

LIBERIA HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT

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Humanitarian Coordinator's Support Office (HCSO) / UNMIL

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HIGHLIGHTS

- **Joint Multi-sectoral Rapid Assessment**
- **Refugee's Needs and Response Assessment**
- **LNRCS Assistance to Refugees**

- **Humanitarian Coordination Section Leads Joint Rapid Assessment**

The Humanitarian Coordination Section of the United Nations Mission in Liberia with support from OCHA Dakar is leading a joint multi-sectoral rapid assessment of the response to the 30,000 refugee and the coordination of the humanitarian assistance at the field level. The assessment mission is expected to run from 20 – 30 January 2011 covering all the 26 refugee communities in both Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties. Since the inception of the refugee crisis, many actors have been reporting the situation differently either from assessments conducted or based on their interventions, while others were not sharing the needed information. Although coordination was seen to be working at the Monrovia level, some agencies working in the field were not satisfied with the manner in which the assistance was being coordinated.

- **Norwegian Refugee Council Assesses Refugees' Response**

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is one agency that recently conducted a five-day assessment of the general situation of the crisis and reported that it has registered 24,000 refugees in collaboration with Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission and UNHCR. There was also a backlog of around 5,000 people and the current influx was 600 new arrivals a day. Some refugees have raised concern about being “locked up” in refugee camps, in fear of ethnic persecution and killings.

Since 14 December, NRC has set up 17 registration points and deployed over 60 experienced national staff to its emergency response in Nimba County. NRC stands ready

to take on the role as Protection monitoring lead as requested by UNCHR. It has signed a tripartite agreement with WFP and UNCHR for food distribution. For the camp(s), it has accepted to take on the Site planning, Camp Coordination, Shelter, NFI and Food distribution, and Protection Monitoring.

According to NRC no assessments have been conducted in Grand Gedeh and Maryland, bordering Ivory Coast where the number of refugees is believed to be minor. NRC also mentioned that international response has been slow, uncoordinated and extremely limited. Until 10th January, the UN had only distributed 1200 NFI kits and one day ration of high energy biscuits to 15,000 people. According to the UN the reasons for this are many; such as the absence of senior staff during several weeks of Christmas holiday, lack of information, weak coordination, and poor contingency planning for the humanitarian impact of the long awaited election in Ivory Coast. There have been inaccurate public reporting by international actors indicating that more aid has reached the people than what actually has been the case.

- **Liberia National Red Cross Assists Refugees**

The Liberia National Red Cross Society (LNRCS) in line with the national contingency plan and a humanitarian coordination mechanism, is providing safe/clean drinking water, improving sanitation conditions, promoting health and hygiene education and facilitating the exchange of family messages. In 17 of the 23 communities that are hosting the refugees, the LNRCS is constructing and rehabilitating 70 household latrines and 31 wells/hand pumps. Additionally, the National Society is organizing five separate training sessions on the promotion of hygiene and health education and is distributing 2000 bottles of water-guard – a substance for household water chlorination. Already, LNRCS has mobilized 49 of its volunteers who are positioned in those communities to provide first aid and facilitate family messages. With additional funding these services would be extended to other communities.

LNRCS was among key agencies that conducted rapid assessment of the situation in December to establish the needs of the refugees, as well as the capacity of the host communities to cope with the swelling population. The assessment report showed that those crossing into Liberia were initially women, children and the elderly. In recent times, young men are increasingly registering according to the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). In the host communities, the harvest ended just before the Christmas holidays producing a basket of food, mainly rice that would not be sufficient to sustain the growing population beyond the first two months of the New Year. In view of an initial strategy to allow the refugees integrate with the local communities, it was observed that inadequate drinking water, poor sanitation, lack of health care and limited shelter were among the several needs that required urgent attention. As it is usually the case for people to flee unexpectedly during conflict situations, several families are eager to reestablish contact with their relatives back home. To date, about 30,000 refugees have been registered in 23 communities in the northeastern county of Nimba, which borders with Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea. In an effort to respond swiftly to mitigate the possibility

of dire humanitarian consequences, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) launched a regional appeal for 1.2 million US dollars to Support the humanitarian activities of the national societies in Cote d'Ivoire and five other neighboring countries including Liberia. Other partners that have provided funding and technical support to the Liberian Red Cross include the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Danish Red Cross and the Swedish Red Cross.