planned, could propel Liberia's peacebuilding process to greater heights.



UNMIL SENDS POLICE SUPPORT TO SOUTH SUDAN

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AFL TRAINED IN EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL

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Message from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General

2013 was a seminal year for Liberia, marking a decade of peace and stability in the country. While Liberia takes pride, once again, in its place among nations, and as an active and respected member of the global community, Liberians are mindful that significant work still lies ahead to make irreversible the country's hard-earned peace.

A challenge for any Government is developing institutions that respond to the needs of all its citizens, that promote development, and that are capable of delivering basic services to those in greatest need. Security remains fundamental to meeting this challenge, particularly in countries emerging from long-term conflict. Further progress in the transition of security responsibilities from UNMIL to Liberian national security agencies, and the recently renewed political and financial commitment by the Government of Liberia to strengthen and professionalize those agencies have been encouraging.

The second phase of UNMIL's military drawdown and reconfiguration began in February 2014, including the closure of the military camp in Sinje and the handover of the facilities to national authorities. The four counties where UNMIL no longer has a permanent military presence have remained peaceful, in some cases for over a year, which is a positive sign. The general increase in stability along the border with Côte d'Ivoire, with the active cooperation of the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and support from its UN and other partners, has been a welcome development, as has the voluntary repatriation of over 18,000 Ivorians in 2013 alone, well surpassing UNHCR targets. However, recent violence in western Côte d'Ivoire has highlighted the persistent threats to stability in the border area, and the need to remain focused on long-term stability.

Security remains UNMIL's top priority, and the

Mission continues to support the Liberia National Police, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation and other security and rule of law actors in strengthening their capacity to protect and to inspire confidence among Liberians. Since Liberian citizens also play a critical role in helping maintain law and order, UNMIL is also working with local authorities, civil society and other partners to support the peaceful resolution of disputes. While national reform processes essential for long-term peace and stability are ongoing, particularly reconciliation, constitutional review, decentralization, natural resource management and accountability, progress in these areas has been slow. UNMIL will continue to engage with Liberia and its other partners to advance more solidly in these processes. The Mission will also continue to advocate for inclusiveness, in order that the outcomes truly reflect the will and aspirations of the Liberian people.

As Liberia prepares for senatorial elections in October 2014, and the country and all its neighbours begin to focus on Presidential elections taking place between 2015 and 2017, there is continuing strong interest by the public and the international community to bring to fruition the significant efforts made by the people of Liberia and West Africa to strengthen democratic governance and maintain stability in the region.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karin Landgren".

Karin Landgren
Special Representative of the
Secretary-General and Coordinator of United Nations
Operations in Liberia

Review Dissects Operation of the Justice and Security Hub

By Daniel Mensah Brande



DSRSG Tamrat Samuel attends a review of one year of the Gbarnga Hub

out of the hub concept.

The centre has barracks for about 50 officers of the Police Support Unit (PSU) of the Liberia National Police (LNP), who are rapidly dispatched to quell riotous situations in the region. There are also around the same number of the Border Patrol Unit (BPU) of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, who carry regular confidence patrols to the border communities. It additionally has a training centre, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Unit, as well as probation, prosecution, public outreach services, and a public complaint mechanism.

Having been in operation for one year, the Gbarnga hub in early February this year was put under intense scrutiny of justice and security actors, civil society groups, and senior UN and Liberian Government officials to assess its effectiveness as a one-stop shop for accessing quality justice and security services. At a one-day workshop, attended by judges, magistrates, prosecutors, public defenders, and the civil society, as well as the police, and immigration and correction officers from the three beneficiary counties, participants took a soul-searching look at the construction process and one-year operation of the hub, detailing the achievements and failures, the challenges and lessons learned to guide the establishment of future hubs in the country.

The outcome of the workshop was presented for discussion by a high level meeting of senior government and

It is in response to the growing need to address the inadequacies in Liberia's justice and security sectors, and to ensure the availability of quality and affordable justice and security services to the people, the idea was floated to have five regional hubs to offer coordinated and decentralized services.

Located in the Bong County administrative capital to provide effective operational control, and proximity for speedy staff deployment to Central

Liberia, the first of the hubs, the US\$5 million-plus Gbarnga Regional Justice and Security Hub, financed through the UN Peace Building Fund, was inaugurated by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in February 2013.

The Gbarnga hub, covering Nimba, Lofa and Bong counties, a conflict-prone region with a combined population of over one million, and shares international frontiers with Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, is to be used as a pilot project for the nationwide roll-

UN officials, including the Chair of the Peace Building Commission Country-Specific Configuration to Liberia, Ambassador Steffan Tillander; Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Rule of Law, Tamrat Samuel; Director and Deputy Head of UN Peace Building Office, Kenny Gluck; and Associate-Justice of Supreme Court of Liberia, Jamesatta Wolokollie.

The meeting examined a wide range of issues seemingly undermining the effective operation of the hub: inadequate human resource and logistical support; absence of effective communications strategy to sell the hub and its services to the people; and the perceived out-of-the-way location of the hub, making it not easily accessible to the people.

Other concerns included the delay in completing the construction of some of the physical infrastructure, thus thwarting efforts to deliver certain services; the apparent bureaucratic command and control structure of the Police Support Unit (PSU) deployed at the centre, disabling its effectiveness as a rapid deployment force; and the ostensible lack of local ownership of the hub, emanating from the seeming non-involvement of the local population and civil society organizations in the designing and implementation of the concept.

DSRSG Tamrat Samuel, who presided over the meeting, described the deliberations as "very fruitful," but noted that though there were some difficult hurdles to scale, forward-moving lessons had been learnt. "There are many lessons that we have learnt from this experience, and we are still learning, but the bottom line is that this is an important and very positive experi-

ence that Liberia is implementing," he pointed out.

Ambassador Tillander said the Peace Building Commission would continue to support Liberia bring justice and security to the doorstep of the people, but stressed the need for the government to continue to build the capacity of criminal justice actors.

Covering about 30 per cent of the land area of Liberia, the Gbarnga Hub region has a total of nine attorneys, six public defenders to service three circuit courts, and more than 40 magisterial courts, in addition to a few specialized courts. The SGBV Unit has only four officers to cover the entire region, while the PSU and BPU have two vehicles each to perform their tasks. The roaming attorneys have no vehicles to travel to the counties to check on court dockets.

Additionally, the three prisons in the region do not have the requisite logistics and human resources to adequately carry out their corrections and rehabilitation functions. The circuit court, which is an integral part of the hub arrangement, is still not operational.

Despite these shortcomings, the Gbarnga Hub has chalked some successes: The PSU has contained several riotous situations in various parts of the region while the regular patrols of the BPU to the border communities have reassured the local population of the government's commitment to their security. The SGBV unit has also attended to rape cases, offering victims psycho-social counseling as well as health services in addition to facilitating the procurement of witnesses in prosecution of SGBV cases. The presence of the hub has helped in the institution of fast-track hearings and regular jail deliveries, culminating in the release of many pre-trial detainees. The hub has also served as a training centre for security agencies and the civil society.

If the lessons learned from the construction and one-year operation of the Gbarnga Hub are meticulously applied to guide the establishment of the remaining four hubs in Liberia, the concept could propel Liberia's peace building process and developmental aspirations to greater heights. It could also be a potential new instrument in the UN's peacekeeping toolkit.



Effective operation of the Gbarnga Hub is a priority

UNMIL Sends Police Support to South Sudan

By Stefanie Carmichael

In the early hours of Tuesday, 14 January 2014, 57 Officers from a Nepalese Formed Police Unit (FPU) descended on Roberts International Airport in Monrovia. Bags in hand, and oversized cargo loaded in trucks behind them, these troops were on their way to Juba for a temporary deployment with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

At the request of the UN Security Council, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is joining select other peacekeeping missions in sending police support

to the afflicted region in order to provide protection for camps of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have been affected by the recent fighting in South Sudan. A total of 120 Nepalese FPU Officers have been sent on loan

for two months to the region.

"We heard that the situation is very bad there. We are going there to help make peace and security," said Superintendent Sundar Khadka. "We'll be deployed in Bentiu. We'll have a chance to help the people there."

UNMISS is working to consolidate peace and security in the young country and the region, and to strengthen the capacity of the Government to establish conditions for development. Recent fighting has led to tens of thousands of people being displaced and led to significant challenges for the Government in ensuring basic needs and protection for the civilian population.

"We're all happy to be going. This is a good chance for us to do what we were trained and to do good in a bad situation," said Khadka. "Our work as FPU is public order management. In Sudan, we'll be managing the IDP camps. We'll be looking for any illegal arms and weapons there, and seeing if they have anything inside the camps."

Major Ali Alsabai from Yemen is an FPU Advisor with UNMIL who knows the troubles of the region, having previously served with the United Nations in Darfur.

"This is a very positive step," he says. "There is a war between two sides



Nepalese FPU line up to board the flight for Juba



in South Sudan. They are fighting and killing each other. These officers are going to keep the peace there."

Superintendent Dhirendra Raj Neupane, a fellow FPU Advisor with UNMIL, himself hails from Nepal and is proud to see his countrymen going to Juba.

"We are from Nepal. Our forces were

organized when there was a civil war going on in Nepal. These are people who have a huge experience of fighting, even me. They have seen many people dying in front of them. My best friend died in front of me. They aren't feeling any fear right now. They are just going to do their duty and to protect the IDP camps."

This Nepalese FPU has already served four months in Liberia out of a planned six month mission. Questions

Above: Nepalese FPU board the flight to Juba

Below: The FPU gets searched at the airport

remain as to whether or not they will return to Liberia following their deployment in South Sudan or whether their mission will be extended.

"They may come back, they may extend. We don't know yet," said Neupane. "Right now, we're just concerned with getting them to South Sudan so they can do their duties."

"THIS IS A GOOD CHANCE FOR US TO DO WHAT WE WERE TRAINED AND TO DO GOOD IN A BAD SITUATION."



AFL Trained in Explosive Ordnance Disposal

By Daylue Goah



A new graduate demonstrates his skill in handling explosive devices

On Thursday, 12 December 2013, the Armed Forces of Liberia celebrated a milestone as for the first time, a group of 16 AFL engineers graduated from a six-week training in Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD).

The training, conducted by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), in support of the UNMIL drawdown, is a significant step forward in Liberia's attempt to reduce the threat left behind by its civil war.

"The soldiers have been trained to provide an operational response, to deal with live ammunitions and their job is going to focus on explosive items that may be found anywhere in Liberia," said Sheila Black, UNMAS Programme Manager.

The graduation ceremony took place at the Armed Forces Training Command, Camp Ware in Careysburg, during which they demonstrated their newly acquired skills.

Brig.-Gen. Mauri Koskela, Chief of Staff (Military) of the United Nations

Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), highlighted the important role the trained engineers would play.

"All 16 AFL Explosive Ordnance Disposal operators have now completed a very specialized and concentrated training and are now qualified to carry out a very important role within the Armed Forces security response capacities. I would like to remind you graduates, this is an honor that you should not carry lightly and you should continue to operate as you have been trained for the safety of all," he pointed out.

Koskela noted that the AFL's capacity to respond to the threat of explosive remnants of war is an important step in the development of the Army and is a credit to the trainers and trainees.

"Based on my personal experiences from Afghanistan and the Middle East, the EOD skills are one of the key capacities of the operational units and it brings also safety and security for the communities living in post-conflict environments," he added.

He further told the graduates that the expectation for the future is great and that he hoped for a time the capacity could be fully operationalized by the AFL with sufficient resources to allow the transfer of EOD response away from UNMIL. As the Mission draws down, Koskela suggested Liberia must demonstrate its ability to protect civilians and provide a safe and secure environment.

"With the drawdown of UNMIL, we have a lot to do. With our mission in Mali, there is more to be done. We might not be able to demonstrate what was learnt in Liberia but we can demonstrate the exercise in other countries when the need arises," said Lt.-Col. Geraldine George, representing the Ministry of National Defense.

George told the graduates that the hardest part was yet to come. "You think the training was tough but the implementation is the toughest task. You might not know where your next



A cross section of AFL operators and trainers

assignment might be. Please remember that everything you acquired today is for the sake of Liberia."

Arthur Willie, one of the graduates, speaking to UN Focus said: "The training built my capacity as an individual, my unit and Liberia. UNMIL is slowly drawing down and there is a need to fill the gap. Therefore, to be equipped today with such knowledge is a plus and something I am grateful for. We put in our 100 percent and I can say for sure that Liberia can depend on us when UNMIL leaves the country."

He noted that prior to the training he had very little theoretical EOD knowledge but the six weeks of intensive exercises, "put me in the position to demonstrate it myself."

The second group of 16 AFL officers is expected to graduate from the same training mid-March. In the meantime, the first group of AFL operators has carried out eight EOD tasks since December on both civilian and MOD property. UNMAS will continue to provide on-the-job training and mentoring while the operators build confidence and leadership skills.

"WITH THE DRAWDOWN OF UNMIL, WE HAVE A LOT TO DO. WITH OUR MISSION IN MALI, THERE IS MORE TO BE DONE. WE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE WHAT WAS LEARNT IN LIBERIA BUT WE CAN DEMONSTRATE THE EXERCISE IN OTHER COUNTRIES WHEN THE NEED ARISES."

Liberian Students Help Children of the Philippines

By James S. King



"TRUE AGENTS OF CHANGE AND SERVE AS AN INSPIRATION TO OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE IN LIBERIA AND THE WORLD."

Students of Isaac A. David Memorial School in Monrovia late last year made a difference in the lives of strangers in a far away land when they raised US\$ 500 out of their school fees for use by children affected by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. Moved by compassion for the children of the Philippines, the students do-

nated one dollar each from their school fees totaling \$500, a check for which was presented to UNICEF Liberia by the children and their school principal.

UNICEF Representative Sheldon Yett, during a visit to the school, thanked the students and authorities of the school for contributing to global efforts to assist victims of Typhoon Haiyan. Yett termed the students' gesture

as an "amazing and a proud moment for UNICEF."

Children in Liberia have survived their own difficult experiences caused by long years of armed conflict, which started in late 1989 and lasted well over a decade. UNICEF, in collaboration with



UNICEF Representative, Sheldon Yett addresses the students of Isaac A. David School

the Government of Liberia, provides learning assistance to Liberian children in the form of school bags, textbooks, curriculum development, and development of handbooks on newborn and child care for use by community health workers in Liberia.

Yett said the combined efforts of students and school authorities of Isaac A. David Memorial School to help

other young people in need shows "true agents of change and serve as an inspiration to other young people in Liberia and the world." He said UNICEF seeks contributions like the ones made by the students of Isaac A. David Memorial School because "such contributions make a difference."

Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines late last year and caused huge destruction to lives and properties there in addition displacing millions of people, including children. UNICEF and other international humanitarian organizations launched appeals for relief assistance for victims after seeing television footage of the huge destruction left behind by Typhoon Haiyan. Yett said the large scale destruction caused by the typhoon made it difficult for the Government of the Philippines to bear the high costs of food, water, shelter and protection of thousands of children who were displaced.

In a presentation followed by a question and answer session, UNICEF staff

educated the students about natural disasters and prevention. The students asked questions about the causes and prevention of natural disasters, the role of UNICEF, disaster awareness and care programmes for children. Large-scale natural disasters are rare in Liberia. The first publicly known manmade disaster, an avalanche which killed several people, occurred in 1982 in Noway Camp in western Liberia. The avalanche resulted from abandoned debris created as result of iron ore mining activities.

Zark E. Whapo, Grade 12, thanked UNICEF on behalf of colleagues for co-ordinating the process of remitting the money donated by the students. Whapo likened the hardship experienced by children of the Philippines to the hardship experienced by Liberian children during the years of armed conflict in Liberia. He thanked the staff of UNICEF Liberia for providing knowledge on disaster management to the students of Isaac A. David Memorial School.

Students of Isaac A. David School



Ambassadors Welcome Refugee Repatriation Progress

By Sulaiman Momodu

As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in collaboration with partners, plans to voluntarily repatriate 16,000 Ivorian refugees from camps and communities in Liberia this year, some 20 ambassadors and representatives of international organizations have welcomed the progress so far made in assisting thousands of Ivorian refugees to return home.

In 2013, UNHCR repatriated 18,273 Ivorian refugees, exceeding the 16,000 repatriation target for the year. This year, in less than two months, over 5,000 refugees have been assisted to return home.

In late January, the diplomats flew from the Liberian capital, Monrovia, to the PTP Refugee Camp in Grand Gedeh County and the Little Wlebo Refugee Camp in Maryland County near the border with Côte d'Ivoire amid funding reduction in the wake of refugee emergencies in other countries such as Syria, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. Liberia still hosts over 46,000 Ivorian refugees.

The ambassadors and representatives of international organizations were from Brazil, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, European Union, France, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Sweden, and USA. Others included the African Development Bank, African Union Commission, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the World Bank. The Government of Liberia was represented by Cllr. Abla G. Williams, the Executive Director of the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC). Senior UN officials, including the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General



Visiting ambassadors with UN and Government Officials in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County
Photo: Sulaiman Momodu/UNHCR

eral Aeneas Chuma, and UN agencies, were also part of the delegation.

The visit, organized by UNHCR, was aimed at taking a good look at the situation inside the camps and also to hear from the refugees themselves about the challenges they face, including a looming food crisis.

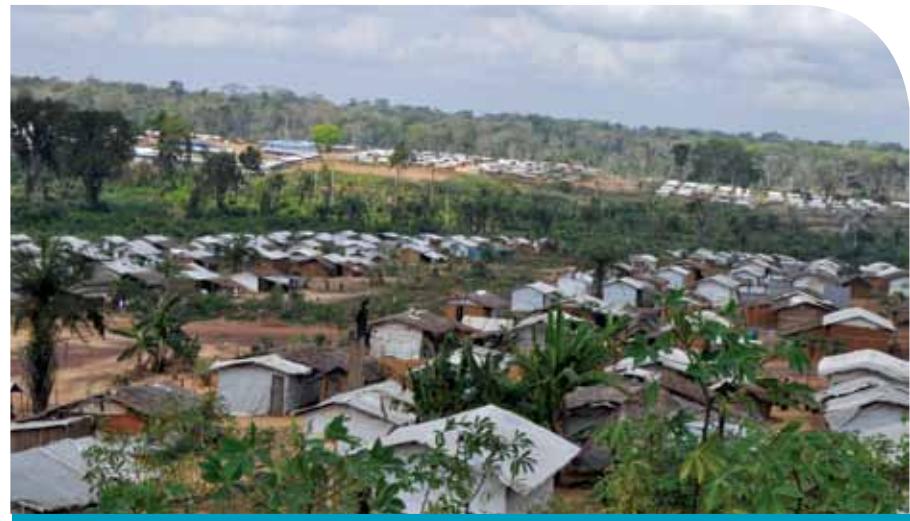
At PTP camp, the largest camp located at a former Prime Timber Production site and currently hosting more than 14,000 refugees, the visitors toured various facilities and witnessed activities refugees are engaged in such as agriculture and skills training.

At the Little Wlebo camp with more than 10,000 refugees, the delegation witnessed schools in session and refugees' poultry production initiative. During the visit, US Ambassador Deborah Ruth Malac launched a newly-constructed US-funded Women's Centre with literacy classes, day-care centre, and micro-finance and income generating components. "It is my hope that this centre will give the opportunity to women and girls to acquire skills while in refuge and to use such skills upon their return," she noted.

Following the disputed presidential election in late 2010 that led to fighting between supporters of poll rivals Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara, some 220,000 Ivorians fled to seek refuge in Liberia.

Although UNHCR is facilitating voluntary repatriation, most of the remaining refugees are calling for the disarmament of former fighters, stronger efforts at national reconciliation and an increase in repatriation grant. At the moment, an adult returnee receives US\$150 from UNHCR, while those under 18 receive US\$100.

"We want to return home, but we do not want to have cause to run away again," Guie Patrice Gnomble, the refugee leader at the PTP Refugee Camp told the visiting diplomats and international aid workers. "We are appealing for the disarmament of all fighters,



including the donsos [local militia]," he added.

In Little Wlebo Refugee Camp, refugee chairperson Elisabeth Kouya Nogbado told the visitors that the refugees wanted an increase in repatriation grant to give them a better chance of reintegration. The refugees also requested that the educational qualifications they acquired while in Liberia be recognized upon their return. They also allege that some individuals have illegally occupied their cocoa plantations. Ambassador Kapieletien Soro of Côte d'Ivoire urged the remaining refugees to return home and reiterated that peace and stability had been restored to their country.

Last October, at a meeting of more than 100 Ivorian and Liberian chiefs and elders held in southeastern Liberia, Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara urged his compatriots to return home and reiterated that peace and stability had been restored to their country. Last year, UNHCR organized "go-and-see" missions, during which refugees visited Côte d'Ivoire to see the conditions back home. "Come-and-tell" missions were also organized for former refugees to visit Liberia and inform refugees about peace, reconciliation and reconstruction efforts back home.

A partial view of the PTP Refugee Camp

Photo: Sulaiman Momodu/UNHCR

"We are doing all we can to assist Ivorian refugees to return home and rebuild their lives," said UNHCR Representative Khessim Diagne. "For 2014, we are stepping up our collaboration with Ivorian authorities to ensure that refugees have more objective information about their areas of origin that will enable them to make informed decisions about return," he added.

"IT IS MY HOPE THAT THIS CENTRE WILL GIVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO WOMEN AND GIRLS TO ACQUIRE SKILLS WHILE IN REFUGE AND TO USE SUCH SKILLS UPON THEIR RETURN."

UNHCR and partners support Liberia's Health Services

By Sulaiman Momodu

"FEEDBACK WE GET INDICATES THAT OUR SUPPORT IS MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT IN IMPROVING THE HEALTH CONDITIONS OF REFUGEES AND LIBERIANS."

The referral health facilities in Liberia's Nimba, Grand Gedeh, River Gee, and Maryland counties -- still struggling to recover from the impact of the civil war -- recently received various medical items donated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The donations are part of UNHCR's support, in collaboration with partners, to the host populations in the four counties. According to the refugee agency's Public Health Officer, Dr. Gebrewold Petros Yohannes, from January 2011 to February 2014, over US\$ 1.4 million has been spent in support of these struggling health facilities.

The latest donations of medical items were made in early 2014 to Sacle-pea Comprehensive Health Centre, Bahn Health Centre, and G.W. Harley Hospital in Nimba County; Martha Tubman Memorial Hospital in Grand Gedeh County; and the JJ Dossen Hospital in Maryland County. The items included antibiotics, pain killers, intravenous fluids, emergency health kits, supplies for surgical procedures and infection control, and medicines for chronic illnesses.

"We want to extend our thanks and

appreciation for the items donated to our hospitals in Nimba and Maryland. We are grateful for the continual collaboration between UNHCR and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW)," said the Assistant Minister of Health, Dr. Saye Baawo. The donations will benefit both the refugees and the surrounding host communities.

Among the support rendered to the health facilities by UNHCR and its partners include provision of health services through mobile clinics as well as camp clinics; infrastructure improvement; one ambulance each to Martha Tubman Memorial Hospital and J. J. Dossen Hospital; technical support; funding for HIV/AIDS projects; logistics support during vaccination campaigns; generators; fuel; training; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Promotion support; and sanitary clothes to women of childbearing age. Medical equipment donated to various health facilities



UNHCR donates medical facilities in four counties

Photo: Sulaiman Momodu/UNHCR

included: in-patient beds, examination equipment, minor surgical instruments, sterilization equipment, bed linens, delivery beds, mattresses, furniture, laboratory equipment, and CD-4 machine, a device used for determining viral load in people living with HIV/AIDS.

UNHCR, in collaboration with its partners, has also rehabilitated Bahn Health Centre in Nimba, and the HIV Treatment Centres in Martha Tubman Memorial Hospital and in Konobo Health Centre in Grand Gedeh. A construction of a new community clinic is ongoing in Dougee, Grand Gedeh; when complete, the clinic will have residence quarters, waste management system, and water borehole with a hand pump. Additionally, UNHCR has constructed a three-room annex to the existing clinic in Sass Town, Bomi County.

With a view to raising the quality of health services, UNHCR covered the salary of an expatriate medical doctor

for two years at Bahn Health Centre, and paid a three-month salary for an expatriate surgeon at Martha Tubman Hospital.

As part of its contribution to the National response to HIV/AIDS, UNHCR has funded four Quick Impact projects on HIV/AIDS in the four refugee hosting counties at a cost of US\$ 90,000. The projects were implemented by the respective County Health and Social Welfare teams, in collaboration with UNHCR partners. In 2011, the agency facilitated the participation of the National AIDS Commissioner at the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS in New York.

"Since 2011, more than 55,442 Liberian patients were examined and treated in mobile clinics and government health facilities supported by UNHCR and partners in host communities, and in camp clinics," said Dr. Yohannes, adding that the number of Liberian beneficiaries in camp clinics is

increasing.

UNHCR's current partners include Special Emergency Activity to Restore Children's Hope, Africa Humanitarian Action, CARE, International Rescue Committee, and Danish Refugee Council; while CHESS, OXFAM-GB, Norwegian Church AID, MERLIN, Tiyatien Health, MERCI, MSF-Belgium, and MSF-Holland were partners before.

"Feedback we get indicates that our support is making a positive impact in improving the health conditions of refugees and Liberians. We will continue to provide support to Liberia's health sector as long as we have funding," said Representative Khassim Diagne, thanking the people and Government of the Republic of Liberia for currently hosting more than 46,000 Ivorian refugees, and expressing gratitude to donors for supporting UNHCR's activities.

UN Deputy Special Representative Talks of Progress and Promise in Farewell Interview

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Consolidation of Democratic Governance, **Aeneas C. Chuma**, served in Liberia for more than a year before joining the International Labour Organisation as its Regional Director for Africa. Chuma, who was also UN's Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator, discusses Liberia's progress, promise, and his own personal highlights during his tenure.

UNMIL: *What do you see as the main achievements of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) since 2003, and particularly in the time that you have been here in Liberia?*

Chuma: I think the achievements have been many and varied. Probably the most important is the fact that there has been peace and stability over the past ten years thanks to UNMIL, thanks to the Government of Liberia, which has over time been increasingly capable of restoring peace and maintaining peace, and thanks to the people of Liberia who have chosen peace over conflict. It has given the country opportunities to rebuild what was destroyed by the war, to rehabilitate the infrastructure, the roads, to rebuild schools. But of course this is not to say that there have not been any problems. We still have problems around high unemployment, and problems of rights and capacities going forward.

UNMIL: *How well do you think Liberia will be prepared to handle the Mission's drawdown? What do you think are the main challenges that lie ahead in transferring responsibility for security to national authorities?*

Chuma: The process of drawing



down has in fact been going on for the last five to six years. If you think about it, it was also anticipated when UNMIL came here for the first time. So it's not something that is sudden. It is something that is planned very carefully by experts, both international and also Liberian. And it's implemented in a very staggered and responsible manner so that we don't lose the gains that

have been won over the last ten years. What is important now is for the Liberian state, the Liberian Government, to increasingly assume responsibility as a sovereign state for security within its own territory. I think the average citizen as well has a responsibility to conduct themselves and relate to each other in a manner that will deepen the peace that has been enjoyed over the last ten years.

UNMIL: *In your very first press conference as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Consolidation of Democratic Governance in January 2013, you said one of the challenges is to consolidate democratic traditions that have been introduced in Liberia. What progress do you see towards this goal?*

Chuma: Liberia has successfully conducted two elections, in 2005 and 2011, which really signaled its return to democratic dispensation. Liberia right now is in the process of updating its voter registry to prepare for elections in October. Next year, if all goes according to plan, Liberia will have a referendum on certain aspects of the new constitution. So you do have now certain practices that are embedded in the Liberian psyche. What we need to

do is to deepen this to make sure the average citizen feels that he is part of this new democratic dispensation, that what the average citizen thinks is taken into account by the legislators, and that the average citizen feels they can influence the direction that the country is going. This is something you do not do overnight. It takes time. It takes investment. It takes due diligence. It takes capacity building. It takes education.

UNMIL: In October, you attended the Joint Council of Chiefs and Elders Meeting in Grand Gedeh County. The President of Liberia was also there. How do you see regional security issues affecting Liberia as it moves forward?

Chuma: That was a very significant occasion. We had over time skirmishes along the border with Côte D'Ivoire, and often on both sides it was really the same people, so it was an area of instability. UNMIL, working with the Government and with our sister mission ONUCI in Côte D'Ivoire, organized this so that the traditional leadership and the government leadership could all meet and discuss and identify what the problem was and find long-term solutions. The conflict in Mano River Union covered all the countries at the same time: Guinea, Sierra Leone, Côte D'Ivoire and Liberia. In some cases, conflict started in one country and spilled over into the other. So that's why it's very important that the regional countries continue to work together to bring territorial and regional peace. We all need it so that we can promote development, but more importantly so that no group of armed elements can use another country as a base to attack another.

UNMIL: During your time in Liberia you also served as Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, overseeing the work of the UN family and the UN agencies in Liberia. With regards to the Millennium Development Goals, what challenges does Liberia face in accomplishing these?

Chuma: Liberia came onto the Millennium Development Goals five years

after the rest of the world because they were coming out of a conflict situation. This meant that Liberia had to run before it could walk. I think they've done well in restoring, for example, services in health, in education, and access to education by girls. But there are areas where they've not made much progress and that is not unique to Liberia. That applies to practically every country really. These long-term goals of education, of fighting poverty, these are very long-term goals. They're not something that you do in 10 to 15 years.

UNMIL: You also recently came back from the annual retreat of the United Nations Country Team in Ghana. What were some of the major achievements of the UN family in Liberia that you discussed and what are the key priorities outlined for 2014?

Chuma: The One Programme is designed to make sure that our work is aligned with the Agenda for Transformation, and that we provide our support in an integrated fashion so that we don't overwhelm the administrative infrastructure, so that we bring in a critical mass of technical resources. It covers four main areas: security sector reform, economic transformation, human development and public institution reform. We also have cross-cutting issues on gender and HIV. One of the most important for us in this respect is our working arrangement with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, particularly around promotion of national reconciliation. Reconciliation doesn't mean forgetting. It means that you recognize the errors of the past, but that you recognize that there is also a higher order, which is the Liberian nation and you need to build on that.

UNMIL: What has been your personal highlight of your time in Liberia?

Chuma: It's been an incredible privilege to come to Liberia and serve even for a short period of time. Probably one of the most exciting parts is the type of work that I was involved in both as DSRSG, supporting initiatives in consolidation of democratic governance,

but also leading the UN Country Team in Liberia, particularly towards long-term development interventions. The most interesting ones were challenges around the constitution, issues of decentralization, issues around land and defining land ownership through the national policy, issues around the exploitation of the incredible natural resources that Liberia has. It's been a very rich experience. It cannot be measured in terms of the duration, obviously. We all are here temporarily. One contributes to the best of one's ability. I think we have been working on the right issues.

UNMIL: You have been appointed Regional Director for Africa for the International Labour Organization. What will you take with you from your experience in Liberia to your new position?

Chuma: My new position will be with the International Labour Organization as you mentioned as the Regional Director for Africa and that includes also the Maghreb not just Sub-Saharan Africa so it's a huge portfolio. I will be working on issues of a policy nature, particularly the main concerns of the ILO, which are employment. That's critical for Liberia and the rest of Africa. Africa has a very young population and a lot of them don't have jobs or if they have jobs they are what we call vulnerable jobs. So we need to invest in job creation. In Liberia over the last ten years there has been growth in the economy to an average seven to eight per cent. But what we need to do then is to interrogate that type of growth. Quality of growth is important. I met with the Minister of Labour here a few weeks ago to try and talk about the types of issues of interest from my new position for Liberia that I can pursue since Liberia is a part of me now. I have to try to follow up and be helpful and serve like a champion for Liberia as well.

UNMIL: Thank you very much for taking the time out of your busy schedule.

Chuma: Thank you very much and keep up the excellent work.

Pneumonia Vaccine Comes to Liberia

By Daylue Goah



The Country Representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Sheldon Yett, called the launch of the first pneumonia vaccines in Liberia a "wonderful New Year's gift" that a government can give to its people in terms of health care delivery. "It is a gift that will protect the Liberian children from the disease that kills over 1.1 million under 5 children globally or over 3,000 children every day."

Yett was speaking on Wednesday,

January 8, 2014, at the John F. Kennedy Medical Center where President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf launched the maiden edition of the pneumonia vaccines in Liberia. The vaccine will be administered to every child three times before reaching the age of three.

He praised the Liberian President for committing her administration to the Child Survival Programme. He said it is hoped that the launch of the vaccine would see an improvement in the 2013 record which indicated that at

least 7,000 children under five died of pneumonia.

Launching the vaccine, President Sirleaf said it was the government's own way of providing health care for its people, calling it a complete breakthrough in the provision of health care to the children of Liberia.



She encouraged mothers, especially those in the rural communities, to take advantage of the vaccine in order to see healthy growing children. She also appealed to health officials to continue the advocacy and sensitization. "The only way to get the complete treatment would be for health authorities to carry out advocacy and health promotion throughout the country, encouraging mothers to know the importance of completing the immunization process,"

she said.

The Liberian leader called on media practitioners in the country to help spread the message so that it reaches the intended audience in order for the vaccination exercise to meet its goal throughout Liberia.

She commended the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and all supporting partners who worked tirelessly in making the dream a reality. "I want to say a big thank you to Dr. Walter Gwenigale and the entire Ministry of Health family for what they have done to make us proud in our achievement and our success in improving healthcare in our country," she noted.

Former Health Minister, now Chair-

man of the Senate Committee on Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Peter Coleman, on behalf of the Liberian Senate pledged to work with all relevant actors in ensuring the successful implementation of the immunization drive. He promised to work with his colleagues at the National Legislature to increase budgetary allotment for immunization.

United States Ambassador to Liberia, Deborah Malac, asked the government and its people to join hands with the Ministry of Health family to attack all obstacles that could prevent them from vaccinating every child in the country. She said it's a right of every child to be immunized.



President Sirleaf speaking at the Pneumonia Vaccine launch

Liberian Returnees Learn Business Management Skills

By James S. King

Ten years of peace and stability in Liberia continue to attract Liberian exiles back home.



Last year, 193 Liberian returnees graduated from a Business Management training programme funded by the Government of Japan through the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The US\$ 1.5 million project was jointly implemented by UNIDO and the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC). The project is in line with the Government's human capacity development agenda.

Leila Salehiravesh, Officer in Charge of UNIDO, described the training as the "heart of UNIDO's intervention." Protracted armed conflict in Liberia caused the country huge losses in human resources as well as basic infrastructure. The Liberian returnees also received training on vehicle maintenance, food services, house plastering, masonry and tiling, and refrigeration, among other trades. Monrovia Vocational Training Center (MVTC) and the World Harvest School served as centers for the training exercises.

Equipped with basic business management knowledge, the trainees are expected to utilize their newly acquired skills to improve their livelihoods. The

A partial view of graduates of Business Management Skills Training

training is the result of a UNIDO-led survey to determine the training needs of Liberian returnees. The 193 Liberian returnees were trained by fellow Liberians who were earlier trained under a two-month training of trainers programme conducted by UNIDO. It is a comprehensive two phase UNIDO intervention that contributes to the Liberian Government's efforts to build the capacities of Liberian returnees as well as to reintegrate them into Liberian societies.

Salehiravesh said the training of Liberians in business skills management contributes to Government efforts to empower former exiled Liberians with basic life skills. It is estimated that the project, which runs for more than one year, will assist over 600 Liberian returnees who voluntarily returned home to meet the June 2012 deadline for voluntary repatriation set by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The refugee agency officially ended its voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees in December 2012.

Liberia's Minister of Education, Etmonia Tarpeh, expressed gratitude to UNIDO and the Government of Japan for their support to the efforts by the Government to provide life skill training opportunities for Liberians who voluntarily returned home from exile. Tarpeh congratulated the graduates on their achievements and encouraged their commitment to the development of Liberia.

Morris Dukuly, Minister of Internal Affairs, thanked the graduates for their decisions and the courage they mustered to return home and contribute towards the development drives initiated by the Government and its development partners, including the United Nations. "The fact that you have decided to be a part of this training indicates you do not want to be



Education Minister Etmonia Tarpeh presents certificates to the graduates

held back," said Dukuly.

The training comes at a time of increasing concern amongst Liberians about the human capacity development required to meet the employment challenges experienced by many Liberian youth. Dukuly urged the graduates to nurture and strengthen the country's ten years of peace in order to create a stable environment for continued development programmes in the country.

Mona E. Peters, speaking on behalf of fellow graduates said, "The knowledge acquired represents power in their hands." Peters appealed to the Government and other organizations to continue their support to the training needs of Liberians, particularly those returning home from exile.

"THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO BE A PART OF THIS TRAINING INDICATES YOU DO NOT WANT TO BE HELD BACK."

Local Chiefs Praise Farming Initiative

By John T. Monibah



Farmers in Nimba benefit from increased crop production

Photo: John T. Monibah/FAO

Local chiefs in Nimba and Maryland Counties are delighted over the quality of agricultural inputs and level of technical support provided to them by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and local implementing partners that led to a recognizable increase in rice production in their areas.

"NOW WE HAVE FOOD. WE WILL SAVE SEED RICE FOR NEXT YEAR."

FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with local authorities and implementing partners, in early 2013 started assisting 2,500 individual rice farmers and 1,500 individual vegetable growers, under the UN Central Emergency Response Fund-supported project called "Improved food security and nutrition for Ivorian refugees and host families in Liberia."

The project, located in Nimba, Grand Gedeh, and Maryland Counties, aims to improve the food and nutritional status of Ivorian refugees and Liberians and raise the incomes that come from selling the surplus.

Chief George Diah, 51, is the town chief of Larpea 2, Nimba County. "I am seriously happy with the work they are doing. It's bringing development in the community, tools, seeds, and other things were brought in to help us grow our food." He said he himself was a farmer and a member of the FAO/MoA-supported Lorzuweah Farmer Based Organization, which plans to transform itself into a cooperative to better serve the community. "The swamp is big, 30 acres, all of which we hope to put under cultivation next year when we multiply the rice seeds they gave us."

Bennie Juluflay, 59, heads Juluken No. 1 as General Town Chief, in Barrobo District, Maryland County. A farmer and father of 11 children, he recalled the bad days when hunger was rife all around his township and adjoining areas. "The refugees came and life was hard with a lot of hunger. So the government people, FAO, SARA [an implementing partner] came with seeds, tools, and encouraged us to use the new seeds. WFP gave us food for work." Pointing to the vast expanse of rice field under harvest, he said: "Now we have food. We will save seed rice for next year."

Chief Bennie said the project also played a crucial role in the lives of the 1,057 residents of Juluken No. 1: "This



Farmers display their crops

Photo: John T. Monibah/FAO

farm work has helped unite the people of the town, bringing us together in meetings, discussing our common development problems, and planning how to develop into a cooperative."

He disclosed that as a result of the success of the swamp farm this year, they have resolved to back off from the upland slash and burn farming. "The upland farming is difficult. It's embarrassing us with bush hogs and ground hogs disturbing the crops. But in the swamp these animals cannot easily eat our labor because there is water to stop them from reaching the rice. So we are now focused more on swamp farming."

However, Bennie had one appeal: "FAO and Government should still help us and not abandon us. We want to be more focused and sustainable. One help like this is not enough."

Thompson Dio, 50, Town Chief of Gbalaken in Maryland County and father of 13, was gracious: "This programme is good for our community because we never had money to buy seeds and tools. We have 54 members including 15 widows who are benefit-

ing, and WFP food for work made us strong to work. We are united and will use the reserved seeds and tools to carry on next year. We say thanks to you people."

Meanwhile, the District Agriculture Coordinator for Karluway 1 and 2 Districts with oversight responsibility for Barrobo District, John B. Zaza, lauded the farmers "for the level of hard work done here" and the FAO for the "good partnership." He described FAO as "a team member working with MoA for the same result." He urged the farmers to continue on the path of lowland farming for double cropping and increased yields.

FAO's Maryland County Field Technician Moses Wonsiah said the involvement of the local authorities including town chiefs was essential to making the farms produce well. "We are here often together with chiefs, MoA, SARA, our implementing partner, to provide the required technical support, and it worked out fine. Come next year, hunger should be less severe compared to this year."

Lowland Rehabilitation to Benefit Farmers

By Snotee O. Sorboh

A two-day symposium on integrated farming in lowland ecologies in Liberia ended recently at the Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI) in Suakoko, Bong County, with partners pledging their support to increased lowland rehabilitation.

Organized by the Government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP), the Swiss Agency for

Development and Cooperation (SADC), and the Food and Enterprise Development (FED), the symposium brought together local implementing partners as well as the Ambassador of Brazil, Andre Luiz Azevedo dos Santos, and representatives from other food organi-

zations in Liberia.

The symposium was intended for partners to review the current status of lowland development in Liberia, develop a common strategy, and increase efficiency and production.

FAO Country Representative in Liberia, Jean-Alexandre Scaglia, stressed the need for more effective collaboration among all development partners to support the capacity enhancement of farmers in lowland ecologies of the country. He stressed the need for actors to also focus on policy making as a key strategy for achieving better results. "These policies should be formed to support local



Stakeholders discuss lowland development at a two-day symposium



The two-day symposium on lowland development

production and reduce importation of rice into the country, because Liberia has fertile soil and water sources for feeding everyone," Scaglia said.

Although most farmers in Liberia pay particular attention to rice production in the lowlands, there is a crucial need for a rounded approach to lowland rehabilitation to support farmers focus on the entire lowland farming system, Scaglia noted. He said this is essential because lowlands can provide the perfect opportunities for the production of vegetables, tubers, ducks and other livestock as well as fish, and not just rice.

He emphasized FAO's commitment to working with the Government of Liberia and other partners to achieve development objectives as outlined in the four-year Growth and

Transformation Plan (2011-2014) as well as the Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (LASIP).

Deputy Agriculture Minister for Technical Services, Dr. Sizi Subah, said, "This integrated lowland rice production is more sustainable and productive for farmers." He said the symposium enabled partners to work collectively to find a common approach toward developing a roadmap that will better improve the capacity of farmers.

For his part, the Counsellor in Charge and Country Director, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Friedrich Steinmann, pledged his organization's commitment in working with Liberia's Ministry of Agriculture to train farmers to better sustain themselves in lowland

rice cultivation. "The SDC is trying to train farmers how to properly develop lowlands."

"THIS INTEGRATED LOWLAND RICE PRODUCTION IS MORE SUSTAINABLE AND PRODUCTIVE FOR FARMERS."

Early Warning System to Tackle Climate Change

By Augusta Pshorr



Liberia has taken a significant step towards mitigating the impacts of climate change by launching an Early Warning System (EWS).

Speaking at a training workshop organized to jumpstart the implementation of the project, Minister of Transport Tonorlah Varpilah noted that the EWS is one of three priority climate change adaptation projects prepared by the Government through its National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

"Today marks the beginning of the implementation of a four-year Early Warning System

Project, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), under the Least Developed Countries Fund," Minister Varpilah said.

He stressed that the EWS will enable Liberia provide weather and climate



Stakeholders begin implementation of EWS

change information and services to the health, agriculture, transport, energy and water resources sectors, and called on all ministries, agencies, and organizations to work towards ensuring the successful implementation of the project.

Many Least Developed Countries

(LDCs) like Liberia have expressed readiness to join global efforts in mitigating the causes and effects of climate change. However, they have always maintained that adaptation supported by regular and predictable financing from developing countries remains the focus.

UNDP Deputy Country Director for

“TODAY MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A FOUR-YEAR EARLY WARNING SYSTEM PROJECT, FUNDED BY THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF), UNDER THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FUND.”

Programme Cleophas Torori emphasized that efficient and effective use of tailored climate change information can be communicated to enable informed decision-making, and increased awareness of the major risks associated with climate change. "Available information could be used when formulating development policies and strategies," stressed Torori.

Meanwhile, the Regional Advisor for Early Warning System, Benjamin Larroquette, has reiterated that people's livelihoods depend on climate change information which helps improve productivity and mitigates the impact of climate change on the environment.

Larroquette said Liberia is among ten other countries creating a regional platform to share experiences and undertaking early warning projects that help warn the population and help them take appropriate actions when faced with issues surrounding climate change.

The Early Warning Project was launched under the Theme "Strengthening Liberia's capability to provide climate information and services to enhance climate resilient development and adaptation to climate change".

The total grant amount awarded to the project is US\$6.7million dollars in Least Developed Countries Funding with co-financing in kind from the Government of Liberia and \$US200, 000 from UNDP.

Years of civil conflict and decades of low investments in hydrological and meteorological infrastructure have severely impaired Liberia's ability to monitor, forecast, archive, analyze and communicate meteorological and hydrological data and climate change information. This EWS project is expected to last until 2017 and restore the country's capability to provide hydro-meteorological services to different end-users.

It is expected to increase the capacity of hydro-meteorological services and associated networks to monitor and predict extreme weather, climate-related hazards and climate trends. Another expected output is efficient and effective use of tailored climate, environmental and socio-economic data to produce appropriate information which can be communicated to government entities and communities to enable informed decision-making. The project also aims to raise awareness in government, private sector and local communities of the major risks associated with climate change, and the use of available information when formulating development policies and strategies.

Women Demand Rights in Constitution Review Process

By Daylue Goah

Hundreds of women gathered at the headquarters of the Constitution Review Committee (CRC) in Monrovia on Valentine's Day to hear presentations from various committees that have been set-up to advance the rights of women in the ongoing Constitution review process in Liberia.



CRC Chairperson, Gloria Scott

Members of the "CRC Women Steering Committee and Champions for Gender Integration into the Constitution Review Process" were staunchly promoting gender equity. Some of the committee members were also pushing for a reversal of classification of gender -- reversing "him/her" as it is placed in the current constitution to "her/him."

"Woman don't sit there...do something positive," bellowed the women as various presenters took to the stage to

describe the major challenges facing them in the society and making recommendations for inclusion in the new Constitution. One of the committees, for example, explored the traditional rights of women when it comes to land ownership and marriage. They suggested that the CRC relook at the transferring of a woman to another member of her husband's family following the death of her husband. They insisted that a woman who lost her husband should be given the right to decide who she wants to remarry instead of the tradition of forcing her to marry a relative of her deceased husband.

Although Valentine's Day is usually associated with the color red, it was different at the CRC on that day. The women chose green for that day, a color they said represented their struggle for their total inclusiveness in the new Constitution.

The Steering Committee on Education focuses on equal participation of women in academics activities. In its deliberations, the committee called on the CRC to also focus its attention on the traditional bush schools of Liberia stressing that there should be a clear policy that will not conflict traditional

enrollment with western school calendar. The traditional bush schools in Liberia are the Poro and Sande bush schools.

The Committee on Economics, had this to say: "The economic status of the female population continues to be far under that of their male counterpart in the country. It is observed that women make up a larger proportion of the labor force at 963,000 out of the total 1,814,000 men." With this breakdown the committee argued that "women are more in need of financial empowerment than men."

The women also suggest that recognizing the disadvantaged position of women and acknowledging the fact the gender equality is a fundamental right, a common value, and a necessary condition for the achievement of equitable growth, employment and social cohesion, it's paramount that the Constitution review process takes note and ensures gender equality clauses within the constitution where necessary.

"The main challenges barring women's economic development in Liberia is the problem of ignorance contained in the various policies and law set up to promote Liberian women financially.

The Committee on Agriculture in its report highlighted the many challenges Liberian women are faced with in the agriculture sector of the country. "Despite the important role women play in the agriculture and the household, women have less access to education/training facilities, tools, seeds, extension services and resources necessary to obtain the same level of efficiency as their male counterparts, as well as cultural and traditional constraints," the Agriculture Committee lamented.

CRC Graduates First Batch of Civic Educators

By Daylue Goah

As Liberia's Constitutional Review process continues to make progress, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is doing what it can to ensure that as many communities and citizens are engaged in the process.



First group of CRC Civic Educators display their certificates after graduation

That is why, in collaboration with the Constitution Review Committee (CRC), UNMIL has embarked on a training of Civil Educators to go into the various communities with the intent of disseminating knowledge and encouraging greater participation.

On 6 December 2013, the first group of Civic Educators graduated from the training, and were told to embrace their new roles as Ambassadors for the CRC.

"I want to emphasize how important your responsibilities are. This is an occasion that comes rarely in any country. Constitution review does not happen every day; it happens because

there is a need for it. The review of any Constitution has to look back at the history and look at the rationale behind the Constitution and relate it to the present and also to the future," said the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Tamrat Samuel.

Samuel told the graduates that there are responsibilities that come with the job, which are "critical elements" in the Constitution Review process. He added that the United Nations will do all it can to support the review process.

"We, the United Nations in Liberia, are here to support Liberia's effort to secure and strengthen its stability, rule of law, governance and move forward

in its development agenda. It has a very successful peace building history and for that success to continue and for the future not to be hampered, it needs a strong legal framework and for its development effort, these fundamental laws are critical," added Samuel.

"You are at a very critical stage of the country's history and you need to reflect the interests and aspirations of the people and this is why your role becomes important. The CRC has decided to deploy civil educators in order to make sure that the inputs of people's broad and genuine views are adequately and properly reflected in the outcome of the process."

In addition to the training support, UNMIL also recently handed over 21,000 reproduced copies of the 1986 Constitution to the CRC for distribution among the population so that they can make informed choices about what aspects they would like to be reviewed.

On that occasion, Samuel called on educators to use the legal book as a source of information in order for citizens to have a proper understanding of the review process and make inputs that will further strengthen the rule of law in the country.

How to stop mob



B. ORANDO YANQUOI, Adjunct Lecturer, Political Science Department, University of Liberia: It is all about strengthening the rule of law. If the rule of law is firmed in Liberia mob violence will be discouraged. It is because of social vices that mob violence occurs in our communities. I don't think anybody in his right mind will want to result to mob violence if they see suspected criminals facing justice whether acquitted or guilty. Again, how strong is the rule of law in Liberia? How is rule of law enforced in Liberia? I know over the years UNMIL has worked towards building the capacities of Liberian law enforcement personnel including members of the judiciary, good governance, etc, yet we are far from applying those values they have taught us.



TIAWON BUYOE, Resident Bernard Farm Community, Monrovia-Kakata Highway:

Mob violence is wrong. Many times people are mobbed for crimes they did not commit. Because of the high crime rate in the communities, people jump to conclusion and begin to mob the person accused. And another reason is the ineffectiveness of our judicial system in prosecuting cases. Whatever the situation may be, let us always inform the police about crimes in our communities.



CHRISTIANA WAHBLO, Resident, Duport

Road Community, Paynesville: Mob violence is on the increase because of the lack of public confidence in the judicial system in post conflict Liberia. For example, if an individual or group of individuals arrest a criminal who had constantly terrorized them in the community and turn him over to the police responsible to levy charges for prosecution fail to do same, and release the criminal back into the community, obviously the community people would choose the path of instant justice if similar incident reoccurs. Conversely, mob violence is not good. People should stop it no matter the justice system.



MAC-ARTHUR SUDUE, Accountant, Capex Investment, Broad Street: Mob violence occurs because our security system is flawed. However, mob violence is wrong. The absence of police in the various communities allows people to take the laws into their own hands always to commit mob violence. I want Government of Liberia to work towards the deployment of police personnel and establishments of depots in the communities to ensure police presence and prevent crimes.

violence in Liberia



BACCUS M. CARR, Civil Rights Activist, Coalition for Better Liberia: The acts of mob violence in Liberia is becoming prevalent. This is happening because people are losing confidence in the justice system. A thief was apprehended in Fiamah, Sinkor with some stolen items in his hands and turned over to the police who established the facts about the commission of the crime, but few days later the criminal returned to the community without any idea of his prosecution. The justice system must be adjusted in a way that restores confidence in the public. Anything short of that, mob violence will continue. I think other way to reduce mob violence is by conducting public awareness about the functions of the court to explain why cases are handled the way they are in Liberia.



ISAAC N. B. LUEAH, Student, Smythe Institute of Management and Technology, 16th Street, Sinkor: Mob violence is not a good. Mob violence is most times committed against individuals who turned out to be innocent of the crimes they are accused of. There is a need to conduct regular public education and awareness against mob violence to have perpetrators of mob violence refrain from acts of mob violence. I will therefore like to encourage Liberians to inform the police whenever a crime occurs in their communities.



JAMES HENRIES, Barber, Sinkor, Let UNMIL continue the public awareness about stopping mob violence. Mob violence is not good for any civilized society. The public awareness exercise will help members of the public to understand that the right place for justice is in the court and not the streets. I have seen several victims of mob violence in Monrovia. I think those who commit mob violence do so without knowledge about its negative consequences. Anybody suspected of committing crime should be turned over to the police for prosecution.



BINTU B. SANDO, Account Technician: Mob violence is not the right way to seeking justice. Oftentimes victims of mob violence are wrongly accused of the crimes they are penalized for after conducting investigations. It encourages people to continue to take the laws in their own hands. It is about time Liberians refrain from mob violence. One of the ways to stop mob violence is by educating members of the public through radio, newspapers, community gatherings, the churches, the mosque etc.



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