

Liberia launches 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women



- Climate Change intervention-UNDP/ GEF Rescues a borough of over 20,000 people
- A tribute: Kofi Annan
- WHO trains 450 community health volunteers to enhance community case detection
- Fistula survivors graduate from skills training project supported by UNFPA

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Cover photo caption: Top: UN staff celebrate the launch of the 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women. ©UNDP Liberia. Bottom left: H. E. President George Manneh Weah speaks during the launch of 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women. ©UN Women Liberia. Bottom right: Group photo during the launch of the 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women. ©UN Women Liberia. **Back page photo caption:** UN staff member hoists the UN flag at the ceremony marking UN Day. ©RCO

Message from UN Resident Coordinator



The United Nations (UN) in Liberia continues to work with seventeen Agencies, Funds and Programmes under the One UN House.

The UN in Liberia has embarked on the preparation of a sustainable development

assistance framework – the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2020-2024, in order to support the Government of Liberia's Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD).

On 25-26 October 2018, a UN Vision 2030 Retreat was held with participants from the Government of Liberia, Civil Society Organisations and Development Partners. This vision, which is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and includes the government's inputs, will guide the UN's development priorities up to 2030.

The UN will continue to dialogue and engage with the Government, Development Partners Civil Society Organisations and the Private Sector in developing the UNDAF 2020-2024. This process will culminate with the signing of the UNDAF, which will guide the UN support to the Government and people of Liberia in line with both

the PAPD and the SDGs.

In addition, the European Union - UN Spotlight Initiative to fight Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) final revised Country Program Document and budget for phase I (15.8 million US\$) was submitted on 19 November, aimed to eliminate violence against women and girls was submitted to the Spotlight Secretariat in New York. The initiative will be implemented in five counties with over 613,578 direct beneficiaries and 1.9 million indirect beneficiaries. Building on previous efforts, this is the biggest single investment towards addressing SGBV in the country. Liberia is one of the eight recipient countries of the initiative in Africa.

These initiatives and several others, including the establishment of a Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund, continue to reflect the UN's dedication to Liberia.

Our commitment to support the government towards achieving the PAPD and SDGs remains strong as ever.

Yacoub El Hillo

**Assistant Secretary General and
UN Resident Coordinator**

Message from the Chair of the UN Communications Group



This UN Focus newsletter pays tribute to the former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and focuses on UN day celebrations, as well as on the wide scope of the UN's support in Liberia.

As we close the year, I would like to take the

opportunity to highlight a few initiatives of the communications group in strengthening joint communications work, and speaking with 'one voice' on common themes.

This newsletter is one of the tools we have used in continuing, and strengthening, the work done by the UN Mission in joint communications to external audiences. We have also enhanced our One UN website at www.lr.one.un.org, carried out advocacy actions on rights issues, jointly organized UN Day celebrations, trained a number of media practitioners on development reporting, and continued our close cooperation with what

is now known as ECOWAS radio in development related programming.

Beginning this edition, we will also place more emphasis on raising awareness on the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

In 2019, we will continue to build on our joint communications capacities, to both improve visibility of the impact of the UN system's work in Liberia, and also for advocacy efforts.

I would like to thank all of you who sent in comments and suggestions, which have been incorporated.

Happy reading.

Suleiman Braimoh, PhD.

Chair, UN Communications Group
UNICEF Representative in Liberia

Liberia launches 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women



The President of Liberia, H. E. George Manneh Weah, speaking during the launch of the 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women. © UNWOMEN Liberia.

Liberia launched the global campaign [16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women](#) at an event in central Monrovia, attended by H.E. President George Manneh Weah.

Speaking at the launch event, President Weah said, “despite numerous efforts by government and international partners, violence against women remains a challenge in Liberia.”

“The elimination of all forms of gender-based violence, including rape, is a major priority for the government. We all must unite to rid our society of this menace,” President Weah said.

More than 600 people took part in the event, held on 25 November 2018 at the Antionette Tubman Stadium. The crowd danced, sang and carried signs that read: “Our children are not breadwinners”, “Stop Violence Against Women and Children” and “Every Child has a Right to a Better Life.”

Songs that focused on ending violence against women, speeches and a skit were highlights of the event, which focused on the national theme: “End Gender-Based Violence in Workplaces, Schools and Communities: Take Action, Report it and Promote a Liberia Free of Violence.”

The skits, performed by groups of children, drew attention to the rape of girls and boys, child labor and girls’ education. The musical performances featured the four winners of a song competition sponsored by UN Women, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and Orange Phone Company and TunesLiberia. The songs performed were: “Voice of Woman,” by Keri & Gospel Medic; “Gender Equality” by E-Lo; “Don’t Beat Women” by Rhyme Sean; and “Say No to Rape” by Kobazzie.

“Violence against women and girls is a global epidemic”, said UNSG statement red by the Resident Coordinator.

UN Resident Coordinator Yacoub El Hillo read the message from the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Antonio Guterres. “Violence against women and girls is a global epidemic. It is a moral affront to all women and girls, a mark of shame on all our societies and a major obstacle to inclusive, equitable and sustainable development,” he quoted the UNSG saying.

Also speaking at the event, the Minister of Gender, Williametta Saydee Tarr, re-echoed President Weah and the UNSG’s sentiments about violence against women, saying “gender-based violence remains a major threat to human security of women and children in Liberia and around the world.”



Participants holding signs with messages highlighting violence against women and girls and the need to curb it. Photo: © UNWOMEN Liberia.

Liberia launches 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women

The Minister of Gender also provided some statistics to reiterate her point. Of the 892 gender based violence (GBV) cases reported in 2017, 506 were rape cases. In 2016, rape accounted for 778 of the 1,413 GBV cases reported, according to Minister Tarr.

Sen. Peter Coleman, Chair of the Senate Committee on Gender, promised the women of Liberia that the senate will move quickly to pass the Domestic Violence law and would amend the rape law to toughen the penalty for perpetrators.

Others who spoke at the event included Cllr. Deweh Gray, Board Chair of the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFL), who called for the enforcement of existing laws.



Women holding placards in protest against SGBV during the launch of the 16 Days of Activism. Photo: © UNWOMEN Liberia

Excerpts from the Secretary-General's remarks on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women



Violence against women and girls is a global pandemic. It is a moral affront to all women and girls and to us all, a mark of shame on all our societies, and a major obstacle to inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. At its core, violence against women and girls in all its forms is the manifestation of a profound lack of respect – a failure by men to recognize the inherent equality and dignity of women.

It is an issue of fundamental human rights. The violence can take many forms – from domestic violence to trafficking, from sexual violence in conflict to child marriage, genital mutilation and femicide.

Violence against women is tied to broader issues of power and control in our societies. We live in a male-dominated world. When institutions fail to believe victims, allow impunity, or neglect to put in place policies of protection, they send a strong signal that condones and enables violence.

Sexual harassment is experienced by almost all women at some point in their lives. No space is immune. This is by no means a new issue, but the increasing public disclosure by women from all regions and all walks of life is bringing the magnitude of the problem to light. We need to do more to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable. But even though this initial investment is significant, it is small given the scale of the need.

Not until the half of our population represented by women and girls can live free of fear, violence and everyday insecurity, can we truly say we live in a fair and equal world.



- António Guterres

Secretary-General of the United Nations

President Weah lauds UN at 73rd anniversary



H.E. George Manneh Weah speaking at the 73rd UN Day Celebration at One UN House in Monrovia. Photo ©RCO Liberia

On 24 October, the United Nations in Liberia commemorated the 73rd United Nations Day with a flag raising ceremony. The celebration was attended by President H. E. George Manneh Weah, members of the diplomatic corps, development partners and international guests from the Kofi Annan Institute-Ghana, a delegation from the UN in Zambia, heads of agencies and UN staff in Liberia.

The programme commenced with the reading of the Secretary-General's Message by the UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Yacoub El Hillo, playing of the UN Anthem and hoisting of the UN Flag in the One UN House.

In a special UN Day message H.E. President George Manneh Weah stated that "Liberia has been a direct beneficiary of the United Nations' interventions and assistance, and it is now on its

way to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals." The President told the audience that maintaining national stability in Liberia is more important and this can be achieved through dialogue amongst Liberians since peace is still fragile.

"Peace-building takes time, and we all know it is a process and not an event," he noted, adding, "Liberians are still bearing the scars of civil war. We therefore intend to initiate a series of national peace dialogues to achieve our goals through frank conversations at local levels, and to sensitize our youth so that they don't repeat the mistakes of the past," he said. "Liberia's development and prosperity depends on sustainable peace, because peace without prosperity is like an unfinished agenda," President Weah said.

The President also called on Liberians, the UN and the donor community to support the Pro-Poor Agenda that is designed to address Liberia's development goals aimed at lifting Liberians out of poverty.

Separately, the concept of establishing Kofi Annan Living Memorial in Liberia was launched by the Angie Brooks International Center for Peace and Women Empowerment as well as the Kofi Annan Institute at the University of Liberia and the Kofi Annan Institute-Ghana along with a delegation from the UN in Zambia.

The flag raising ceremony was the official programme marking two days of events under the theme "From peacekeeping to sustainable development in Liberia". The events included sporting activities involving all UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes and a radio talk show with heads of agencies.



Group photo after the official 73rd UN Day Celebration. Photo: © RCO Liberia

On 18 August 2018, the United Nations mourned the death of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who passed away in Bern, Switzerland after a short illness. He was 80 years old.

The current UN Secretary-General (UNSG), António Guterres hailed him as “a guiding force for good” and a “proud son of Africa who became a global champion for peace and all humanity.”

“Kofi Annan was both one-of-a-kind and one of us. He was an exceptional global leader — and he was also someone virtually anyone in the world could see themselves in: those on the far reaches of poverty, conflict and despair who found in him an ally; the junior UN staffer following in his footsteps; the young person to whom he said until his dying breath “always remember, you are never too young to lead — and we are never too old to learn.”

Annan served as UN Secretary-General for two consecutive five-year terms, beginning in January 1997 and ending in December 2006. Annan and the United Nations jointly were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001.

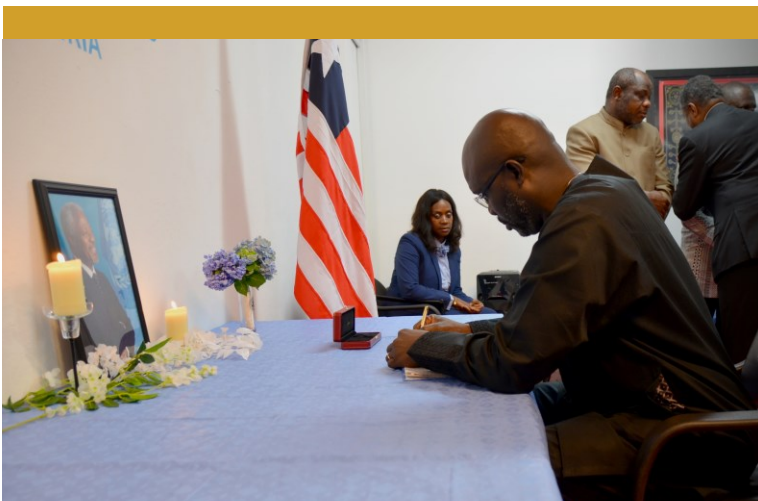
Immediately prior to his appointment as Secretary-General in January 1997, Annan headed the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations during a period which saw an unprecedented growth in the United Nations’ field presence.



Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan speaks to the media in the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) press room on 5 July 2006. ©Mark Garten



As UNSG, Annan galvanized global action to fight HIV/AIDS and combat terrorism. Mr. Annan and the United Nations jointly were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001. ©Sergey Bermeniev



His Excellency, George Manneh Weah President Republic of Liberia, signs the book of condolences at One UN House. © RCO Liberia

H.E. President George Manneh Weah, First Lady Clar M. Weah and key members of the Cabinet signed the book of condolences for the late Kofi Annan at the One UN House in Monrovia, Liberia.

President Weah described Annan’s passing as a “loss to the rest of the world, not only to his family and country, Ghana [...] He was a great statesman and an outstanding diplomat of all times. He was my boss.”

Kofi Annan in Liberia

Kofi Annan visited Liberia in early July 2006. He was in the country for the first time since the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was established in 2003 following the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

During his visit, he held talks with then President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, members of the Cabinet and the UN Country Team, and addressed a joint session of the Legislature.

During his time in Liberia, Annan was also invested by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf with the highest honour in Liberia: the Grand Order of the Knighthood of Pioneer.



Former SG reviews UNMIL Nigerian Honor Guard. ©Mark Garten.

During Annan's visit, he also inaugurated the UNMIL's headquarters in Monrovia. In an **interview with UNMIL Radio**, the Secretary-General stressed the importance of good governance and urged Liberians to rise above individual interests to rebuild the nation. Here are excerpts from his interview.



“It is the people of Liberia who deserve the credit for where we are today. It is their courage, their perseverance, their resilience that brought us here”.

“We need now to begin to focus on the question of recovery and reconstruction. This is an area where we need to work very energetically with the government. Good governance is extremely important. Here, we need to work with the government to build capacities in ministries and key institutions for them to be able to carry out their work.”

“We should accept that nation-building is a long-term proposition [...] The international community can and should help, but the country and the people should take the ownership. They should assume responsibility with the full support of the international community. Nation-building, consolidating peace and stabilizing the situation, is a responsibility of the government and the people of the country concerned. It is their responsibility, first and foremost.”

“Liberians have lost peace once and now they must appreciate it and yearn for it. They have to work together and turn diversity into strength. They have only one Liberia and it is in their interest to work together to make this country what it ought to be. They should not go after group interest or individual interest. They need to chip in and do whatever little things that they can do and not just sit back and wait for the Government to do everything for them.”



(L): Former SG interviewed by UNMIL Radio. (M and R): Former SG and Former President of Liberia attend the Inauguration of UNMIL Headquarters. © Mark Garten

Fistula survivors graduate from skills training project



(L) Fistula survivors sing during their graduation ceremony. (R) Some of the products from the Fistula Rehabilitation and Reintegration Center. Photo: ©UNFPA Liberia

Eighteen survivors of fistula have graduated from a skills training programme supported by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), Zonta International, and the Ministry of Health.

The survivors received training in tailoring, pastry making, cosmetology and soap making over a six-month period. To be able to begin self-employment opportunities, each of the 18 graduates received reintegration packages with items based on their training, sewing machines; lappas (traditional cloth) and tailoring materials; hairdressing materials; baking flour and pastry condiments, as well as oil; and US\$ 100.

“As you arise from a stressful situation, hold fast to your new found opportunities,” encouraged Bong County Health Officer, Dr. Adolphus Yeiah at the graduation ceremony.

Several government line ministries and agencies attended the graduation ceremony, along with other supporting organizations including Dignity Liberia, and the Catholic Hospital.

UNFPA also handed over a newly reconstructed Palava Hut at the Rehabilitation Center. The Palava Hut, reconstructed with funding from Dignity Liberia will be used as a meeting place for group discussions and social gatherings.

Keynote Speaker, Madam Darboi D.G. Korkoyah, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager of the Liberia Board of Nursing and Midwifery (LBNM) said the start-up packages and training skills must be seen as weapon that will conquer despair and stigmatization.”

Dr. John Mullah, credited with leading the campaign to end fistula in Liberia, recommitted to helping the fight against fistula. Dr. Mullah stressed to the survivors the importance of efficiently managing their economic and social integration packages.

A highlight of the ceremony was a skit performed by the graduates, which they used to showcase the circumstances and consequences of obstetric fistula among young girls and women. The performance focused on the contextual realities of poverty, misguided teenage behaviour and inaccessibility to health care that have an impact on the lives of girls and women.

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Liberia has achieved ISO 14001 certification for implementing projects in a way that mitigates environmental damage.

The ISO 14001 is an international standard which is granted to those organizations that are actively assessing and managing their environmental impact.

Policy and practices of UNOPS office in Liberia meet all international standards related to environment and social management. ISO 14001 certification to UNOPS in Liberia follows an audit conducted by external ISO certification auditors, which took place in August 2018.

What ISO 14001 certification means in practice

The compliance means the operational excellence of UNOPS in delivering its mandate in:

1) Improved environmental performance through a more efficient use of resources, reduction of waste, and reduced costs. **2)** Leadership commitment and engagement of employees. **3)** Capacity building through trainings offered to stakeholders. **4)** Social inclusion and gender mainstreaming and community engagement. **5)** Gaining the trust of partners and stakeholders.

How UNOPS achieves these commitments

Continuous monitoring and inspections: This is done by dedicated staff for Health, Safety, Social and Environmental (HSSE) and related projects, using different skill-sets required for each project.

The teams environmental policies include targets for reducing environmentally hazardous materials, sets out responsibilities for continual improvement, periodic inspections, provision of reports, and preparation of action plans for resolution of observations.

Communication and training: These are organized by Health and Safety training to its contractors, stakeholders from University of Liberia, Ministry of Health and related personnel.

Continuous reporting and reviewing performance: Monitoring Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and reporting through the HQs to the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Monthly HSE tracking and reporting to project clients and partners.

Engagement and partnership: With University of Liberia, Environmental Protection Agency, Liberia Fire Service, One UN House Facility Management Unit.



UNOPS and stakeholders jointly conducting routine project site inspections. Photo: ©UNOPS Liberia

As a result of the continuous improvement approach towards HSSE, the UNOPS Office environment and project sites have recorded zero fatalities in the last 18 months.

In this time, there has also been minimal lost time from the start of the project for 'Design and Construction of Students' Dormitory buildings and Classrooms for A.M. Doglioti College of Medicine at the University of Liberia – Fendall campus.

Liberia marks World AIDS Day: “Know your status, get tested”

The first day of December 2018 marked 30 years since the first World AIDS Day was commemorated. The theme for 2018 was “Know your HIV status, Get tested”.

Marking the day, the Executive Director for UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé, said “Thirty years of activism and solidarity under the banner of World AIDS Day. Thirty years of campaigning for universal access to life-saving services to treat and prevent HIV. But after 30 years, AIDS is still not over. We have miles to go. World AIDS Day is a day to remember the millions of people who have lost their lives to AIDS-related illnesses, many of whom died because they couldn’t access HIV services, because of stigma, because of discrimination and because of criminalization of key populations.”

“AIDS is still not over. We have miles to go,” said UNAIDS Executive Director in a statement.

West and Central Africa is lagging behind other regions in the HIV response with only 30% of persons estimated to be living with HIV on treatment falling far below the 90% target for 2020. Liberia is one of four west African countries with a [treatment coverage of less than 40%](#) compared to the remaining 22 countries that were above that and closer to the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets for 2020.

The National AIDS Commission (NAC) took the lead in organizing the main event to mark the day. The NAC also organized a week-long initiative in Monrovia and cities of counties including Bong, Grand Bassa, Margibi and Nimba in order to enable people to take advantage of free testing for HIV services.



First Lady Clar Weah visiting the HIV testing site at Elwah Junction in Monrovia with Dr Chipimo, UNAIDS Country Director and Ms Theodosia Kolee, National AIDS Commission Chair. © UNAIDS Liberia

On 1 December, the main event began with a march from Monrovia City Hall to Antionette Tubman Stadium (ATS), led by NAC. Other participants included the Minister of Health, Hon. Wilhelmina Jallah, the Swedish Ambassador, the Representative of the US Embassy, the Ministry of Gender and UNAIDS, amongst others. The Armed Forces of Liberia set the marching tempo, while representatives of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital and Redemption Hospital, students, Non-Governmental Organizations and Faith Based organizations also took part in the march.

A keynote address from H.E. President George Manneh Weah and a message from the First Lady Clar M. Weah were read at the event held at the ATS stadium. UNAIDS Country Manager read the World AIDS Day message from the UN Secretary-General, followed by an address from the newly appointed National AIDS Commission Chair, Theodosa Kolee and the Minister of Health, Dr. Wilhelmina Jallah, who pledged to take testing services to the communities to improve access and uptake of testing for HIV.



(L-R) The First Lady hosted a Round Table Forum on 27 November 2018, a follow up on the FOCAC meeting held in China for African Heads of State where the First Ladies committed to be champions for the national HIV response. (M) Participants displaying awareness messages on HIV & AIDS. (R) Stephen McGill, SAIL, Dr Chipimo, UNAIDS Country director, Dr Whilemina Jallah, Minister of Health, Ms Theodosia Kolee, Chair of National AIDS Commission marching on World AIDS Day. © UNAIDS Liberia

More than one thousand farmer households empowered through WFP initiative

More than one thousand smallholder farmer households are participating in a World Food Programme (WFP) supported project that helps strengthen livelihoods and build their resilience, thereby also reducing unseen hunger shocks and vulnerabilities.

Fifteen communities from 15 lowland ecologies are expected to benefit from under the Smallholders Agriculture Development Project (SHAD-P) in Bong County. In addition to resilience building, the SHAD-P also aims to organize farmers into viable agricultural producer groups and increase access to improved farming inputs and agro-processing technologies.

WFP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Cooperating Partner Samaritan's Purse (SP), provided farmer Saydee J.M.Lincoln, and his group tools and other items to commence the project. "What we need to work hard is motivation and encouragement and we see it right here in front of us with these rice, oil, and beans for assets creation. I pledge that we will not fail you, our supporters", stated Lincoln, group head of the Gbuyah Swamp Project in Suakoko, Bong County.

The prospects for participants of the SHAD-P

Through the SHAD-P, smallholder participants have the possibility of doubling rice production. This is done by improving productivity through a value chain approach and thereby increasing Liberia's global and regional competitiveness.

The SHAD-P has also a long term vision: self-sufficiency and building a market that is self-sustaining locally. Bong County Agriculture Coordinator, Kollie R. Nahn, told a workshop

audience in August 2018 that their county had to face an emerging grim reality. "There is something serious we need to know about this county. I recently attended the validation workshop on the Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (CFSNS) 2018 Report, and it was made clear that Bong County is not producing enough food, like before. This is a wakeup call. So, the SHAD-P is timely", Nahn stressed.

Speaking to farmers in Bong County in mid-September 2018 during the launching exercise of food distribution, WFP's Deputy Country Director, Mr Asif Bhutto, expressed satisfaction over the SHAD-P effort aimed at strengthening efforts of rural small-scale producers. "We are bringing this project to you where you live because we are committed to you and to supporting government's development plans", stated Mr Bhutto. He further extended heartfelt appreciation to the people and Government of Japan for providing the needed funds in support of rural dwellers.

According to the CFSNS Report, Liberian households (Bong County included) headed by individuals with little or no education are more vulnerable to food insecurity. The report demonstrates that approximately 28% of household heads have no form of education. Out of these households, 24% were notably food insecure; 21% were moderately food insecure; and 3% were severely food insecure.



Rural farmers working on their site under the food for assets creation SHAD-P initiative. Photo: © WFP Liberia

Liberia continues supporting all persons who arrived in the country after fleeing their homes due to violence and conflict, including former Sierra Leonean refugees. The government also leads the development of the local integration programme for those Ivorian refugees opting to remain in Liberia.

Welcoming former Sierra Leonean refugees as new citizens

On 23 July 2018, the President of Liberia, George M. Weah, presented Certificates of Citizenship to 50 former Sierra Leonean refugees. These 50 certificates are part of the total of 300 Certificates of Citizenship handed to former Sierra Leonean refugees fully integrated in Liberia since 2008. With these documents the former refugees now have more opportunities to empower their self-sufficiency and integration in Liberia.



President Weah presents a former Sierra Leonean with her Certificate of Citizenship. Photo: ©UNHCR Liberia



“Liberia is a commendable example of a country with overwhelming potential and generosity in terms of providing a favourable protection environment to refugees and other persons of concern”, stated Fatima Mohammed-Cole, UNHCR Liberia Representative. © UNHCR Liberia

Supporting the integration of Ivorian refugees

While acquiring the Liberian nationality is not a requisite of integrating in Liberia, it remains a possibility under the legal aspect of the integration process of Ivorian refugees, a group that represents 98% of the total amount of refugees and other persons of concern in Liberia (9,278).

On 20-22 November 2018, the Government of Liberia, through the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) with the support of UNHCR, held a retreat on local integration of Ivorian refugees in Liberia to craft out a national strategy of the local integration of Ivorian refugees in the country.

Group discussions took place throughout the retreat taking into consideration the three dimensions of the local integration process: economic, social and legal aspect. Participants included Ivorian refugees; host communities; UNHCR partners; ECOWAS; Liberian Immigration Service; African Union; UNICEF, FAO; WFP; UNDP; IOM; as well as technical focal points of the ministries of Internal Affairs, Finance, Justice, Gender, Education and Health.

On 22 November 2018, the morning session was attended by the Minister of Internal Affairs, Hon. Varney Sirleaf; the Resident Representative of the ECOWAS Commission President in Liberia, Ambassador Tunde Ajisomo; the Deputy Minister of Justice, Cllr. Nyenanti Tuan; Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former UNHCR Africa Bureau Director, Marjon Kamara; Acting Commissioner of the Liberia Immigration Service, Commissioner Moses Yebleh; and the Second Counsellor of the Ivorian Embassy in Liberia, Mr Bruce-Jacob Gbadji.



Participants of the Local Integration Retreat. © UNHCR Liberia

UNICEF funded programme helps girls pursue dreams in Liberia

“One day, I want to become a medical doctor,” says 17-year-old Nimatu, from Margibi county, in Liberia.

Three years ago, it seemed almost impossible for her to achieve that dream. Dropping out of school owing to a lack of funds, Nimatu was selling oranges to help support her family. Today, thanks to a UNICEF supported project, she is in Grade 9 after scoring an average 93 per cent in her last school examination, at the top of her grade. Her mathematics score was 90 per cent.

Nimatu was born in West Point, Liberia’s largest slum, to a family living below the poverty line. Her father, a petty trader, could only afford to send her and a younger brother to a religious school, where she studied up to grade six. She had to drop out due to a lack of funds.

“I was so sad that I was not able to go to school. I cried most times when I saw my friends and neighbours getting ready for school,” Nimatu reminisces.

For two years, Nimatu sold oranges on the street, while three older sisters married at ages 24, 19 and 17.

“One day some girls were in my community, talking about how it is good for girls to go to school and learn. When I said I wanted to join school, they paid all my school fees, gave me a uniform and shoes, and bought me copybooks.”

The girls were part of a Girls Club set up as part of the Ministry of Education led and UNICEF supported Gender Equitable Education Programme (GEEP). The GEEP programme seeks to promote access to education and increase the retention and completion rates of adolescent girls in grades seven through nine. Nimatu is one of some 5,000 girls who have benefitted from the programme.

An estimated 140,160 school-aged girls remain out of school in Liberia.

The GEEP programme offers a two-hour academic tutorial four days a week, providing extra support to students who are at risk of dropping out due to limited family support, or low learning performance in the four core subjects of mathematics, science, social studies and language arts.

In addition, the GEEP programme also provides life and leadership skills for girls through an all-girls club established at each school in which it is implemented.

Profits from small-scale income generation activities by the Girls Clubs go toward the purchase of learning material or paying school fees and supporting girls’ return to school.

There are an estimated 140,160 school-aged girls like Nimatu who remain out of school in Liberia, and an additional 174,380 who are over-aged and at risk of dropping out, according to the Out of School Survey in 2016.

“Twenty-six girls registered in our school because they heard my story.” Nimatu says.

Appointed Chair of the Girls Club two years after she re-joined school, Nimantu also went out into communities to encourage girls to join or return to school. “Twenty-six girls registered in our school because they heard my story. I am encouraging them to tell their story too, so other girls in the streets can come to school,” says Nimatu.



Nimatu teaching her siblings how to read and write. Photo: © UNICEF Liberia

On 18 July 2018, H. E. President George Manneh Weah, launched a project in New Kru Town, Liberia, that will improve the management of 300 million hectares of seascapes, mitigate 750 million tons of carbon dioxide, reduce 1,000 tons of mercury and protect approximately US\$ 250 million in infrastructure and economic assets that are threatened by coastal erosion, sea level rise and other serious impacts brought on by climate change.

The project, financed by the Global Environment Facility Least Developed Countries Fund (GEF-LDCF) with a US\$ 2 million grant and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), will protect the lives and livelihoods of thousands of people living along Montserrado county's coastline, scaling up the successes of a recently closed UNDP-supported Coastal Defense Project financed by the GEF.

"We must do our best to succeed because our vision is to help our people out of poverty and that is our major concern in running of our government. When you are poor, you will live everywhere because you are looking for that aunty, uncle or family member that you think will help you achieve your dream; and by that, you will experience things. For me it is good to live everywhere, living everywhere gives me the sense of experience for development," President Weah said at the launch of the project at the D. Tweh High School.

Located near the sea's edge, the entire back fence of the D. Tweh School, along with several neighboring homes, have already fallen into the sea. The rising tides now threaten the auditorium and main building.

This new project re-affirms UNDP's commitment to supporting the government's Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD).

UNDP Liberia Country Director Dr. Pa Lamin Beyai said the PAPD indicates that tackling environmental and climate change issues will form an integral part of the Government of Liberia's development priorities, as well as their Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement.

New Kru Town has a population of over 20,000 inhabitants, and along with the high school, hosts



H.E. President George Manneh Weah cuts the ribbon launching the coastal defense project. Photo: © UNDP Liberia

the second Government referral health facility in Montserrado County – the Redemption Hospital.

Engineers are to construct approximately 1200-meter revetment (protective seawalls and revetments) to mitigate the situation. The project will also build drainages, construct docking areas for the fishing communities, improve waste management and beach restoration, working with local communities to ensure no one is left behind in the government's efforts to ensure low-carbon climate-resilient development.

The Ministry of Mines and Energy, in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is responsible for the procurement of equipment, rocks, geo-fabric mats, and the services of temporary staff, while as a key implementation partner, UNDP is in charge of hiring the core project staff, including an international coastal engineer; who has completed baseline surveys and recommended appropriate project designs.



Truck offloads rocks at the project site in New Kru Town. © UNDP Liberia

Liberia commemorates 70th anniversary of International Human Rights Day



UN Resident Coordinator, Yacoub El Hillo delivering special messages from the Secretary-General. © OHCHR Liberia

Human Rights Day is observed every year on 10 December, the day the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

In Liberia, Human Rights Day 2018 was celebrated on 10 December in Ganta, Nimba County, under the global theme “Stand Up For Human Rights” and National theme “Sustaining the Peace by Ensuring Dignity for All”. The celebrations coincided with the official closing of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

The Independent National Commission for Human Rights (INCHR) organized several events to commemorate this year’s 70th anniversary of the Declaration. Activities included information a parade through the principle streets of Ganta and an indoor programme held at the Ganta Methodist School auditorium.

The outdoor programme began with a parade through the principal streets of Ganta, and during the official commemoration, several representatives shared words on both the UDHR and the 16 Days of Activism against GBV violence.

The Minister of Justice (MoJ), Cllr. Frank Musa Dean, delivered the keynote speech on behalf of H. E. President George M. Weah. The Minister reaffirmed the President’s commitment to upholding the contents

of the UDHR and remained dedicated to promoting human rights, including those most vulnerable. Some of the significant gains made by the Government of Liberia in promoting and protecting basic human rights in the country include attending the two Universal Periodic Review (UPR), establishing the Human Rights Resource Center at the MoJ and integrating human rights into the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD). The government has also carried out ongoing initiatives aimed at drafting the new National Human Rights Action plan (NHRAP), replacing the previous one which expires in December 2018.

The Minister used the opportunity to share the government’s gratitude to the UN in Liberia, as well as to other actors for their continuous support.

Other high level speakers at the ceremony were Madam Williametta S. Tarr, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, as well as UN Women Deputy Country Representative who stressed the need to advocate and coordinate in the fight against violence against women worldwide.

INCHR Chairperson emphasized the Commission’s willingness and determination to guide and support the government in fulfilling its obligation to promote, protect and fulfill Human Rights throughout Liberia.

Representatives of ECOWAS and the African Union highlighted their commitment to support all initiatives aimed at promoting and protecting human rights in Liberia, pointing out that peace and national development can only be sustained when the human rights of all persons in the country are promoted and protected without discrimination.

UN Resident Coordinator, Yacoub El Hillo, delivered the special messages of the UN Secretary General, while the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Representative, Uchenna Emelonye, read that of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Both messages focused on recognizing and commending the progress achieved thus far in the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide and in Liberia, especially for most vulnerable groups.

The transformative nature of the UDHR was highlighted as well as its adaptability to cover several contemporary issues, such as climate change and migration.

WHO trains 450 community health volunteers to enhance community case detection



WHO National Epidemiologist sensitizing community Health Volunteers on Integrated Disease Surveillance and priority disease response, Gbarpolu County, Liberia Photo: © WHO Liberia

The World Health Organization (WHO) in Liberia, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and National Public Health Institute of Liberia, has supported the training of 450 community health volunteers from three counties: Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu.

The participating community health volunteers improved their skills and capability to detect and report common and prevailing epidemic-prone diseases, conditions and events, as well as community case detection from communities within a five kilometers radius of the closest health facility. The training was held in September 2018.

Speaking during the opening of the training, Mr. Thomas K. Nagbe, Director of Division of Infectious Disease and Epidemiology (NPHIL), said Liberia has registered remarkable achievements since the adoption of the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) strategy in 2004. Mr. Nagbe stressed the urgent need to build the capacity of community health volunteers in all communities for effective surveillance and reporting of priority diseases.

At the opening ceremony, Mr. Kwuakuan D. M. Yealue, II, WHO National Epidemiologist, stated that accurate case detection at the community level is vital for timely identification which facilitates timely response to emerging outbreaks and other public health threats. Mr. Yealue pledged WHO's commitment in working with the Ministry of Health, National Public Health Institute of Liberia and partners to build a robust integrated disease surveillance and response system that is adequately prepared to

respond to any emerging and re-emerging epidemics that may evolve.

The 2014-2016 Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in Liberia exposed critical weakness in the Liberian health system with regard to early detection and response to public health threats, highlighting the need for the introduction of an effective Community Event Based Surveillance (CEBS) System in the country. As a result, in 2016 former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf launched the National Community Health Assistant (CHA) programme.

The CHA programme was Liberia's first national community health worker initiative with the aim of deploying over 4,000 community health workers across Liberia to serve the 1.2 million Liberians who live more than 5km from the nearest health center.

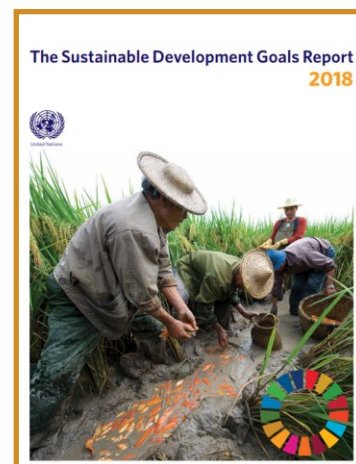
As per WHO reports, while the CHA programme has yielded some positive results, its coverage has been limited to those communities within the five kilometers radius of the nearest health facilities due to the lack of incentive payment. This limitation has resulted in a 55% decline in the national community case detection rate, which now stands at 25%, far below the national target of 80%. Initiatives such as the community case detection training carried out by the Ministry of Health and WHO aim at increasing case detection, and reaching the national target.

Through UN Focus we are following up on the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The **SDG 2018 Report** was launched in June 2018 and gives a review on the progress achieved in the third year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The document also focuses in more depth on the six Goals under review at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2018: Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 15 and 17.

While people overall are living better lives than they were a decade ago, progress to ensure that no one is left behind has not been rapid enough to meet the targets of the 2030 Agenda.

The rate of global progress is not keeping pace with the ambitions of the Agenda, necessitating immediate and accelerated action by countries and stakeholders at all levels.



Some key findings of the SDGs Report 2018

- The proportion of the world's workers living with their families on less than \$1.90 per person a day declined significantly over the past two decades, falling from 26.9 per cent in 2000 to 9.2 per cent in 2017.
- Rates of **child marriage** have continued to decline around the world. In Southern Asia, a girl's risk of **marrying in childhood** has dropped by over 40 per cent between 2000 and 2017.
- Nine out of 10 people living in cities breathe **polluted air**.
- In 2016, the absolute number of people living without **electricity** dropped below the symbolic threshold of one billion.
- **Land** degradation threatens the livelihoods of over one billion people.

“Narrow the gaps. Bridge the divides.
Rebuild trust by bringing people together
around common goals.
Unity is our path. Our future depends on it.”

- António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030

Only 45 per cent of the world's population are covered by at least one social protection cash benefit



What is poverty in this context?

The international poverty line is currently defined as 1.90 US dollars per person per day using 2011 purchasing power parity (PPP).

One in ten people in developing regions are still living with their families on less than the international poverty line of US\$1.90 a day, and there are millions more who make little more than this daily amount

Can we actually achieve this goal?

Yes.

To end extreme poverty worldwide in 20 years, economist Jeffrey Sachs calculated that the total cost per year would be about \$175 billion.

This represents less than one percent of the combined income of the richest countries in the world.

Economic losses attributed to disasters were **over \$300 billion** in 2017



Some key findings of the [SDG Report 2018](#)

- The rate of extreme poverty has fallen rapidly: in 2013 it was a third of the 1990 value. The latest global estimate suggests that 11 per cent of the world population, or 783 million people, lived below the extreme poverty threshold in 2013.
- The proportion of the world's workers living with their families on less than \$1.90 per person a day declined significantly over the past two decades, falling from 26.9 per cent in 2000 to 9.2 per cent in 2017.
- Based on 2016 estimates, only 45 per cent of the world's population were effectively covered by at least one social protection cash benefit.
- In 2017, economic losses attributed to disasters were estimated at over \$300 billion. This is among the highest losses in recent years, owing to three major hurricanes affecting the United States of America and several countries across the Caribbean.





The United Nations in Liberia is represented by the following Agencies, Funds, and Programmes:
AFDB, FAO, ILO, IMF, IOM, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNDSS, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRCO, UNWOMEN, WFP, WHO and World Bank.



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