



PROFILE OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT : LIBERIA

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PROFILE SUMMARY

Five years after the end of the brutal civil war that killed an estimated 200,000 people and forced more than half the country's 2.8 million population to flee their homes – 1.2 million of whom were internally displaced (US DOS, 1998) – lasting peace and stability in Liberia remained a pipe dream in 2002. Since 1999, the country has become mired in yet more fighting – this time largely between Liberian security forces and armed insurgents in the north of the country. By early 2002 the fighting had spread southward, at times coming dangerously close to the capital Monrovia, prompting successive waves of population movements. In August 2002, estimates of IDP numbers ranged between 90,000 and 200,000. Two months later, in October 2002, WFP gave the figure of 183,900 IDPs living in camps in the suburbs of Monrovia, Totota and CARI, while expressing concern at the possibility of a 'dramatic explosion' in the current caseload (WFP, 25 October 2002). There was widespread concern also about the many thousands more people believed to be trapped inside conflict zones, to whom humanitarian organisations had no access.

Background and causes of displacement

The internal displacement of civilians began in Liberia with the civil war that started in 1989. Charles Taylor, leading the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), launched an armed rebellion against the Samuel Doe regime in the north of the country. Fighting quickly reached the capital. In 1990 the Economic Community of West African States deployed a Nigerian-led peacekeeping mission (ECOMOG) to Liberia to restore order. ECOMOG's control did not extend beyond Monrovia, however, and the rest of the country was ruled by Taylor and other self-styled freedom fighters battling over the country's rich natural resources.

Four months after intense factional fighting and looting devastated Monrovia for a second time in April 1996, the four main Liberian warlords signed the fourteenth peace agreement since the outbreak of the war, providing for disarmament of the warring factions, followed by presidential and parliamentary elections in 1997. Charles Taylor won a landslide victory in the presidential contest, winning the legitimacy he craved through the ballot box.

However, peace in Liberia was short-lived. In 1999 armed dissidents, believed to have crossed the border from Guinea, attacked the town of Voinjama in northern Lofa County (Guinea subsequently accused Liberian forces of entering its territory and attacking border villages). Intermittent fighting – largely between Liberian security forces and the newly-formed rebel movement known as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) – spread and intensified, forcing tens of thousands of people to flee their homes. The situation was however complicated by reports of in-fighting between various pro-government militias in the region, and military claims on all sides were often unverifiable. The conflict was centred in the gold and diamond-rich area close to where the borders of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea meet.

In December 2001, government forces launched a fresh offensive when the rebels got within 60km of the capital. Fighting followed fleeing populations from one temporary location to another. At the end of January 2002, the UN was 'deeply concerned' about reports of the forced displacement of some 10,000 IDPs from the temporary camp at Sawmill, who joined thousands of other newly displaced persons in Klay Town near Monrovia. The government restricted aid agencies to the greater Monrovia area, while blocking IDPs from entering the capital, where many people who had been previously displaced continued to shelter in unfinished and war-damaged buildings.

Further attacks on Klay Town, less than 50km from the capital, prompted President Taylor to declare a state of emergency in February 2002, restricting movements and requiring exit visas for everyone leaving the country, including UN staff. Sceptics believed that Taylor's government may have state-managed the crisis in order to 'create a humanitarian crisis on the doorstep of Monrovia that would draw the eyes and the

sympathy of the world' (Reuters, 14 February 2002). President Taylor had long complained that he could not properly address the security situation because of a UN arms embargo.

Sporadic but intense fighting continued throughout 2002, causing almost continuous displacement. Villages and IDP camps in Lofa and Bong counties were emptied and reportedly looted by both government and dissident forces, forcing many civilians to seek refuge in camps around Monrovia (OCHA IDP Unit, 21 May 2002).

Conditions of displacement

Since the upsurge of fighting in 2000, perhaps the most pressing concern about IDPs from the north of the country has been their total lack of protection from increasingly widespread human rights abuses carried out not only by Liberian security forces but by LURD combatants as well. Amnesty International has documented the situation of human rights abuses in a series of field assessments, most recently in October 2002. According to many IDPs interviewed by Amnesty, people fleeing their homes in the northern region of Liberia have been subject to extrajudicial executions, torture and rape. Rape has been so widespread, according to Amnesty, that it could be described as a weapon of war. Other aid agencies reported that many IDP women who were raped during flight were pregnant in the camps. Forced recruitment has also been a major problem. It is widely believed that many men and boys have been denied freedom to move out of Lofa county, and have, instead, been forcibly recruited.

Civilians forced to flee their homes have hidden and trekked through dense forest for days – and sometimes weeks – before reaching relative safety. But even transit centres such as the one at Sawmill proved to be unsafe. WFP reported that since the January 2002 attack on the Sawmill camp, many IDPs were on the move for the fourth successive time. Numbers were hard to estimate because the serious insecurity was restricting humanitarian access to all the displaced. According to WFP, the newly displaced were living in partially destroyed buildings, warehouses, or simply in the open air. Many were said to be physically weak after their flight. In June 2002, the BBC reported that tens of thousands of people displaced from the Gbarnga area were living in miserable makeshift shelters on the main road leading to Monrovia, or in public buildings (BBC News, 17 June 2002).

Conditions in IDP camps were also grim: in 11 camps and schools assessed by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in July 2002, mortality rates were above the emergency threshold, with malaria and diarrhoea the main causes of death (IRC, 30 September 2002).

Humanitarian response and constraints

International scepticism of the Charles Taylor administration has remained high since the 1997 elections. Taylor's government has been accused of increasing human rights violations at home, as well as backing armed insurgencies in neighbouring countries. The UN Security Council tightened an arms embargo on Liberia in March 2001 to curb arms trafficking to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, and two months later imposed further sanctions, including travel restrictions on senior government officials and a ban on diamond exports. In May 2002 the sanctions were extended for a further 12 months.

As a result, funding for Liberian humanitarian programmes has been extremely poor. In November 2002, about 36 percent of the scaled-down 2002 Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal (CAP) had been funded. Donor antipathy has forced NGOs to scale down their reconstruction and development activities, and reduce the level of support they have been providing to IDPs and other vulnerable populations (UN, November 2001).

At the national level, responsibility for the coordination of humanitarian assistance and return of IDPs lies with the Liberian Refugee, Repatriation, and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC), although it too suffers from limited technical, financial and logistical capacity (OCHA IDP Unit, 21 May 2002).

International humanitarian operations have been hampered not only by a lack of resources but also by lack of access to many areas of the country where fighting has been taking place – including Lofa, Bomi, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount counties.

November 2002

CAUSES AND BACKGROUND OF DISPLACEMENT

Background to the conflict

A chronology of significant events (1980-2000)

1980: Samuel Doe leads military coup ending 150 years of domination by Americo Liberians.

1980-1990: Doe's regime (supported by the United States) marked by violence and suppression of repeated coup attempts.

1989: NPFL under the leadership of Charles Taylor commences rebellion in northern Liberia (December).

1990: NPFL reaches Monrovia but is repelled by ECOMOG (Economic Community Monitoring Group, ECOWAS) peacekeeping force (August). Doe killed. Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) installed under Amost Sawyer.

1991: First peace talks fail. Yamoussoukro (Cote d'Ivoire) talks begin. United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO) begins operations against NPFL.

1992: NPFL launches new attack on Monrovia, repulsed by ECOMOG (October). UN secretary-general appoints special representative (November).

1993: New peace agreement signed at Cotonou, Benin (July). Disarmament fails amid increased factional fighting. UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) created and deployed.

1994: Sawyer resigns (March). IGNU replaced by Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG). New peace process started in Akosombo, Ghana (September) under President Jerry Rawlings.

1995: Continuation of fighting. New peace accord signed at Abuja, Nigeria (August). LNTG II installed. Wider ECOMOG deployment halted by renewed fighting.

1996: Renewed factional fighting leads to all-out conflict in Monrovia (April). ECOMOG does not intervene. Fresh peace accord signed in Abuja (August). New timetable for disarmament (November) and elections (May 1997) adopted.

(Scott 1998, pp. 100-101)

"Border fighting

1999 January - Ghana and Nigeria accuse Liberia of supporting Revolutionary United Front rebels in Sierra Leone. Britain and the US threaten to suspend international aid to Liberia.

1999 April - Rebel forces thought to have crossed from Guinea attack the town of Voinjama. Subsequent fighting leads to the displacement of more than 25,000 people.

1999 September - Guinea accuses Liberian forces of entering its territory and attacking border villages.

2000 July - The US threatens to impose sanctions on Liberia unless it curtails its ties with Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front.

2000 September - Liberian forces launch "massive offensive" against rebels in the north. Liberia [sic!] accuses Guinean troops of shelling border villages." (BBC, January 10, 2001, "TIMELINE LIBERIA")

War continued throughout 1990s despite numerous peace attempts (1997-2000)

- Over ten cease-fire agreements were signed and broken during period of war

"Over 10 cease fire agreements were signed and broken before the final 'Abuja Agreement' was reached in November 1996." (IRC 2000)

"In November 1990, a fragile cease-fire was undertaken and lasted for almost 2 years. Upon the intervention of the United Liberation Movement for a Democratic Liberia (Ulimo) troops based in Sierra Leone, the N.P.F.L. responded by launching a violent attack on Monrovia in October 1992.

During 1993 and 1994 a series of cease-fire agreements were signed, but they were always broken, sometimes even before coming into effect. The peace agreement signed between the different factions in August 1995 seemed promising. Yet, the fighting resumed in April 1996 and violent battles between the different factions took place in Monrovia for 7 weeks." (ACF 2000)

"Numerous attempts were made at the regional level to resolve the conflict through peaceful means. ECOWAS brokered a series of peace agreements, including the Yamoussoukro Accord of October 1991, the Cotonou Agreement of July 1993, the Akosombo Agreement of September 1994, the Accra Agreement of December 1994 and the Abuja Agreement of August 1995, which provided for a cease-fire, disarmament and elections to be held in August 1996." (UNSG 12 September 1997, para. 24)

Monrovia was engulfed by violence in April 1996

- Monrovia is engulfed by violence for several weeks in April 1996
- 3,000 killed and over 300,000 forced to flee their homes
- Non-essential humanitarian personnel evacuated and aid looted

"1996 has been a year marked by a renewal of violence, especially in Monrovia, which had until then been considered a haven of peace. The fighting began on 6 April when the provisional authorities tried to arrest the leader of one of the factions, Roosevelt Johnson, who is a suspected accomplice in a murder case.

Starting on 6 April and for several weeks, Monrovia was engulfed by violence and horror. Stores were looted. Offices and warehouses of the humanitarian agencies were sacked, forcing them to evacuate all non-essential personnel. Nothing seemed to stop the spiral of violence. Not even an orphanage was spared. On 30 April armed men assaulted and looted the Vahun Children's Center, an orphanage run jointly by a local agency and UNHCR, where 75 unaccompanied Sierra Leonean children and some 20 Liberian orphans were sheltered.

The Ministry of Health building that sheltered 1,200 Sierra Leonean refugees and 4,300 displaced Liberians were seized by armed men, who made it their barracks. Refugees and displaced persons fled and ended up crammed in a former UNICEF warehouse that had been looted at the onset of the hostilities and had no water or toilet facilities.

Part of the population sought refuge in the compound of the United States Embassy, protected by American soldiers and located in the residential district of Mamba Point. Thousands of others tried to leave Monrovia, a city at the mercy of drugged teen-agers, their bodies wound with amulets in a mad search for invincibility." (Kpatindé 1996, "1996 in Review", paras. 3-6)

"The 6 April crisis marked yet another tragic episode in the more than six-year-old conflict. It is estimated that 46 percent of Monrovia's population, some 361,880 persons, were displaced and some 3,000 persons killed in the fighting." (DHA 23 October 1996, sect. 2.3)

Abuja Peace Agreement finally reached in August 1996 and president elected in 1997

- Peace agreement reached once ECOMOG re-asserts control over Monrovia
- Agreement calls for disarmament, demobilization, and national elections
- Presidential elections conducted in atmosphere of intimidation
- Charles Taylor wins presidency

"The fighting that erupted in Monrovia on 6 April 1996 paralysed the Abuja peace process launched in August 1995. The April crisis, characterised by widespread looting and a complete breakdown of law and order, continued until the Military Observer Group of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOMOG) peace-keeping force asserted a tenuous control over the city in late May.

Intensive diplomacy by various parties to put the peace process back on track culminated in the Abuja Agreement of 17 August 1996, reached exactly one year after the Abuja Agreement of 1995." (DHA 23 October 1996, sect. 2.1)

"The agreement provides for disarmament under the aegis of the Economic Community of West African States' Monitoring Group, demobilization and reintegration of fighters with the help of the United Nations and the donor community and national elections by May 31, 1997." (USAID 1998, FY 1998 Congressional Presentation, "The Development Challenge")

"In July 1997 Taylor won the presidency, and his National Patriotic Party (NPP) won three-quarters of the seats in the Congress, in elections that were administratively free and transparent, but were conducted in an atmosphere of intimidation, as most voters believed that Taylor's forces would resume fighting if Taylor were to lose. The leaders of the former warring factions, including Taylor, did not make any serious attempt to reconcile their differences. In his first year in office, Taylor restored the trappings and ceremony customarily associated with the presidency, but his NPP Government did not pass any significant legislation. The judiciary is subject to political influence, economic pressure, and corruption." (US DOS 26 February 1999, para. 1)

Liberian dissidents operating out of Guinea are blamed for incursions and instability from 1999-2001

- Liberian rebels operating from Guinea carry out attacks in Lofa County
- Liberian government expels ambassadors, closes borders, March 2001

- Liberian National Security Adviser accused the Guinean army and a Sierra Leonean militia of supporting rebel forces fighting in northern Lofa County in March/April 2001
- LURD takes responsibility for attacks since mid-2000

General:

"In April and August 1999, Liberian rebels operating from neighboring Guinea carried out attacks in Lofa County, northern Liberia. Although not confirmed, the rebel attacks were thought to be led by former fighters from the ULIMO-K faction who were largely ethnic Mandingos. The fighting resulted in civilian deaths and displacement, forcing thousands of Liberians and Sierra Leonean refugees to flee.

In July 2000, another invasion was launched by a group calling itself Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) from the Guinea border into Liberia, resulting in fighting and displacement yet again in Lofa County. These periodic eruptions of violence contributed to the continuing destabilization of the subregion, and within Liberia assumed an ethnic dimension as the government indis criminate ly blamed members of the Krahn and Mandingo communities for the attacks." (HRW 2000, Human Rights Developments)

Liberian government expels ambassadors, closes borders (March 2001)

"President Charles Taylor closed Liberia's border with Sierra Leone at midnight on Monday [19 March 2001] and ordered the ambassadors of that country and Guinea to leave within three days, diplomatic sources said.

The government said its measure followed serious incidents of border insecurity. It did not elaborate, diplomatic sources in Monrovia told IRIN. However, the city's newspapers reported on Tuesday that the envoys, Kemoh Salia-Bao and Baba Soare of Sierra Leone and Guinea, were declared unwelcome because of what the government said were "acts incompatible with their status". (IRIN-WA 20 March 2001)

Liberian National Security Adviser accused the Guinean army and a Sierra Leonean militia of supporting rebel forces (March/April 2001)

"[Following renewed fighting in Lofa County in March 2001] the Liberian government has accused the Guinean army and a Sierra Leonean militia of supporting rebel forces fighting in northern Lofa County, the BBC reported on Sunday [29 April 2001].

Liberian National Security Adviser Lewis Brown said that in the past few days "serious artillery and aerial support from Guinea" had been used against Liberian troops. He said intelligence reports confirmed that the Kamajors, a militia force loyal to the Sierra Leonean government, had teamed up with Liberian dissident forces to provide ground support. There has been no independent confirmation of the minister's claims, the BBC said." (IRIN-WA 30 April 2001)

Attacks since mid-2000 claimed by LURD:

"The exact identity of the armed opposition groups -- and their leaders -- which have been attacking Liberia from Guinea since 1999 has been difficult to establish. However, since the beginning of the latest round of incursions in July 2000, attacks on Liberian territory have been claimed by a group called the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). The LURD is reportedly composed of former fighters from the civil war of 1989 to 1996, many of whom became refugees in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire after the end of the war." (AI 1 August 2001)

"The Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebel group, with back bases in neighbouring Guinea, is leading the fighting in Lofa County.

The LURD is thought to be led by former chief of staff Charles Juju, who served in the regime of Samuel Doe, assassinated in 1990 after Taylor launched an insurgency.” (AFP 21 November 2001)

Liberian government declares state of emergency (February 2002)

- President Taylor declares state of emergency on 8 February 2002
- Declaration follows shooting at Klay Junction, less than 50km from Monrovia, and the area becomes inaccessible to aid agencies
- The Liberian government blames its failure to defeat the rebels on the UN arms embargo on the country

"Liberian President Charles Taylor declared a state of emergency with immediate effect on Friday after shooting was reported close to the capital, Monrovia, Information Minister Reginald Goodridge said. Speaking on CNN, Goodridge said the measure was taken because of 'imminent danger' in Liberia as a result of the activity of armed rebels.

On Thursday, shooting had been heard at Klay Junction, a crossroads about 50 km north of the capital, on Thursday and internally displaced people (IDPs) fled the area, the head of delegation of Medecins sans Frontieres-France in Monrovia, Giuseppe Scollo, told IRIN on Friday. 'We have no more access to the area,' he said.

The IDPs had moved south to Klay following a rebel attack nearly two weeks ago near a temporary IDP camp at Sawmill, some 100 km north of Monrovia. Scollo said there were around 10,000 IDPs at Klay a few days ago, but we have no idea how many there are now,' he said.

Goodridge claimed on Friday that 'the dissidents have received sanctuary and an unlimited supply of weapons in Guinea'. Taylor has often accused the Guinean government of harbouring dissidents on their territory, a charge denied by Conakry.

Defence Minister Daniel Chea recently told reporters that government forces were hard pressed to defeat the rebels because of an international ban on weapon sales to Liberia, according to recent media reports. He was quoted as saying that unless the embargo was lifted, the rebels could defeat the army within one month.

There were media reports on Friday that some people were trying to leave Monrovia. However, Goodridge said the legislature was operating normally, while Scollo said it was business as usual in the city." (IRIN, 8 February 2002)

President Taylor lifted the state of emergency in September 2002. [Click here](#) for details.

Allegations that upsurge in fighting has been 'stage-managed' (February 2002)

- Liberian journalists are among many who believe that the government may have engineered or manipulated the upsurge in fighting
- Sceptics charge that the government is trying to create another humanitarian crisis in order to win international sympathy
- President Taylor continues to blame the army's inability to defeat the rebels on UN sanctions

"Liberian journalists on Monday called on President Charles Taylor to lift the state of emergency he imposed on 8 February, saying there was growing suspicion that the unfolding humanitarian crisis in the country was being stage-managed.

The journalists, in a statement by the Association of Liberian Journalists in the Americas (ALJA), said they were disturbed by press reports that the population displacement and heightened insecurity that preceded the declaration of the state of emergency, might have been triggered by exchanges of gunfire between government troops.

'We hope that this crisis is not being orchestrated, at the cost of innocent lives, to serve the political interests of Mr. Taylor or the LURD ((Liberia United for Reconciliation and Development) rebels,' ALJA said.

'There are growing suspicions,' it added, 'that the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe is being stage-managed, in an attempt to force the United Nations to lift the arms embargo and sanctions imposed on Liberia. The LURD is also suspected of being in complicity with (President Charles) Taylor in creating a sense of chaos.'

The journalists appealed to the UN to retain the arms embargo and other sanctions against Liberia." (IRIN, 18 February 2002)

"Could Liberia's rulers really be so diabolical as to fake rebel attacks and drive thousands from their homes to win international sympathy and increase their powers?

Conspiracy theories flew more thickly than the mosquitoes in the West African country's capital on Thursday, nearly a week after President Charles Taylor declared a state of emergency.

'To my eye there is more to this than there seems,' said one Western diplomat with long experience in Liberia.

'The events appear to play right into Taylor's hands. It is also very unclear what is happening on the ground and who was behind whatever happened at Kley junction.'

Shooting at Kley junction in an apparent rebel attack a week ago, just 22 miles from Monrovia, was a turning point in the conflict with the rebels, terrifying Liberians and leading to the swift declaration of a state of emergency.

But there is far from solid evidence for the suspicions of many diplomats and aid workers that the latest crisis has been partly engineered and manipulated by the pariah state, under United Nations sanctions for backing war in Sierra Leone.

Liberia's government, so the theory goes, might have had its own soldiers carry out the attack -- which left several people dead -- to create a humanitarian crisis on the doorstep of Monrovia that would draw the eyes and sympathy of the world.

That might be to Liberia's advantage in a review of sanctions imposed over the war in Sierra Leone, which was declared over last month. The state of emergency might also give Taylor a freer hand ahead of elections due next year." (Reuters, 14 February 2002)

Main causes of displacement

Hundreds of thousands of civilians were forced to flee their homes during country's civil war (1989-1997)

- Liberians began to flee their homes with onset of civil war in 1989
- All warring factions were responsible for displacement of local populations
- April 1996 crisis caused thousands more to flee homes in Monrovia

"Like the 750,000 Liberian refugees who managed to flee to Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, the troubles of Liberia's internally displaced began in December 1989, when the NPFL rebels took up arms to overthrow the regime of Samuel K. Doe. Caught in the crossfire, many civilians had no option but to head for neighboring countries – especially Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea – or to the capital, which was considered a safe haven once the ECOMOG troops had established control there in 1990. Subsequently, factions proliferated, essentially along ethnic lines, and anarchy reigned, forcing an ever-increasing number of Liberians to flee first to Monrovia and then on to the neighboring countries." (Kpatindé 1996, "Internally Displaced Persons", para. 8)

"The warring factions have terrorized the local population. Fighters have mutilated captives, using their victims' intestines to cordon off areas newly controlled by the victorious group. They have cut up human bodies and scattered them around villages. Many areas have passed under the control of successive warring factions and Liberia has effectively become a series of competing fiefdoms ruled by faction leaders.

[...]

All parties to the continuing conflict committed gross human rights abuses. Fighters from all the warring factions tortured and deliberately killed unarmed civilians suspected of opposing them, as they seized territory or raided another group's territory. All armed groups were responsible for deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, although in many cases it was not possible to establish which group was responsible. (AI, 20 June 1997, "Liberian Tragedy")

"Tens of thousands of Liberians were killed during the war and almost half the country's population displaced. Despite the presence of regional peacekeepers and a United Nations military observer mission, fighting resumed numerous times during the war, and the number of factions proliferated over the years. All the factions, including Charles Taylor's faction, were responsible for terrorizing the local populations in order to loot and to discourage support for rival factions. Widespread atrocities against civilians were committed including killings, torture, forced labor, and extortion." (HRW, 17 November 1997, para. 4)

Many thousands of persons were forced to flee Monrovia in 1996:

"Prior to the 6 April [1996] fighting there were approximately 750,000 IDPs in Liberia. Of these, an estimated 300,000 were located in shelters in and around Monrovia. The 6 April fighting has exacerbated the situation. Approximately 46 percent, some 361,880, of the estimated 780,000 inhabitants of Monrovia had to abandon their homes. Of these, 30 percent are in shelters and 17 percent have fled the greater Monrovia area. These populations are completely dependent on the international community for all their basic needs." (DHA, 23 October 1996, sect. 4.5)

"Renewed violence in April [1996] pushed an estimated 300,000 persons from their homes in Monrovia and devastated the morale of many Liberians. Families fled to Monrovia's schools, warehouses, dilapidated government buildings, and to private homes in safer parts of the city. Up to 20,000 fled to a

Monrovia military base that subsequently came under attack. Another 20,000 took refuge in the U.S. embassy's residential compound. Outside Monrovia, tens of thousands fled to the central Liberian town of Gbarnga in search of safety." (USCR, 1997, p. 77)

Thousands of civilians newly displaced with resurgence of violence in northern Lofa County in 2000 (July-October 2000)

- Armed insurgency and gun battles forces people to flee (July 2000)
- Shelling of Zorzor district by Guinean security forces resulted in 1,500 IDPs fleeing the war zone
- Mass movement was started by instructions from military that women and children leave the areas
- On October 7th 2000, Zorzor town came under attack for the second time in the space of 2 weeks

"In July 2000, armed insurgency and sporadic gun battles occurred at the border towns of Voinjama in Lofa County, causing loss of life, the destruction of property, the looting of homes and the displacement of over 45,000 persons to Salayea District, close to Bong County, in Upper Lofa and Camp Anthel in Lower Lofa Counties. Recently, the government announced the expulsion of the armed insurgents. In October 2000, ethnic violence erupted between the Mandingos and Mano people in Nimba County. Several people were injured, and houses and vehicles were destroyed." (IFRC, 20 February 2001)

"On 8 July [2000], the Government of Liberia reported that an armed group of Liberian dissidents operating from neighbouring Guinea, attacked the provincial town of Voinjama in Lofa county (approximately 384 kms north of the capital of Monrovia). Thousands of civilians fled the town into the bush and nearby towns and villages. Accusations by both sides over border raids launched by unidentified gunmen have created poor diplomatic relations between the two countries. President Lansana Conte of Guinea has accused Liberians of involvement in cross-border attacks on Guinean villages, while Liberia accuses Guinea of harbouring insurgents who are fighting government forces in northern Liberia.

Most recently, the Government has reported the shelling of Zorzor district by Guinean security forces. Reports say that the incident has resulted in some casualties of IDPs from Voinjama, who had taken refuge in Zorzor town. Over 1,500 IDPs have fled the war zone, traveling (sic!) through the bush to towns as far away as Camp Anthe (125 kms from Voinjama) in Lower Lofa County." (IFRC, 19 October 2000)

"Liberian government officials claimed that an incursion by armed dissidents in July took control of several towns in northern Liberia's Upper Lofa County and forced 30,000 people to flee their villages. The government declared a state of emergency in the county in mid-July." (USCR, 28 August 2000, para. 2)

The independent Inquirer newspaper said that hundreds of residents were fleeing Zorzor, 210 kilometres (130 miles) northeast of Monrovia, following the attack Saturday [8 October 2000], saying the town was being shelled from the Liberian border town of Yeala, eight kilometers (five miles) away.

[...]

The people were reported to be fleeing to the regional town of Gbarnga, 150 kilometres (95 miles) east of Monrovia." (AFP, 9 October 2000)

"The relief workers also said the mass movement of the people was started by instructions from military personnel in Zorzor and surrounding towns and villages, that women and children leave the areas in the wake of the attack." (PANA, 10 October 2000)

"On October 7th [2000] Zorzor town came under attack for the second time in the space of 2 weeks. An estimated 30,000 civilians deserted the town of Zorzor after it was shelled by rebel forces believed to be operating from Guinea. The shelling has forced civilians to head towards the town of Gbarnga, although many are now staying in towns between Zorzor and Gbarnga in neighbouring Bong County and are in need

of food, shelter and sanitation facilities. It seems that only those who have family to stay with have been permitted to enter Gbarnga." (SCF, 24 November 2000, Current Situation)

Further displacements accompany intensification of violence in northern Liberia in 2001-2002

- Fighting in Lofa County between Liberian forces and dissidents on the border with Guinea breaks out in February 2001; thousands of civilians flee
- In July 2001, fighting was ongoing in Lofa, and Liberians were still moving southwards as a result of the fighting
- By end of year, civilians were still fleeing their homes in northern Liberia for relative safety of IDP camps
- In 2002, fighting spreads southwards and dangerously close to the capital, Monrovia

Intermittent fighting in Liberia has continued throughout 2002. For more details of population movements resulting from the fighting, and their locations, see the sections on Geographical Distribution and Patterns of Displacement.

February 2001:

"In February 2001, the latest fighting erupted in Kolahun District in Lofa [which] [...] produced a new wave of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

[...]

[...] an estimated 150,000 persons are on the run for their lives, most of them having abandoned the major towns and took refuge in remote villages, running from the fighting forces. Homes of civilians fleeing the fighting have been completely looted; while some homes have been burned." (ACT, Appeal Liberia 30 March 2001)

March 2001:

"Liberian Defence Minister Daniel Chea on Monday [5 March 2001] said rebels had seized the key northern town of Voinjama, which lies near the Guinean border.

Chea made the remarks to AFP after unconfirmed reports reached the Liberian capital that "dissidents" had hoisted a flag in Voinjama, about 260 kilometres (160 miles) north of Monrovia.

[...]

The defense minister said between 20,000 and 30,000 civilians displaced by the fighting were moving in large groups away from the conflict area." (AFP, 5 March 2001)

"In March, fighting between dissidents and government forces moved further southwards towards Tarvey, Gbapolu County. The latest reports of fighting come from Gelmah to the south of Kolahun. This movement southwards has caused previously internally displaced people (IDPs) to flee again further south. Almost all of the 2,000 registered IDPs who were in Tarvey until recently, left there at the end of March, some of them moving on foot further south to Amtel and the rest fleeing into the bush." (SCF, 6 April 2001)

April 2001:

"Thousands of civilians have been fleeing heavy fighting between government troops and insurgents in upper Lofa County, northern Liberia, Defence Minister Daniel Chea told reporters on Wednesday. He said the civilians were going to lower Lofa County.

Chea described the fighting - in Foya and Kolahun - as serious but denied claims that the insurgents, who call themselves Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, had seized control of a vast swathe of territory. Chea said government troops still controlled the provincial towns of Voinjama, Vahun and Zorzor. He blamed the cross-border attacks on Guinea, which has made similar charges against Liberia." (IRIN-WA, 6 April 2001)

"Liberian authorities said Wednesday [25 April 2001] that fighting in northern Lofa County had stepped up with "dissidents" occupying five key border towns.

Information Minister Reginald Goodrich told reporters the government had launched simultaneous counter-attacks on the towns of Foya, Kolahun, Vahun, Voinjama and Zorzor in a bid to recapture them.

He said the fighting had displaced about 60,000 people according to the Liberia refugee agency.

The pro-government Guardian newspaper said fighting had intensified in the provincial capital Voinjama since sports minister Francois Massaquoi was killed there last week.

"Government troops, apparently troubled by the killing of the late youth and sports minister, have launched an all-out counter-attack aimed at regaining control of Voinjama," the paper said Wednesday.

Reports reaching Monrovia say the fighting in northern Liberia is spreading westwards.

An escapee who identified himself as Yanquoi Zayzay said rebel forces over the weekend attacked Cooper Town in the newly-created County of Gbarpolu about 120 kilometers (75 miles) west of here." (AFP, 25 April 2001)

"A UN official Wednesday expressed concern about "what appears to be prospects of increased fighting in Liberia."

[...]

She said figures presented by the Liberia agency responsible for internally displaced persons show some 60,000 persons have been uprooted, 15,000 of them generated in the past few weeks of intense fighting." (PANA, 25 April 2001)

July 2001:

"Liberia's Defence Ministry reported renewed fighting in the northern county of Lofa even as relief organisations continued to appeal for assistance for people displaced by the insecurity there. Defence Minister Daniel Chea said on Tuesday [3 July 2001] that Lofa was under attack by Guinea-based rebels, AFP and humanitarian sources reported.

Chea urged the international community to pressure Conakry into stopping "armed incursions" into Liberian territory, AFP said.

[...] my forces in Voinjama (the main town in Lofa) informed me about renewed attacks in the area from Guinea,' AFP quoted Chea as saying on Tuesday. 'They came under heavy mortar and artillery attack.' He said the worst-affected areas were the towns of Barkedou and Sakonadu, about 170 km north of Monrovia on the Guinea border.

Chea said thousands of civilians, mainly women and children who had returned to Voinjama after pro-government forces expelled the dissidents from Lofa in June, were reported to have fled into the forest. He also reported rebel attacks in Kolahun, about 310 km north of the Liberian capital." (IRIN-WA, 4 July 2001)

October-December 2001:

“The security situation in Liberia remains precarious. Fighting between GOL troops and anti-government forces continues to displace thousands of Liberians. Until August [2001], fighting had been concentrated in the northern Liberian county of Lofa. However, in the past two months clashes have been reported in Gbarpolu, closer to the capital of Monrovia.” (USAID, 3 October 2001)

“The outbreak of major military confrontations along Liberia’s border (Lofa county) with Guinea led to the displacement of some 65,000 IDPs since May 2001. In addition, this outburst of violence resulted in new Liberian refugees in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote d’Ivoire, as well as the premature return of Sierra Leonean refugees from Liberia to communities in Eastern Sierra Leone.” (UN, November 2001, p. 3)

“Amidst reports of movements of dissident groups in Gbarpolu County, vulnerable Liberians continue to flee their homes for the relative safety of IDP camps.” (OCHA, 5 November 2001)

"Depuis le mois de février 2001, les hostilités qui sévissent dans le nord du Libéria ont jeté sur les routes -à plusieurs reprises- de très nombreuses familles qui résidaient dans la région du Lofa. Une partie de ces populations a été accueillie dans les camps de Jenemana et de Bopulu, situés au sud-ouest du Lofa. En novembre 2001, ces deux sites regroupaient près de 10 000 personnes. Depuis, la progression des combats a suivi le même chemin que les déplacés : le 7 décembre, ceux-ci - ainsi que bon nombre de résidents - ont été à nouveau contraints de fuir. Actuellement, plusieurs milliers de personnes sont bloquées au niveau d'un important barrage militaire, à Sawmill.” (ACF, 14 December 2001)

January-February 2002:

"Fighting in the mining town of Bong Mine near the capital of Monrovia between troops loyal to President Charles Taylor and rebels trying to overthrow him has caused the displacement of at least 20,000 persons, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said Thursday.

The fighting Tuesday in Bong Mine, just 80 kilometres northeast of the capital, marked the second time this month that rebels belonging to Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy have succeeded in bringing the fighting to the doors of the capital. A rebel attack on Klay Junction north of Monrovia last February 7 sent tens of thousands of people fleeing, including some 6,000 who sought shelter in refugee camps established for Sierra Leoneans.

Most of those who fled the most recent clashes sought refuge in Kakata, some 70 kilometres northeast of Monrovia. Reports from the area said many were desperately seeking transportation to get further away from the fighting.

Both United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organisations were gearing up Thursday to respond to the emergency situation in Kakata. The Liberian government's refugee agency (LRRRC), which has been funded by UNHCR since 1993, is carrying out a global survey on the number of persons displaced by the fighting. Initial U.N. estimates put their number at 50,000 to 60,000. The government, however, put the figure into the hundreds of thousands." (UNHCR, 21 February 2002)

May 2002:

"At least 40,000 people have been displaced in Liberia by the latest fighting between government troops and rebels in central Bong County, humanitarian workers in the capital, Monrovia, told IRIN on Friday.

More displacement was expected as the fighting intensified around the town of Gbarnga, 160 km north of Monrovia, the workers added. The majority of the displaced were moving south to Margibi County, while a few were moving into Nimba County.

The fighting had by Friday reportedly spread to several areas on the outskirts of Gbarnga. A government military camp housing the engineering and artillery base was overrun by the rebels, news agencies reported.

At least 900 students and teachers from the Cuttington University College, the second largest University in Liberia, were evacuated by a police convoy to Monrovia on Tuesday, the workers said. Fleeing residents, they said, spoke of heavy gun fire coming from the town.

President Charles Taylor spoke on Radio Liberia International on Thursday, saying fighting with rebels of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) was continuing fiercely. 'All those who have been telling the world there is no war in Liberia- we hope they will now see that this democratically-elected government is under attack, and that powerful nations of the world continue to deny Liberia the right under Article 51 of the UN charter to defend herself.'

Taylor called on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to lobby the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) and the UN against the Security Council embargo, the pro-Taylor radio station reported.

He said that Liberia should be allowed to order 'materials for legitimate self-defence' despite United Nations sanctions because 'genocide' was taking place in the country. The Mano River states of Guinea and Sierra Leone, he added, should also ensure that cross-border incursions against his country were prevented." (IRIN, 10 May 2002)

Human rights abuses in the context of attacks on towns and villages is one of the main causes of displacement (2002)

- Primary cause of displacement is insecurity caused by fighting between Liberian government forces and LURD rebels
- Many boys and young men have been abducted and forcibly conscripted into pro-government forces, separating families and making women and children more vulnerable
- Large-scale displacement has been caused by radio announcements by the Liberian government, warning of imminent rebel attacks, which often never materialise
- The targeting and hunting down of suspected 'dissidents' by Liberian security forces has also caused large numbers of people to flee

"The causes of displacement are varied but are primarily due to the insecurity caused by the fighting between Liberian government forces and the LURD. Repeated attacks on towns and villages by both sides has had a devastating effect on the Liberian civilian population. Fighting has intensified since the beginning of 2002 with heavily populated towns and villages frequently attacked. These attacks have invariably involved human rights abuses against civilians, civilians caught in the cross-fire and massive looting sprees.

Civilians leave their homes suddenly to escape death or injury, and repeatedly complain of further hardship where they flee. Many leave when they hear heavy gunfire, as the result of a camp or village being attacked, or are told by government forces to flee to escape rebel forces. Often civilians complain that money and personal items are taken from them at government checkpoints, leaving them without the resources to flee to safety. There are large numbers of women and young children in IDP and refugee camps as many boys and young men have been abducted and forcibly conscripted into fighting forces loyal to the government. This has led to separation of families and put women and children at risk of sexual and gender-based violence such as rape and sexual slavery.

Large-scale displacement has also been caused by radio announcements by the Liberian government warning of impending attacks, often apparently without foundation, so that abandoned homes and property

can be looted by security forces. On 13 May 2002 the government announced on the radio that rebels were planning an attack on Buchanan in Grand Bassa County, central Liberia. This resulted in a movement of several thousand civilians towards Grand Gedeh County, eastern Liberia, who were reportedly positioning themselves to be ready to cross the border into Cote d'Ivoire, if necessary. Buchanan was not subsequently attacked.

Another cause of flight has been the targeting and hunting down of suspected 'dissidents' by Liberian security forces. Since May 2002 men and boys of Mandingo ethnic origin have been the primary targets of arbitrary arrest and detention without charge by Liberian security forces. This has caused large numbers to flee the country, primarily to Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. Many complained of harassment at border checkpoints. Others perceived to oppose the government have also sought refuge outside the country, including human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents, and in some cases, former members of the government who have become disaffected with the current government." (Amnesty International, 1 October 2002)

Other factors fuelling the conflict

Element of ethnicity to be considered in Liberian context (2000-2001)

- Government has blamed Krahn and Mandingo groups for recent violence in North
- Mandingos are considered by many Liberians to have strong affinities with Guinea

"Liberia's vice-president, Moses Blah, has warned against rising ethnic unrest in the northern county of Nimba.

Blah, quoted on state-run radio, described the tension between members of the Mandingo and Mano ethnic groups as 'disturbing'. Blah headed a presidential committee that visited Nimba County last weekend to investigate the ethnic clashes.

Liberian newspapers reported on 10 October [2000] that armed police had been deployed to the Nimba town of Ganta to quell riots between groups of Manos and Mandingos. Reports said the riots in Ganta, which is located about 220 km northeast of Monrovia, had left the city centre deserted and some homes and businesses looted.

Some reports said the clashes are rooted in a land dispute. The unrest has been aggravated by tension between the Liberian and Guinean governments, which have accused each other of backing dissidents. Mandingos are considered by many Liberians to be close to Guinea." (IRIN-WA, 15 October 2000)

"The festering ethnic clashes between the Mandingo, Gio and Mano tribes in Nimba and Bong Counties could continue and cause further internal displacement." (UN, November 2000, Republic of Liberia)

"Ethnic Krahn and Mandingo people, historically seen to be allied with the repression of the former Doe government and with anti-Taylor factions during the war, were particularly susceptible to harassment at the hands of the state security apparatus. Following the violence in Monrovia in 1998, Krahn were targeted for extrajudicial executions, harassment, and politically motivated criminal charges. In the aftermath of the Lofa County incursions in 1999, security forces killed, tortured, and mistreated civilians, particularly members of the Mandingo ethnic group. During the incursions and counter-attacks in Lofa County, hundreds were killed and thousands of citizens as well as Sierra Leonean refugees were forced to flee the area. Although some of the alleged abuses by the security forces were investigated by the government, in

all cases security personnel were treated leniently or exonerated. Since the 1999 and 2000 rebel incursions in Lofa County, Mandingo residents remain afraid to return to their homes." (HRW, 2000, Human Rights Developments)

Illicit smuggling of diamonds from Sierra Leone fuels conflict in the region (2000)

- Trafficking in diamonds and gun-running are used to finance wars in region

"Underlying the Sierra Leone conflict and its spread in the sub-region is the trade in its illegally mined diamonds, and the proliferation of small arms in the entire region. Instability in Sierra Leone and Guinea is fuelled by armed support being provided outside the country to the RUF in Sierra Leone and the related insurgents who attack Guinea. Trafficking in diamonds and gun-running are used to finance war efforts.

Reports indicate that diamond exports from the sub-region have risen and have been channelled through a variety of countries. It is believed that official channels only partially reflect the real trade in diamonds, as reports indicate that some gems could be reaching Western Europe under fake country of origin certificates for tax purposes." (UN, November 2000)

For more information on the diamonds-for-guns trade in West Africa, see the Report of the Panel of Experts appointed to Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), para 19, in relation to Sierra Leone (S/2000/1195) [External link].

Liberian timber industry reported to be 'a primary source of funding for Liberia's war machine' (September 2002)

- Investigative NGO, Global Witness, exposes direct links between Liberia's timber industry and the conflict
- Global Witness reports that numerous logging companies continue to be engaged in illegal arms imports for the government, committing human rights abuses and destabilising Liberia and its neighbours

"Due to the UN Security Council's inaction on Liberia, the Liberian timber industry remains a primary source of funding for Liberia's war machine. Many logging companies continue to be actively engaged in illegal arms imports for the government, committing human rights abuses and destabilising Liberia and the entire West Africa sub-region. A new Global Witness report, titled Logging Off: How the Liberian Timber industry fuels Liberia's humanitarian disaster and threatens Sierra Leone, exposes the direct links between Liberia's timber industry and the conflict. The report also details how the United Nations has failed to heed the evidence presented by its own Expert Panels to actively address the destabilising role of the Liberian logging industry. Global Witness recommends that the UN impose a complete embargo on Liberian timber, and mandate any new Expert Panel on Liberia to conduct a thorough investigation of the Liberian timber industry.

'UN failure to acknowledge 'conflict timber' as a war commodity just like diamonds or oil and its refusal to allow Expert Panels to conduct a thorough investigation of the timber industry frustrates attempts to resolve the conflict in Liberia,' says Global Witness Campaigner Alice Blondel. 'The Security Council's refusal to impose a ban on Liberian logs exports—due primarily to the objections of France and China—means that the international community's attempts to bring peace to Sierra Leone could soon be completely undone'.

Global Witness and UN Expert Panels have uncovered numerous violations of current UNSC sanctions by the Liberian government and timber companies, continued human rights abuses by parastatal logging

company militias, and significant inaccuracies in the UN's own research of the Liberian timber industry." (Global Witness, 18 September 2002)

[Click here for full report](#)

POPULATION PROFILE AND FIGURES

Global figures

IDP figures in 2002 vary greatly depending on the source – but could be more than 200,000 by October (2002)

- In October 2002, WFP reports there are more than 183,900 IDPs in camps in the suburbs of Monrovia, Totota and CARI
- WFP is worried about a possible 'dramatic explosion' in the current caseload due to ongoing conflict as well as people leaving Monrovia for better conditions in the camps
- In August 2002, estimates of IDP numbers ranged between 90,000 and 200,000 - although counting mechanisms are widely acknowledged as faulty
- Many thousands more people are believed to be displaced inside conflict zones, to whom humanitarian organisations have no access

"WFP is particularly concerned by the continuing increase in the number of IDPs in camps in the suburbs of Monrovia, Totota and CARI which reached over 183,900 people on 23 October. This trend may indicate that in addition to those who fled conflict areas, there may be people who are gradually finding it difficult to sustain their living in Monrovia town and prefer to settle in the camps where assistance is being provided. Should this movement intensify it might result in a dramatic explosion of the current caseload. As poverty and lack of minimal services intensify in Monrovia town, people may also be tempted to register in the camps, obtain ration cards, build their shelter in the camps but continue to reside in town. They would then report to the camps only at times of distributions or in case of need for other services.

[...]

Fighting is reportedly continuing in Lofa County, causing new displacements of civilians. An estimated 3,000 people were forced to cross the border with neighboring countries and an undetermined number of IDPs are hiding in the forests or walking towards relatively secure parts of the country. WFP anticipates that the number of displaced in need of assistance will continue to increase. OCHA will implement a census of all IDPs in Liberia possibly by the end of October. WFP, other UN partners and NGOs, are giving full support to the census which is expected to give a comprehensive and up to date picture of IDP figures throughout Liberia." (WFP, 25 October 2002)

"According to UN OCHA, the number of IDPs in Liberia increased from 45,000 in January 2002 to 126,427 in August, although estimates from other sources range from 90,000 to 200,000. In September, the World Food WFP resumed 100 percent distribution of emergency food assistance rations to IDPs, as well as Sierra Leonean refugees. The rations were reduced by 50 percent in July as a result of the delayed arrival of cereal commodities." (USAID, 9 October 2002)

"According to the Liberia Refugee, Repatriation, Resettlement Commission (LRRRC), the official figures of displaced population in Liberia as of August 31, 2002 is as follows: 196,055 Internally Displaced Populations; 21,750 Refugees; 376,537 Returnees and 250,000 Host populations.

More than fifty per cent of the IDP population (99,240 IDPs) is settled in five IDP camps in Montserado County (in the suburb of Monrovia): Jartondo camp (17,000 IDPs), Wilson camp (25,700 IDPs), Blamasse camp (15,346 IDPs), Sergbeh camp (28,300 IDPs), Ricks Camp (12,894 IDPs) and Plumkor (a new camp population not yet defined).

Other IDPs are located in various camps in the Northwest part of Liberia: Cari 1 & 2 and Totota camps in Bong County, Kakata camp in Margibi County, Ganta camp in Nimba county and Buchana camp in Grand Bassa County. Sinje camp in Grand Cape Mount County was closed due to rebel's attack of late June in this County." (WHO, 31 August 2002)

"A total of 112,400 people are estimated to be displaced throughout the country. This includes 35,000 IDPs in Monrovia, 10,200 in Sinje (Cape Mount county), 6,500 in Kataka (Margibi county) 38,200 in Totata and Gbondoi (Bong county) and 1,000 in Buchanan (Grand Bassa county)." (WFP, 31 May 2002)

"At the beginning of 2002 it was generally agreed that the number of IDPs resulting from the upsurge of violence in Lofa County since May 2001 was in the range of 30,000 to 60,000. With new multiple displacements during the first quarter of 2002, basic registration mechanisms have broken down and scores of new IDPs have not yet been registered. Current estimates for IDPs in camps only vary widely from some 50,000 to as many as 100,000 depending on information sources. Disagreement over the numbers of IDPs in camps has further heightened tension between the humanitarian actors and the Government.

The current registration system needs a complete overhaul with enhanced control mechanisms and new implementing methods, including regular verification, to prevent abuses such as multiple registrations and fraudulent registration of non-IDPs. For example public information of a forthcoming registration exercise led to an influx of "IDPs" from Monrovia city to the camps. To address this problem, the Mission proposed a two-track process involving as a first step setting up a joint (UN/NGOs/GOV) task force to forge a consensus IDP planning figure; and at a later stage, possibly during the second quarter of 2002, to conduct a full simultaneous registration exercise with participation of all actors. HCR's experience in refugee registration in camps and lessons learned from Sierra Leone could be useful.

Figures are not available for dispersed IDPs. The northwestern counties Lofa and Gbarpolu are not accessible for security reasons and there is no reliable information on population movements and their humanitarian needs. Likewise no precise information is available on the IDP population settled in Monrovia outside camps." (OCHA IDP Unit, 21 May 2002)

Differing estimates exist regarding the current number of "old caseload" IDPs (2000-2001)

Concerning the number of persons still displaced from the civil conflict of 1989-1997, the Liberia Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) states:

"The LRRRC say it needs to strengthen the capacity of the remaining communities to attract people, including some of the close to 100,000 IDPs in and around Monrovia to return to the countryside and stay." (IRIN-WA, 20 July 2000, para. 2)

And UNHCR considers some 110,700 IDPs of concern to the agency in January 2001 (presumably "old caseload" as there was no where near that number of newly displaced persons in the country at the time):

"ESTIMATES OF MAJOR POPULATIONS OF IDPs OF CONCERN TO UNHCR [at 1ST January 2001] 1

Country	IDPs	Returned IDPs
Eritrea	1,100,000	-
Afghanistan	758,600	-
Sri Lanka	706,500	-
Azerbaijan	572,500	-
Colombia	525,000	-
Bosnia-Herzegovina	518,300	59,300
Russian Federation	490,700	70,000
Sierra Leone	300,000	200,000
Georgia	272,100	300
Yugoslavia	267,500	-
Angola	257,500	-
Liberia	110,700	13,400

1 Groups over 100,000.
(UNHCR, 2 October 2001, "IDPs and others of concern")

whereas the UN Sub-Committee on Nutrition noted:

"An estimated 75% of IDPs have returned to their places of origin and it is probable that the remaining 25% may settle permanently where they are. The Government of Liberia and WFP no longer consider these people to be displaced." (UN Sub-Committee on Nutrition, 25 July 2000, p. 22)

UN estimated there to be 750,000 IDPs at end of civil war (1998)

"The UN estimated that some 750,000 Liberians were internally displaced at the beginning of the year [1997]. That this estimate remained essentially unchanged at year's end reflected the uncertainty about the number of displaced persons living outside formal shelters. In the absence of definitive reports, USCR estimated that at least 500,000 Liberians remained internally displaced at year's end [1997]. Most displaced persons lived in Monrovia." (USCR, 1998, p. 77)

Geographical distribution

Upsurge in fighting starting in December 2001 causes successive waves of displacement (2001-2002)

- Situation in Gbarpolu county deteriorates in December 2001; fighting forces IDPs in Bopolu camp to move south and northeast; many seek shelter at Sawmill in Bomi County
- In February 2002, shooting at Klay Junction forces IDPs towards Monrovia and some to Sinje in Grand Cape Mount County
- Fighting in Bong County in April 2002 prompts IDPs to seek refuge near the central town of Gbarnga; some head for the four established camps in the county

- In May, civilians are forced to flee once again when fighting breaks out near Gbarnga, and again comes dangerously close to Monrovia. Three IDP camps are forced to close.

"Heavy fighting is raging between Liberian Government forces and rebels known as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (Lurd) near the central town of **Gbarnga**

Thousands of people are fleeing the city - which used to serve as the headquarters of President Charles Taylor's forces when he was a rebel leader.

The BBC's Jonathan Paye-Layleh, who has visited Gbarnga, says the fighting is raging near the town of Weinsu, about 40 km (25 miles) away. (BBC, 8 May 2002)

"Fighting intensified in May and spread to Bong and Bomi Counties, causing massive movements of population to Ganta (Guinea border), Bomi, Grand Bassa and Margibi counties. The latest round of fighting also hit the centrally located city of Gbarnga and its environs, making residents and humanitarian agencies to flee. These attacks led to the closure of the second largest university (Cuttington), a Lutheran Mission hospital (Phebe) and three camps (CARI 1, CARI 2 and TV Tower) holding over 35,000 IDPs.

Humanitarian agencies have set-up transit camps and mobile clinics to assist the fleeing IDPs as alternative sites are being sought. The constant insecurity and desertion of camps by IDPs has increased the cost of providing support to the vulnerable populations. As old camps are deserted and looted, the humanitarian agencies have to reinvest in new structures. The number of IDPs in camps and transit sites is approaching 100,000." (UNICEF, 29 May 2002)

An estimated 7,289 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in central Liberia have left their camps in **Bellefanai**, Bong County, following fighting between armed dissidents and government troops, the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Activities (OCHA), reported on Wednesday.

The IDPs have sought refuge in **Weinsu**, 15 km south of Gbarnga, OCHA said in its situation report for 17-23 April. Gbarnga is the main town in Bong, the county that adjoins Lofa where the bulk of the fighting between pro-government troops and dissidents has been going on.

It was not clear how many people were wounded or died in the 19 April fighting. The report noted that the minister of defence had said military operations were still going on. Liberian officials told IRIN recently the rebels had adopted 'a hit and run' strategy.

OCHA said conditions in Weinsu were unsuitable and clearance was being sought to move the IDPs to CARI and the TV Tower, camps also located in Bong. Some people had started arriving in these camps and they were being counted by WFP, LRRRC - the state body responsible for IDPs and NGOs. Over 3,600 new IDPs have so far been registered in the camps, according to the OCHA report.

Action Contre la Faim was giving milk to children in the displaced camps while WHO was conducting a campaign to vaccinate them against yellow fever, diphtheria, tetanus, measles and polio, OCHA reported. It said WHO had trained 80 people in disease surveillance and other agencies had been providing basic necessities such as food, health care and emergency education." (IRIN, 25 April 2002)

"Fighting in **Lofa Bridge** and **Gbarma** generated a new wave of IDP movements into **Sinje**, in Cape Mount and towns and villages in **Sanoyea District** in Bong County and has repressed humanitarian work where insurgent incidents have taken place. However, during the reporting period, the situation in **Heindii and Bong Mines** was relatively calm and some IDPs displaced in the area since the 19th February attack were returning amidst the presence of armed soldiers and scores of militia in those areas." (UN OCHA, 31 March 2002)

"(a) On 7 February, shooting erupted around **Klay junction** (Bomi County) where up to 10,000 IDPs were located. The situation in Monrovia was reportedly tense and some people have started leaving towards the interior of the country or across the border into Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana. As a result, the Liberian Government declared a 'state of emergency' on 8 February and reinforced security on the road leading to Klay Junction, 58km from Monrovia. The Government also imposed an exit visa on everyone leaving the country, including UN staff.

(b) Following the shooting, approximately 10,300 IDPs previously registered in Klay town, including people repeatedly displaced from **Bopolu, Jenemana and Sawmill** areas were again forced to flee. Some moved towards **Monrovia** while others headed towards **Sinje** in Grand Cape Mount County. Towns and villages along the Klay to Monrovia and the Klay to Sinje routes have also been abandoned by the resident population. The numbers of people heading in each direction has not been determined. No humanitarian agency has been allowed beyond St Paul River, between Monrovia and Klay Junction.

(c) Approximately 14,700 IDPs arrived in the suburbs of **Monrovia** according to the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC). They are sheltered in four sites (**ex-VOA transmittal site, Zuanna Town, Ricks Institute and Jah Tondo's Town**) and their number is been verified by humanitarian agencies. Others are reportedly staying in **Lenduama and Kamara Town**, while another group of IDPs was reportedly stopped by Government troops at **Sass Town**, approximately 35 kilometres from Monrovia.

(d) The four established camps in **Bong county (CARI 1&2, TV Tower and Bellefanai)** have a current population of 30,000 IDPs, including 3,000 new arrivals. Access to these camps is not problematic and WFP has been assisting this caseload. However, new influxes of IDPs were reported in various locations of Bong County. As of 7 February, approximately 1,500 IDPs had been registered and verified in **Haindii and Bong Mines**. An estimated 5000-8000 people have reportedly arrived in **Gbonota and Kelebei**, near the St Paul River between Lofa and Bong counties.

(e) In addition, 4,500 persons have reportedly arrived in **Sinje** (Grand Cape Mount County). This figure includes 2,300 displaced who arrived earlier and were assisted by WFP on 2-4 February. The number of Sierra Leonean refugees on the move steadily increased also. WFP is currently providing assistance to some 40,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in the country, made up of about 18,600 in Sinje (80km south west of Monrovia) and some 21,400 in Monrovia. Two of these camps, VOA and Zuannah Town are currently receiving IDPs also. 2,000 refugees, according to UNHCR, have spontaneously returned to Sierra Leone, whilst organized repatriation is to commence on 13 February.

(f) Due to the prevailing insecurity, WFP operations in Bomi, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount Counties have been suspended. However, WFP has made the necessary arrangements to promptly respond to the new influxes of IDPs and refugees in all accessible areas. 660 tons of food were distributed under various programmes from 3 January to 13 February. In particular, WFP has undertaken food distributions to IDPs registered in two sites in Monrovia." (WFP, 15 February 2002)

Figures and locations as of end 2001:

1. IDPs	55,000
Current caseload	
Bong County	37,740 ²
Grand Cape Mount County	26,043
Gbarpolu County	9,065
Contingency caseload	2,632
	17,260
2. Sierra Leonean Refugees	65,000
	(34,000 assisted)
3. Liberian Returnees	5,000
4. Host communities (Bong, Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu, Lofa Counties)	500,000

Footnote to table states: "The current IDP figures were obtained from a joint verification exercise conducted in the camps at the end of September 2001."

(UN, November 2001, p. 23)

IDPs in Gbarpolu county find themselves in danger and again on the move in December 2001:

"It is estimated right now that over 5,000 people are moving south of Bopolu towards the **Tubmanburg area** and Northeast of Bopolu towards **lower Bong County**. The movement of the IDPs from Bopolu continued throughout Friday and part of Saturday (7 - 8 December) and it has been reported that the camp is now completely deserted. LWF/WS was the last NGO to evacuate the camp at midday, Saturday, 8 December. Other NGOs that evacuated the camp included ICRC, AFC and Save the Children, UK. The people on the move are in total panic and these are mostly women and children who claim to have lost most what little they possessed." (ACT, 11 December 2001)

"Chea was quoted as saying that huge numbers had left Gbarpolu County, which adjoins the troubled northern Lofa County, and sought shelter at **Sawmill in Bomi County**.

He said that the internally displaced people were basically from the towns of Bopolu, Weasua, Ngemgbai in the Fassama and Kolahun regions." (AFP, 12 December 2001)

"United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator Kenzo Oshima has expressed alarm at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Liberia's northwestern Gbarpolu county following attacks by alleged dissidents that have put thousands at risk.

'The displacement of 1,413 people by these attacks has nearly doubled the population of the **Bopolu IDP camp**, strained its already inadequate resources, and created serious security and health risks for all those seeking refuge there.' Oshima said in a statement." (IRIN, 5 December 2001)

"'An influx of people from Belle Fassama (in Gbarpolu County) is moving towards the **Bopolu displaced camp** which already has a population of 2,000,' she said.

There were no reports as yet on the numbers of the displaced or casualties, she said. There was equally no information that displaced people were moving into **Gemana camp** which has a population of 7,000. 'A team from SCF which was to travel to Bopolu to check on the situation encountered some delay and would leave possibly by Monday,' Gibreel added." (IRIN, 30 November 2001)

"According to the source, the displaced people in **Gemana camp** in the northwestern Gbarpolu county which had a population of 7,000, had remained in the camp. 'The displaced in the camp are not happy with the fighting but they opted not to flee,' the source added." (IRIN, 12 December 2001)

Nearly all inhabitants of Voinjama have fled the provincial centre (November 2001)

- Voinjama use to be host to some 50,000 persons
- Today, it has no civilian population, no electricity or running water and no telephones, banks or shops
- The hospital and other infrastructure have been heavily damaged by fighting

"Voinjama, once among Liberia's largest provincial hubs and home to some 50,000 people, has been reduced to a ghost town due to a bitter civil war raging in the west African country.

Currently controlled by government forces, Voinjama today is a pale shadow of its former self -- with no civilian population, no electricity or running water and no telephones, banks or shops.

The town is populated solely by government troops and is their frontline position in the war-ravaged northern Lofa County where 'dissidents' are waging a bloody and protracted war against President Charles Taylor's forces.

Voinjama is 280 kilometres (175 miles) north of Monrovia. Fighting has been going on in northern Liberia since 1998 but has intensified since last September. According to the government, about 60,000 civilians have fled the area since then.

[...]

In its heyday, Voinjama, the regional capital was among Liberia's five largest provincial towns and boasted its own radio station.

There were five high schools, several elementary and junior high schools and scores of companies and private manufacturing units.

[...]

The Tellewoyan hospital, the largest public health centre in the area, is today a sprawling concrete shell with no roof.

A three-storey local administrative building – barely a few hundred yards from the hospital – is also in ruins. The walls of the building sport bullet marks. There are no doors or windows. The furniture was pillaged years ago." (AFP, 21 November 2001)

Majority of "old caseload" internally displaced in and around Monrovia (1996-2000)

- ICRC reports that there are 3,000 IDPs in Monrovia from the south of Liberia
- According to government, as many as 100,000 internally displaced persons reportedly still in Monrovia
- At height of displacement, pre-war population of Monrovia tripled

"Today, Monrovia is still temporary home to almost 3,000 displaced persons from the south. For nearly a decade, unusable or dangerous roads have prevented these people from returning to their homes. But this is changing." (ICRC, 2 March 2001)

"Many IDPs still remain in former VOA (Voice of America) compound with the Sierra Leonean refugees." (Nowrojee, 13 October 2000)

"The LRRRC says it needs to strengthen the capacity of the remaining communities to attract people, including some of the close to 100,000 IDPs in and around Monrovia . . ." (IRIN-WA, 20 July 2000, para. 2)

"The pre-war population of Monrovia was estimated at 500,000. With the massive inflow of displaced persons, it has practically tripled in six years. 'The greatest concentration of displaced persons is found in Monrovia and its outskirts,' said Kallu Kalumiya, UNHCR's representative in Liberia...

[...]

UNHCR's office in Liberia, which opened in 1991, estimates the total number of displaced persons at around 1.2 million, of which 800,000 are in Monrovia or its suburbs; 110,000 in Margibi county, near the capital; 82,000 in Grand Bassa county (whose main city is the port of Buchanan); 80,000 in Cape Mount county, on the Liberian-Sierra Leoneon border; and 56,000 and 40,000 respectively in Bong and in Bomi counties." (Kpatindé 1996, "Internally Displaced Persons", paras. 9-10)

"Most of the internally displaced are currently on the fringes of the capital – Monrovia, in the cities of Harbel and Buchanan east of Monrovia, in the Kakata and Gbanga areas to the north-east of Monrovia, or in Tubmanburg and parts of Grand Cape Mount towards the north-west of the capital." (UNDP, 1997, sect. A.1)

Disaggregated figures

Aid agencies note that most of the IDPs out of Lofa county have been women and children (2001)

- Majority of IDPs crossing the St. Paul River bridge at Gbalatuah were women and children at mid-year
- They showed signs of extreme fatigue and physical weakness after having walked for days

"For people who have had to walk several days through forest after abandoning their villages, WFP food rations represent a vital lifeline. The majority are women and children; they have been showing signs of physical weakness." (WFP, 1 August 2001)

"Population movements from Lofa County have temporarily stabilised, however, an estimated 10,000 people are thought to be on the road or gathered in inaccessible areas. Most of those who have managed to flee the violence and cross the St. Paul River bridge at Gbalatuah, which separates Lofa and Bong counties, are women and children, and many are separated from other family members. Others, rather than crossing the bridge, have reached the camps by trekking through deep forest." (ICRC, 31 July 2001)

"The World Food Programme has finished delivering emergency rations to 40,000 Liberians fleeing fighting between government troops and dissidents in Lofa County, the WFP regional office in Abidjan reported on Thursday [14 June 2001].

It said 30,000 of the displaced were in Bong County and 10,000 in Grand Cape Mount County. WFP regional spokesman Ramin Rafirasme told IRIN that about 70 percent of them were women and children, living in the open air and in abandoned buildings." (IRIN-WA, 14 June 2001)

PATTERNS OF DISPLACEMENT

General

Fighting moves southwards, pushing many displaced people in the same direction (2001-2002)

- Fighting in the northwest of the country in May 2002 sent large numbers of people south towards Monrovia, and west to Sinje in the direction of Sierra Leone
- In May 2002 a fifth IDP camp is established in Montserrado county near Monrovia

- In February 2002, fighting at Klay Junction (47km from Monrovia) forced thousands of people to former IDP camps in the capital
- In January 2002, thousands of IDPs fled the temporary site at Sawmill in Bomi County, and gathered at Klay Junction
- Tension had been steadily building up in the south of Lofa County throughout January 2002
- Fighting between pro- and anti-government forces in north-western Liberia in November - December 2001 caused IDPs to flee the camps of Jenemana and Bopulu for a temporary site at Sawmill

"This new phase of the conflict has led to further population displacements as IDPs have been forced to move again and the overall caseload has increased. The current IDP population is estimated to be up to 80,000 persons. IDPs have been widely dispersed in different directions, stretching the response capabilities of humanitarian organisations.

In Bong County, the Belefanaï camp populations (School camp and Market camp approx. 2,000 families), together with the Gbarnga resident population (approx. 7,000 families), IDP populations at TV Tower, Cari camps (approx. 4,500 families) and local surrounding villages (500 families) fled the fighting and moved in four different directions:

- northeastwards towards Ganta in Nimba County. Approximately 3,000 families arrived and in turn caused a snowball effect whereby a number of Ganta residents left for Saniquellie and others carried on to Côte d'Ivoire;
- northwards over into the Youmou district of Guinea. The borders with Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire are open while the Guinean border remains officially closed;
- southwards towards Botota, Grand Bassa County and eventually Buchanan (approximately 4,000 families);
- towards Monrovia. Most of the 4,500 families from TV Tower, Cari I and II have moved in this direction. Increasing the sizes of the sites on roads to Monrovia (Totota, Kakata).

In Montserrado County, the current IDP populations staying in camps around Monrovia (approx. 20,000 persons) are not yet stable. There are still new arrivals following recent upheaval in Suen/Mecca, Artington and Gbah. In Grand Cape Mount County some 1,000 IDP families and 750 refugee families are staying at Sinje camp." (ICRC, 24 May 2002)

"Thousands of residents fleeing the fighting in Gbah Tubmanburg, Suehn-Mecca District, and Lofa Bridge, have been moving west towards Sinje and south towards Monrovia where they have sought refuge in the Montserrado camps. There were reports of a worsening humanitarian situation as those fleeing the fighting were without their belongings and food; new arrivals have strained the already inadequate Facilities. Most displaced persons that moved towards the Sinje area were reported to be crossing the border into Sierra Leone.

Some displaced IDPs during the fighting in Gbarnga were reportedly returning to CARI to assess the security situation to gather vegetables from their backyard gardens. An unspecified number of these IDPs were reportedly sleeping in the camp.

The Administration of Phebe is considering returning to the hospital under a skeleton staff until the security situation improves. Currently, the hospital is operating at Totota.

LRRRC has declared Sergbeh within the vicinity of Blamasee in northern Montserrado, a new camp. This will be the 5th camp to be established for IDPs. According to LRRRC, about 25,000 IDPs comprising the residual caseload of IDPs in camps around Monrovia and new influxes registered at Ricks and Zuannah Town will be moved to this camp. At the moment, Concerned Christian Council has allocated 25 acres of land for the purpose and has laid out plots. Transit shelters are being constructed to accommodate some of the influxes." (UN OCHA, 31 May 2002)

"Recent fighting between Liberian government troops and LURD rebels in the northwest of the country has driven thousands of people into camps which lack adequate facilities for them.

Relief workers estimate that 12,000 villagers have fled the Guthrie and Gbah region since May 12 to escape clashes between President Charles Taylor's troops and rebels of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).

The rebels have been trying to win control of the provincial town of Tubmanburg, 65 kilometres (40 miles) northwest of Monrovia. Villagers from the area have fled to Zwannah Town on a road junction about 10 kilometres from the capital.

'The displaced began arriving in large numbers last Thursday, when rebels attacked Guthrie and Gbah. We have registered more than 1,000 new arrivals only today,' Sekou Sheriff, Liberia Refugee Agency officer in Zwannah Town's displaced people's camp, said Tuesday.

Many other people who had sought refuge in Sinje, about 30 kilometres further north, had headed for neighbouring Sierra Leone, Sherriff said.

'Most displaced Liberians are moving towards Sierra Leone because they are cut off from Monrovia,' he added." (AFP, 28 May 2002)

"Some of the thousands of desperate people fleeing recent fighting in Klay Junction, a crossroads some 47 km north of the capital Monrovia, have started arriving in former camps for the displaced near Liberia's capital, the head of the Liberian refugee agency, Samuel Brown, told IRIN on Monday.

'They are moving mostly because of fear,' he said.

Brown, the executive director of the Liberian Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission, said many of the internally displaced persons were returning to camps in Zuana Town, Finje, Jah Tondo Town and the Ricks Institute, which had been temporary homes for people displaced by earlier emergencies. He said many others were still in the forests but would likely make their way to the relative safety of Monrovia. The new arrivals are being registered and Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) is providing emergency aid, he said.

Residents of Klay and surrounding villages fled when anti-government dissidents of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy movement attacked the crossroads on Thursday when food aid was distributed, Brown said. 'They burnt cars, took away relief food aid,' he said.

There are also 20,000 IDPs heading for Bong Country, he added, having fled earlier attacks at Sawmill, two weeks ago. They will join another 35,000 IDPs already in Bong.

'The situation is very bad,' he said." (IRIN, 11 February 2002)

"Thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) fled a temporary site some 100 km north of the Liberian capital, Monrovia, on Sunday following exchanges of gunfire near the area, humanitarian sources said on Monday.

By most accounts, some 20,000 IDPs have left the site, Sawmill, and are currently gathered at Klay Junction, 50 km to the south. However, one humanitarian NGO that sent a team to investigate the situation estimated the number of people at Klay Junction at between 6,000 and 8,000. It was still not clear on Monday whether the entire population of Sawmill had deserted the camp.

The latest population movement started early Sunday morning after the IDPs and local residents heard gunshots nearby, sources said. As has been the case for several weeks now, no one was sure who was fighting whom. Some people referred to fighting between groups within the military, while others felt there had been clashes between the army and dissident groups opposed to the government of President Charles Taylor.

Several NGOs told IRIN that the security situation had tightened. Security agents blocked most humanitarian workers from going to Sawmill and Klay Junction on Monday, and also prevented IDPs from moving closer to Monrovia, the sources said." (IRIN, 28 January 2002)

"Tension has been steadily building up in the south of Lofa since January 24, culminating in the Sawmill attack which took place during the night of the 26th to the 27th. The displaced population (close to 3000 people), blocked by Liberian authorities near Sawmill, had been growing increasingly worried by days of frequent gunfire originating just a few miles away. When the violence finally reached their camp, they were forced to quickly evacuate. Panic immediately reached the neighbouring towns and villages of the region, namely Tubmanburg (the largest city of west Liberia with close to 30,000 inhabitants). By Sunday, the teams of Action Against Hunger already present in the area witnesses an endless line of displaced people fleeing down the road leading south.

Claire Magone, head of program, comments: 'Only a few days ago it would have been possible for the displaced people to leave the area of conflict calmly and with their entire family. But once again the military held the civilians back until it was too late, until gunshots were literally heard in the town, leaving the population with no other choice but to chaotically retreat in the middle of the night. And once again, families were separated and dispersed in the panic, leaving many parents without news of their children'.

These populations have been stopped again at the military barrage of Kle Junction, located some 45 kilometers from Monrovia. Once again, they are caught in between the rampant insecurity of the region they have just fled and the restrictions imposed by the authorities, forbidding them to go beyond Kle Junction." (AAH, 31 January 2002)

"Relief agencies have reiterated calls to Liberia's government and the international community for support for the relocation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to safer areas.

Following recent fighting in northwestern Liberia between pro- and anti-government forces, IDPs fled the camps of Jenemana and Bopolu for a temporary site at Sawmill, an area that is closer to the capital, Monrovia. Both Jenemana and Bopolu, which are now empty, were eventually looted and destroyed, WFP's Deputy Head for West Africa, Arnold Vercken, said on Monday.

He said Sawmill had more than 10,000 IDPs and that agencies in the area thought that some 4,000-5,000 more could be on their way to the site, which is about 70 km from Monrovia. Sawmill could have as many as 20,000 IDPs in the next few weeks if the insecurity continued, he added.

According to Vercken, Sawmill is a transit town for soldiers heading for the battlefield. He said that while the site had running water, wood for building houses and firewood, security was a source of concern, and the UN had called on the government to move the IDPs to Clay Junction, about 50 km from Monrovia." (IRIN, 26 December 2001)

"On Friday 7 December 2001 ACT member, Lutheran World Service - Liberia Program reported that fighting had broken out on 23 November 2001 in Fassama (100km north of Bopolu) between government

forces and a dissident faction belonging to the Liberia United for Reconstruction and Democracy (LURD). About 2,000 people, mostly women and children are reported to have made the 100 km journey to Bopolu in search of security, food, and other humanitarian support. While LWF/WS was preparing to assist the newly arrived in Bopolu, internally displaced people (IDPs) started fleeing the camp at Bopolu after claiming that they had heard heavy gun fire coming from North of Bopolu, in the town of Gaingbai.

It is estimated right now that over 5,000 people are moving south of Bopolu towards the Tubmanburg area and Northeast of Bopolu towards lower Bong County. The movement of the IDPs from Bopolu continued throughout Friday and part of Saturday (7 - 8 December) and it has been reported that the camp is now completely deserted. LWF/WS was the last NGO to evacuate the camp at midday, Saturday, 8 December. Other NGOs that evacuated the camp included ICRC, AFC and Save the Children, UK. The people on the move are in total panic and these are mostly women and children who claim to have lost most what little they possessed.

LWF/WS is monitoring the movement of the IDPs towards Tubmanburg and to Bong Mines in the Lower Bong County and at the same time trying to locate potential sites for establishing new camps. In order to do this, and assist the IDPs, LWF/WS are appealing for emergency funding. As a new appeal for 2002 is under preparation, the agency has requested for a Rapid Response Fund for immediate assistance to the affected people." (ACT, 11 December 2001)

Many IDPs forced to hide in and trek through forests to safety (2001)

- Civilians flee quickly with few personal belongings
- Many hide in and trek through forests to avoid human rights abuses and detention by government as well as insurgent forces
- In certain cases, IDPs forced to walk for days and sometimes weeks to safety

"When the fighting started around our village, my daughter Nyapu and I decided it was time to leave," Kedeh recalled. Her eyes wander, betraying nervousness as she speaks, 'We carried what little food we had with us,' she adds. Wrapped in a cloth she conceals the two stumps which are all that remain of her arms. Her daughter later explained that her father had attempted to murder Kedeh by cutting off her arms with a machete before killing himself. No one ever found out why.

Nyapu went on: 'We walked for a whole week but needed to rest often. You see, I was pregnant at the time. Then the LRRRC [Liberian Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement Commission] found us and transported us along with other IDPs here to TV Tower Camp.'" (IFRC, 29 October 2001)

"When fighting broke out in Lofa County at the beginning of the year, Korto [a displaced woman] left in a hurry. Crossing the Saint Paul River into the next county, she got separated from her two children, her sister and her brother. Until she'd done all she could to find them, she didn't want to carry on with the rest of the group. But she was alone in the forest, it was dark and she kept going round in circles. Eventually she abandoned the search and headed south towards the capital, Monrovia. A family have taken her in for the time being, and she's eking out a living selling scraps of charcoal." (ICRC, 29 August 2001)

"For people who have had to walk several days through forest after abandoning their villages, WFP food rations represent a vital lifeline. The majority are women and children; they have been showing signs of physical weakness." (WFP, 1 August 2001)

"Population movements from Lofa County have temporarily stabilised, however, an estimated 10,000 people are thought to be on the road or gathered in inaccessible areas. Most of those who have managed to

flee the violence and cross the St. Paul River bridge at Gbalatuah, which separates Lofa and Bong counties, are women and children, and many are separated from other family members. Others, rather than crossing the bridge, have reached the camps by trekking through deep forest." (ICRC, 31 July 2001)

"The clashes between Government forces, armed groups and the displaced populations have now spread throughout Lofa County (located in the north of the country). After walking through the forest for three weeks, 35,000 people have now been settled into camps set up on the Jenne Manna, Bopulu and Gbarnga roads." (MSF, 3 July 2001)

"Among the 10,000 people who have arrived at Gbarnga, most are showing signs of physical weakness - some of them are suffering from diarrhea. After leaving their native villages three weeks ago, they were obliged to walk for several days through the forest." (MSF, 21 May 2001)

IDP accounts testify to the difficulties faced during periods of flight (2001)

- Testimonies describe desperate circumstances leading to flight
- Accounts also reveal how persons were killed and families separated along the way

Testimonies collected by MSF:

"Many of the people of Voinjama were fleeing. They said the dissidents had taken the town and were heading for my village. I collected my children and my grandchildren, a few things, and a little rice, and we left, along with hundreds of other people. Along the road, we passed through empty villages. Some had been destroyed. To the east of the Lofa River, there's nobody left and some villages were burned down. We were able to survive with what we had and what we found along the way. We had to leave those who were too old or sick behind us, in the village or along the road.

Emmanuel, 34, displaced from the Voinjama region, has also come to live at Cari:

On April 12, the town of Voinjama was attacked. My brother was killed. They took everything from us: our things, our money, sometimes our identity papers. I'm blind. It was very hard to walk for days and days under such conditions. To guide me, my young brother and I held on to each end of a stick. When we got to the bridge, things got even harder. They kept my family but let me go on because I was blind. On the other side, I found myself alone. I couldn't eat or drink, or find a place to sleep. I was completely lost, and I heard people panicking - desperately trying to get into the trucks taking people to Cari. I stayed at Gbalatua, a camp next to the bridge, for a week and a half. Then my younger brother came and brought me here to Cari. MSF has given us a shelter, and life is gradually getting going again. But I don't know when I'll be able to go home, and, anyway, what would I find when I got there? A town and my house destroyed? We'll have to start over. It's the same old story, again and again.

Sonnae is a 35-year-old woman. On June 8, she arrived in Bopulu, to the north of the capital, Monrovia. Before fleeing, she had run a small business in a village close to Voinjama, in Lofa County, in northern Liberia. She had been living alone with her children since her husband left, in 1990.

"On April 23, there were a lot of people leaving. I decided to join them because I'd heard shooting and the noise of firearms in the distance. I left with my four children, taking almost nothing with me. We started walking and walking. I had to leave my father at home. He's too old to keep up with us for long. My brother stayed with him. I was terrified, but I had no choice but to leave. People said that this time we wouldn't be able to hide and wait for everything to calm down.... Everybody was running around, shouting. We walked for over three weeks, sometimes stopping to rest a little. It was really hard for the children. We walked through deserted villages, and some that had been partly destroyed. I fell ill, and we hid until I got better.

We didn't eat much, because there was almost nothing to eat. Sasazu was the first place I found that still had people living in it. They helped us, but I had a few problems with the soldiers there. They took my son's shoes, by force. I don't know why they did it, perhaps just because of the war.

We left quite a few people behind us - mainly people who were old or sick. I saw an old lady die on the road. She just couldn't go on any more. A little farther on, at Fassama, we were brought here, by truck, to Bopulu. Right now, we're living in the school, until the shelters are built. In the mornings, we clear out so that the kids can have their classes. When they're finished, we go back in. There's not much to eat, but it's better than before, anyway. I'd like to know what's happened to the rest of my family." " (MSF, 19 July 2001)

During civil war of 1990s, IDPs fled primarily to Monrovia (1995-2000)

- Displaced families seek safety in ECOMOG-controlled areas
- Internally displaced squat in abandoned buildings
- The Liberian population is very mobile and many upcountry families have relatives in the city

"Humanitarian agencies estimated in July 1997 that by the end of the civil war over 130,000 IDPs had crowded into areas around Monrovia protected by the West African peacekeeping force, ECOMOG." (IRIN-WA 30 October 1998, "Liberia")

". . . 750,000 internally displaced persons who have flocked to the ECOMOG controlled areas of Grand Bassa, Margibi and Montserrado counties, 320,000 of who are living in shelters." (DHA 1 September 1995, para. 2)

"In Liberia, about 500,000 IDPs fled to the capital, Monrovia, during the fighting from 1990 onwards. The Liberian population is very mobile and many upcountry families have relatives in the city. With only a few exceptions, protection was effectively ensured by the presence of ECOMOG forces." (Nowrojee 1998, p. 15)

PHYSICAL SECURITY & FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Physical security

IDP camps are increasingly targeted by armed militia (2002)

- Villages and IDP camps in southern Lofa County, and subsequently in Bong County, have been emptied and reportedly looted by both government and dissident forces - forcing many civilians to seek refuge in camps around Monrovia
- Unknown numbers of civilians from Lofa County are believed to be hiding in the bush
- In May 2002, armed activities in Cape Mount and Bomi Counties resulted in a high military presence in the Sinje Camp, causing panic among both refugees and IDPs living there
- Government forces have reportedly been looting equipment from IDP camps as well as aid agency property

"Since July 2000, thousands of civilians have been forcibly displaced as violence broke up again in the North Western region of the country. Fresh displacement of local population as well as secondary displacement of IDPs have taken place throughout the year and are still on going due to fighting in and around Lofa County.

As a result, villages and IDP camps in the southern part of the Lofa County were emptied and allegedly looted by members of militia and/or dissident groups. Many civilians, both old displaced as well as residents, have sought protection as IDPs in existing and new camps around Monrovia. Others have found safe-haven as refugees in Guinea and Sierra Leone, and large numbers of Sierra Leonean refugees have returned to their country. Most worrying is the situation of an undetermined number of Lofa County residents who reportedly remain hidden in the bush fearful of abuses and exactions inflicted on people attempting to cross borders by armed elements.

Since the Mission departed from Liberia, attacks and threats against IDP camps and villages in the Bong County, a region hitherto unaffected by the conflict, have been increasingly documented. As a result, growing numbers of IDPs continue to concentrate in camps around Monrovia. This trend is likely to continue, at least in the medium term. In view of the above, the humanitarian intervention is currently de facto limited to this area plus some areas within Bong County, where most IDP camps are now located." (OCHA IDP Unit, 21 May 2002)

"There are also reports of armed activity in Tubmanburg and surrounding areas. Armed activities in CapeMount and Bomi counties have led to high military presence at the Sinje Refugee camp causing panic among the refugees and IDPs. In a related development, the diamond rich Lofa Bridge has also been under the control of dissidents since 18th May and fighting is reported in the towns of Madina and Ba displacing more population to the camps around Monrovia.

There are also reports of Government security forces systematically looting Gbarngah, Phebe and environs. Offices of humanitarian organizations have been vandalized; as plumbing and electrical fittings have been removed. WFP lost a generator and computers. Three water pumps installed by OXFAM at the CARI I IDP camp and four bundles of corrugated zinc sheets for the Concerned Christian Community (CCC) shelter at the TV tower IDP camp were reportedly looted. While in Ganta on a needs assessment mission, some of the looted items like farming tools (hoes, cutlasses, and diggers) belonging to WVI were seen at the market.

Merlin, the only health NGO operating in Grand Bassa County and catering to the health needs of the recent influx of IDPs, reported that on 21st May at 3:30 a.m. armed men believed to be local government security personnel, threatened their staff and took away a motorbike from Merlin's office at the Buchanan Government Hospital. The armed men were later seen riding the bike enroute to Monrovia. Due to insecurity, Merlin is considering scaling down its operations in Buchanan." (UN OCHA, 23 May 2002)

Liberian rebels attack refugee camp and abduct five aid agency nurses (June 2002)

- In June 2002, LURD rebels attack Sinje camp - home to both Sierra Leonean refugees and Liberian IDPs - and abduct five NGO nurses
- Weeks of intense negotiations result in the nurses' eventual release in September

"The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) today appealed to Liberian rebels to release a group of nurses who had been abducted from a refugee camp near the Sierra Leone border. Rebels had attacked the Sinje refugee camp yesterday, taking away five local nurses and sending an estimated 11,000 Sierra Leone refugee into flight, a spokesman for UNHCR said at a press briefing in

Geneva. The camp had been cut off from aid for over a month because of sporadic fighting in the surrounding area and the new conflict has rendered any repatriation by road impossible.

The rebels, from a group that calls itself Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), acknowledged that they were holding the nurses, who work for the non-governmental organization MERCI, a partner of the UN agency, spokesman Kris Janowski said." (UN News Service, 21 June 2002)

"Following weeks of intense negotiations, five Liberian nurses abducted June 20 by Liberian rebels were handed over to UNHCR late Monday on the Guinea-Liberia border. A UNHCR staff member reported that the nurses were 'fine.'

UNHCR staff in the southern Guinea town of Nzerekore said the return of the nurses took place near the border town of Macenta on Monday afternoon. The nurses were being taken Monday evening to Nzerekore." (UNHCR, 2 September 2002)

Lack of food pushes people to risk their lives, says MSF (May 2002)

- Food scarcity has forced civilians to travel through dangerous zones where they are the targets of human rights abuses, and has also caused civilians and soldiers to fight over food
- For those IDPs stuck in Lofa county, the rainy period - or 'hunger gap' (June-September)- will be particularly critical
- MSF criticises the international community for 'politicising' humanitarian assistance in Liberia, with poor civilians being punished for the politics of their President

"Since 2000, the war has greatly destabilized Lofa County, and more recently has made steady progress into Grand Cape Mount, Bomi Hills and now Bong counties, causing people to flee.

However, most people fleeing today had already left their homes several months ago, and had been surviving hidden in the bush. They had not been able to reach the camps in Bong, Bomi and Grand Cape Mount counties (Tarvey, Jene Manna, Sawmill, etc.) or those closer to Upper Lofa (Belefanai) due to the location of the front lines. Many families had been attacked by several different groups during the past year, and these attacks not only involved abductions but also rapes, killings and burning people alive in their homes. Families have had great difficulty trying to escape.

The driving cause pushing people to risk their lives to travel through such dangerous areas seems to be lack of food. New arrivals report that the food situation is getting difficult. Some say civilians and soldiers have been fighting over food. Also the time frame for crossing into Guinea is critical. Once the rains begin, the river between Lofa and Guinea will not be passable, and this would mean being stuck in Lofa during the most difficult period of the hunger gap (June - September).

In Liberia, people's right to seek refuge, either within Liberia or in countries of asylum, has been blocked continuously and by all parties to the conflict. Abductions, rape, executions and the use of civilians as human shields are all common occurrences.

The current lack of protection and limited assistance for the Liberian people also draws attention to the mandated agency OCHA that fails to take on their responsibility.

The international community, having successfully politicized humanitarian relief money in the Liberian context, has a responsibility for the plight of these people today. All of the reasons that have been put forward for not funding non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are hypocritical when looking at their

policies in the sub-region. This results in the people, especially the poorest of the poor, being punished for the politics of their President." (MSF, 24 May 2002)

Amnesty International documents human rights abuses carried out in the armed conflict (April-August 2002)

- Civilians fleeing fighting between the LURD and Liberian security forces between April and August 2002 have again been targets of human rights abuses by both parties to the conflict
- Abuses include summary executions, sexual and gender-based violence, abduction of civilians and harassment

"Amnesty International has received reports of civilians who have been targets of killings, torture, including rape, forced recruitment and arbitrary arrest or who have been caught in cross-fire as they tried to flee fighting between the LURD and the Liberian security forces between April and August 2002.

Summary executions, deliberate and arbitrary killings and threats to life

During the fighting in Sawmill near Tubmanburg, Bomi County, central Liberia, in mid-April 2002, Amnesty International received reports of the arrests and executions of men who refused to fight with Liberian security forces. On 19 April 2002, **Fofoe Kanneh**, a Mandingo and former member of ULIMO-K, a former faction in the Liberian civil war, was arrested by Liberian security forces and taken to Sawmill, the frontline of the conflict at the time, and forced to fight. While there, he was shot in the back of the neck and the abdomen three times and then dragged off the main road to die. He was reportedly shot for making the following comment: 'Even if you force people to fight and they are not willing to do so, you'll be creating more rebels against yourself, because they may end up joining the rebels. I really do not want to fight again, I am doing my business.' In early April in Sawmill it was reported that 11 boys below the age of 18 years were recruited to fight by Liberian security forces. They included: **Othello Kyne**, 15, **Anthony Boima**, 15, **Machael Tarlue**, 17, **Osman Turay**, 16, **Haji Gray**, 16, **Francis Toe**, 16, **Ballah Davis**, 17, and **Christopher Bema**, 14. It was reported that four of the 11 were summarily executed when they refused to fight.

On 15 May, in Gardnersville, Paynesville, and West Point, suburban areas of the capital, Monrovia, 13 men between the ages of 15 and 31 years were arrested and forcibly recruited to fight. On their way to being brought to the front line in the northwest of the country, several escaped. Some of those who escaped reported that Liberian security forces had summarily executed four men who had refused to fight. They were killed in the town of Gbah on the road to Bo-Waterside, near the border with Sierra Leone.

Looting regularly takes place after either the LURD or the Liberian security forces invade a village and all the residents abandon it. Sporadic shooting often follows looting as members of both sides fight over looted goods, further putting civilians at risk of being caught in the cross-fire. Many looted goods find their way to Guinea where Liberian refugees have witnessed Guinean soldiers purchasing them. Reportedly, those in command of the Liberian security forces have summarily executed individuals including some members of the security forces under the guise of punishing them for looting. Amnesty International received reports that at least five people were threatened with summary execution for looting during the fighting in Gbarnga on the orders of a high-level member of President Charles Taylor's presidential guard. **Edward Karju**, **Alvin Zarwolo**, and **David Kpantie**, three members of the presidential guard, and two civilians, including **James Sassie**, were reportedly arrested, tied up, and threatened with summary execution. Local human rights defenders in the area learned of this and pressurized local governmental officials to stop the executions.

Amnesty International has received reports that in May 2002 Liberian security forces killed 11 people of Mandingo origin in the town of Gbaney and another eight in the town of Gbeka, which are both close to Gbarnga, Bong Country.

Sexual and gender-based violence, including rape

During fighting which took place in Gbarnga in mid-May 2002 tens of thousands of civilians fled north to Ganta in Nimba County near the border with Côte d'Ivoire. As civilians fled, up to 20 women reported that they were stopped by Liberian security forces and raped on 9 May 2002. Amnesty International has recent reports on at least three of these cases: **FK**, a 21-year-old, was raped by a member of the Liberian security forces behind the Gbarnga Methodist School; **AG**, aged 19, was gang-raped by four government-allied militia inside the Gboveh High School building; and **HF**, aged 33, was abducted and held for two days while she was repeatedly raped by a member of the Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU), part of the Liberian security forces, near Cuttington University College.

There are also reports of displaced and fleeing women and girls being captured and forced to render sexual services. There is at least one case of a girl of Mandingo origin who was taken from her father by a high-level government official as they tried to cross into Guinea. The girl is currently still being held in Nimba County.

Abduction of civilians

In mid-May 2002 a group of around 60 blind Liberians and a British Catholic priest caring for them, Father Gerry Jenkins, were reportedly abducted by the LURD in the town of Tubmanburg, the scene of intense fighting. Father Gerry Jenkins was released, unharmed, in Conakry, the capital of Guinea, two weeks later. The group of blind people were found in late July 2002 when government forces took control of Tubmanburg from the LURD. An LURD spokesman claimed that the LURD had not abducted the group but had helped them to move to safety away from the fighting. The precise circumstances of the conditions under which they were held, however, remain unclear.

On 20 June 2002 the LURD attacked Sinje refugee camp, 80km northwest of Monrovia. As a result, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that around 24,000 Sierra Leonean refugees and displaced Liberians fled the camp, moving either in the direction of Sierra Leone or towards Monrovia. During the attack, the LURD looted and destroyed the camp and abducted five nurses who were working with a Liberian non-governmental organization, Medical Emergency Relief Cooperative International (MERCIC). The nurses were released near the border with Guinea on 2 September 2002 into the care of UNHCR.

In many reported cases of human rights abuses, it is unclear whether government forces or the LURD were responsible, as many combatants do not have uniforms or other means of identification. For example, on 16 July 2002, at least 20 Sierra Leonean civilians were abducted from three villages in Kailahun District, eastern Sierra Leone. Following an investigation, Sierra Leone government officials concluded that the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) were responsible. In early September 2002, however, the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that the LURD had abducted the civilians. There are very few independent sources of information in areas of fighting, where many human rights abuses take place. This means that it is often difficult to obtain verifiable information about abuses or to attribute responsibility.

Harassment

Other human rights abuses carried out by Liberian security forces and the LURD during the fighting in Gbarnga included harassment, destruction of property, burning of houses, detention at checkpoints, and extortion of personal belongings from fleeing civilians. During the attack on 9 May 2002, as civilians fled, Liberian security forces stopped and asked them to produce identification cards which they were forced to

hand over together with a fine of 25 Liberian dollars. If civilians did not have any identification they were detained by Liberian security forces for questioning. On 10 May 2002 Liberian security forces erected a barricade at St. Johns Bridge, just outside of Gbarnga on the road to Ganta. News of the barricade forced fleeing civilians into the bushes to hide and bypass the road in order to avoid harassment at the barricade." (Amnesty International, 1 October 2002)

Human Rights Watch reports that both government forces and rebels have committed war crimes (2001-2002)

- Between June 2001 and June 2002, HRW collects testimonies stating that Liberian government forces have carried out numerous summary executions of civilians, widespread rape, looting and burning of villages, and forced conscription
- LURD forces have also carried out serious abuses, but to a lesser extent

"Liberian government forces fighting against rebels from the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) have committed war crimes and other serious human rights abuses, including summary executions of scores of civilians, widespread rape of girls and women, and looting and burning of villages. Hundreds of civilians have been forcefully conscripted and sent to the battlefield in an arbitrary manner, without advance notice or any set procedures, and often with little or no military training. The LURD forces have also carried out serious abuses, although to a lesser extent, including summary executions of alleged government collaborators, rape, and the forced recruitment of civilians, including child soldiers.

[...]

Scores of testimonies taken by Human Rights Watch from June 2001 through March 2002 in Liberia and neighboring Sierra Leone and Guinea, provide compelling evidence that both Liberian government forces and LURD forces have committed war crimes and other gross abuses of human rights against civilians. In researching this report, Human Rights Watch interviewed more than three hundred victims and witnesses of the abuses, as well as Liberian army and Ministry of Defense officials and LURD commanders.

The picture that emerges is one of government troops and pro-government militias summarily killing, torturing and abusing civilians, raping women and girls, and abducting civilians for forced labor and fighting in the northwest. They have systematically looted and burned towns, and in some cases government troops at checkpoints have blocked displaced civilians from moving to safety. Government soldiers systematically extort money and other goods from those seeking refuge. Citing the rebel threat, the Liberian government is remilitarizing society-remobilizing ex-combatants, and permitting the proliferation of militia groups. The government has forcibly recruited hundreds of young men in a manner not consistent with their rights. There are no publicly established and clear criteria and procedures governing conscription, while recruits are not given any advance warning of conscription, any indication of how long they will be forced to serve, nor any idea of where they will be taken for training or for combat. In many cases, they effectively receive no training before they are deployed. In the course of combat, they are often ordered to commit human rights violations.

LURD rebel forces have also committed gross abuses against civilians, including summary killings, abduction, rape, abuses in the context of forced recruitment of men and boys, and forced labor. Rebel abuses appear to be less widespread and systematic than those committed by government forces. A large proportion of LURD fighters were previously affiliated to the two factions of the rebel United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) during the pre-1997 civil war." (HRW, 1 May 2002)

"In the nine-page letter to the Security Council, Human Rights Watch documented how, between April and June 2002, Liberian government forces committed scores of war crimes and other serious abuses against civilians in the northwest of the country. Fighting has raged in the country since the start of a rebel incursion in mid-2000.

Recent victims described to Human Rights Watch how members of the government army and pro-government militias executed numerous civilians, shot and beaten to death males of all ages for resisting conscription, carried out widespread rape of women and girls as young as twelve, subjected hundreds of civilians to forced labor, and restricted the movement of hundreds of civilians intending to flee as refugees into neighboring Sierra Leone and Guinea.

Another disturbing development is the renewed use of child combatants by members of the Liberian security forces. Children are once again being recruited to form part of the army and pro-government militias.

In the face of renewed rebel action, the government of Charles Taylor has become increasingly intolerant of dissent. Since the imposition of a state of emergency in February 2002, the government has steadily imprisoned, harassed, and beaten individuals that have been critical of its policies.

Human Rights Watch also expressed concern about the fate of five nurses from the Liberian humanitarian organization, Merci, who were abducted on June 20, 2002 from the Sinje camp area by the Liberian rebels. The Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebels have admitted holding the nurses in their northern stronghold of Voinjama. In addition, Human Rights Watch continues to receive credible reports of continued forced conscription of civilians, including children, by the LURD." (HRW, 19 July 2002)

Liberian security forces responsible for human rights abuses against IDPs in Liberia (December 2001)

- Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU) appears to be responsible for many of the abuses
- Amnesty has documented continuing human rights abuses, including torture, rape, and forced recruitment
- All ethnic groups are apparently at risk
- Arrests of suspected "dissidents" are carried out in arbitrary manner

"The international community must take urgent and concrete steps to protect vulnerable populations from further human rights abuses," said Amnesty International today following a recent visit to Liberia where researchers found that civilians have become the main targets in the armed conflict in Lofa County.

The armed conflict, which last week reportedly spread to Gbopulu county between Liberian security forces and armed opposition groups based in Guinea, has been going on since early 1999. Amnesty International has documented continuing human rights abuses, including torture while in incommunicado detention, rape of women and girls, forced military recruitment of men and boys, and killings, going back to at least mid-2000.

In recent weeks, the targeting of civilians has become increasingly arbitrary, with all ethnic groups at risk. Previously, members of the Mandingo ethnic group were the primary targets and victims of human rights abuses.

Those responsible for these abuses include Liberian security forces -- the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU) and national police -- and armed opposition groups based in neighbouring Guinea. The Sierra Leone armed opposition Revolutionary United Front (RUF), fighting alongside Liberian security forces, has also been responsible for human rights abuses against Liberian civilians.

Since the beginning of December 2001, government sources have reported large-scale killings and other attacks on civilians in Gbopulu county by 'dissidents'. The main armed political group, the Liberians United

for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), has denied responsibility. There has been no independent confirmation of the large-scale killings.

Amnesty International is alarmed by the continuing lack of protection for civilians. Humanitarian agencies working in camps for internally displaced people (IDP) in Gbopulu county have had to leave temporarily due to the conflict. The lack of international presence in the camps raises urgent and serious concerns for IDP protection. Many families have become separated during their flight from Lofa county and there are large numbers of unaccompanied women and children in IDP camps. Liberian civilians and Sierra Leonean refugees in camps in Cape Mount county are also at risk." (AI, 11 December 2001)

"Testimonies and reports gathered by Amnesty International suggest that since late April 2001, government security forces, especially the Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU), a special military unit frequently accused of human rights violations, have extrajudicially executed, arbitrarily detained or tortured -- including by the rape of women and girls -- more than 200 civilians suspected of supporting armed opposition groups. Civilians fleeing Lofa County have often been prevented from moving to safer areas by the security forces, on suspicion that dissidents were among them.

Armed opposition combatants, reportedly based in Guinea and belonging to the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), have also been responsible for abuses in recent months. They have reportedly carried out summary executions, torture and rape of civilians suspected of collaborating with the Liberian security forces.

[...]

"The testimonies and cases gathered by Amnesty International show that arrests of suspected dissidents have often been carried out on a purely arbitrary basis. Torture has been systematically used to make people confess their supposed backing for either the LURD or the security forces. Women and children have been the most vulnerable people among those displaced. The scale of sexual violence raises concerns about rape being used as a weapon of terror against the civilian population, and countless victims of rape are currently in urgent need of medical and psycho-social assistance." (AI, 1 August 2001)

LURD is also responsible for human rights abuses against civilians (August 2001)

- Several reports at end 2001 that LURD combatants involved in killing, torture and rape of civilians
- Information about these abuses is limited, but persons are apparently targeted on suspicion of collaborating with government forces

"There have been several reports that in the past few months LURD combatants have summarily and deliberately killed, tortured and raped unarmed civilians. Detailed information on individual abuses is limited, but it appears that some civilians including women have been targeted on suspicion of collaborating with government forces.

On 15 April 2001 a young woman in Voinjama, aged about 21 years old, was reportedly raped by a LURD fighter. According to eyewitnesses, when the LURD fighter was caught raping her, he was said to have been summarily executed by a local LURD commander. On 16 April 2001 in Voinjama, two men wearing civilian clothes and suspected of being members of the Liberian security forces were reportedly killed by LURD fighters. The two men were in their early 30s.

In late June 2001, a 29-year-old man was captured by LURD fighters while trying to flee renewed fighting in Kolahun. His hands were tied behind his back and he was taken to a house on the outskirts of Kolahun where two other men and a young woman, all civilians, were being held by the LURD fighters. Two days later, before managing to escape, he reportedly witnessed the deliberate killing of the two men detained with him on the orders of a high-ranking officer, apparently for failing to give

information about government forces' movements and numbers in the area. The young woman detained with them, around 23 years old, was reportedly tortured, including by being repeatedly raped and having a piece of wood forced into her vagina. Subsequently, she also managed to escape.

Amnesty International has been unable to collect further information on these particular cases of rape and killings. However, the organization has received other similar reports and is concerned that they may be indicative of a pattern of unlawful killings and rape being carried out by armed opposition forces in Liberia." (AI, 1 August 2001)

Amnesty International documents widespread human rights abuses against civilians, including specific IDP targets (August 2001)

- Amnesty International documents extrajudicial execution of some 35 people in Gilima and Vahun, upper Lofa County, in May 2001
- The Anti-Terrorist Unit and other security forces are reported to have tortured civilians in raids on IDP camps
- Many IDPs are reported to have been arrested in camps
- Hundreds of women fleeing violence in northern Liberia have been raped and gang-raped
- Victims of rape, including young girls, have been held in unofficial detention centres by Liberian security forces
- Rape victims have in some cases identified high-ranking Liberian officials
- Scale of rape raises question as to whether Liberian security forces are using it as a weapon of war
- Aid organisations report that many victims of rape are pregnant

"Between 29 May and 11 June 2001, more than 35 people -- possibly all civilians -- were reportedly arrested in Gilima and Vahun, upper Lofa County, on suspicion of backing the rebels. They were blindfolded, tied and taken away by ATU and other government forces who told relatives that the detainees would be taken southwards to Gbaama, Gbapolu County. Villagers and relatives who subsequently travelled to Gbaama were denied information by the security forces on the detainees and their place of detention, but heard from unofficial sources that the detainees were being held in a village nearby on the road to Weasua -- possibly Zuah. On 16 June 2001, a Liberian security forces commander reportedly arrived in Gbaama, publicly threatened to kill the detainees, and was later the same day seen taking the road to Weasua with ATU officers. The officers reportedly returned a few hours later singing war slogans, firing in the air and using phrases suggesting they had killed the detainees: "We fucked with them"; "We did it"; "We will be back". There are widespread fears that some or all of the detainees may have been extrajudicially executed." (AI, 1 August 2001)

"The ATU and other security forces are reported to have tortured civilians arrested in raids and night searches in camps for internally displaced persons. Since early May 2001, more than 100 people who fled Lofa County, including children, are reported to have been arrested in the camps or at security force checkpoints and arbitrarily detained without charge or trial. According to relatives and other unofficial sources in Liberia, some have been held at ATU bases in Bong County, including at Gbatala, an unofficial detention centre where detainees have been held incommunicado, regularly tortured and in some cases extrajudicially executed. Others are reported to have been held at the central police station in Gbarnga. Families have been prevented from seeing the detainees and eyewitnesses have reported deaths among the detainees there as a result of torture aimed at forcing them to confess to supporting the LURD.

Some displaced people arrested since the end of May 2001-- including a number who were blindfolded, flogged and taken in early June 2001 from a centre for displaced people at the Central Agricultural Research Institute, Bong County -- have been released within days. Several others are reported to be still in

custody. Amnesty International is investigating reports that some of this group have died in custody possibly at Gbatala base as a result of severe beatings. The names of the victims who allegedly died in custody are known to Amnesty International, but they have not been identified here for fear of reprisals against their relatives." (AI, 1 August 2001)

For testimonies of torture victims, see AI report "Liberia: Killings, torture and rape continue in Lofa County" dated August 2001 [External link].

"According to a local Christian charity running the camps [in and around Voinjama], at least 300 of the refugee women living there have been raped.

An official of the organisation, Concerned Christian Charity, said about 30 percent of these raped women were pregnant. Hundreds of others had suffered other brutalities, he said." (AFP, 19 November 2001)

"During armed conflict, women and adolescent girls suffer disproportionately as they are exposed to violence, rape and prostitution with the high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and STDs. The virtual collapse of most of the family structures and the limited capacity of families to provide adequate care has exacerbated the situation of children, both in IDP camps and in war-affected communities." (UN, November 2001)

"Cases of torture continue. In recent months, dozens of women fleeing insecure areas of northern Liberia have reported being tortured by the security forces, including by being repeatedly raped or gang-raped, and being threatened with death. Also alarming is the systematic torture used by the security forces to punish criminal suspects." (AI, 16 October 2001)

"Women and girls have been raped -- often by gangs of soldiers -- after fleeing the fighting and being arrested at checkpoints. Other victims of rape have been arrested in war zones, including Vahun and Kolahun, on suspicion of backing the dissidents, being related to dissidents or being spies. Victims of rape have often been held in unofficial detention centres, such as abandoned private houses used by government soldiers as their bases. Members of the security forces are reported to have beaten, kicked and stabbed their victims with bayonets when they resisted rape. Victims have often been threatened with reprisals by the perpetrators if they lodge a complaint.

Victims have in some cases identified high-ranking officials in the Liberian security forces as involved in raping them. The scale of rape carried out by the Liberian security forces raises serious concerns that sexual violence against women has been used as a weapon of war to instil terror among the civilian population. There is no doubt that the impunity which the security forces have enjoyed for rape and other human rights violations has been a key factor in allowing rape and other forms of sexual violence to reach the current alarming proportions.

[...]

Cases of rape continued to be reported in June and July 2001. In early June 2001, a woman was seized in Vahun district by the ATU and gang-raped for more than ten days including by the local ATU commander. When she was released, she was threatened with death by the ATU if she lodges a complaint. On 12 June 2001, a woman from the town of Voinjama was arrested by the ATU in lower Lofa County. She was accused of being a spy and collaborating with the dissidents, although she said she had fled south to find members of her family who had previously fled Voinjama. She reported being repeatedly gang-raped before being released a few days later. In late June, she is reported to have said, 'I am not safe anymore and I can't go among people'. She was traumatized and feared she might have caught sexually transmitted diseases as a result of the rape." (AI, 1 August 2001)

"Participants expressed concern that displaced women fleeing Lofa often become victims of rape and sexual abuse at the hands of the armed actors. This conduct was said to be closely linked to drug abuse among soldiers. Also, abduction of women for forced domestic labour often lead to rape. Reportedly, displaced men are also abducted by the armed actors, often when stopped at roadblocks. Participants

reported that a number of IDPs suspected of being rebel collaborators were abducted from TV Tower and CARI camps, south of Lofa County." (NRC October 2001)

"Children are vulnerable to attacks by both rebel and government forces; women and girls are reportedly being raped; there is a serious lack of access to food supplies and clean water; there is a lack of access to adequate health provision; diarrhoea amongst IDPs is on the increase; child protection relating to status of young boys; separation of children from parents and families." (SCF, 22 May 2001)

"In early March 2001, four other women, two of them Mandingos, and another 17-year-old girl, also suspected of supporting the dissidents, were reportedly arrested at checkpoints in upper Lofa County, held in Vahun for a few weeks and gang-raped by members of the ATU and the SOD. Two of the victims were wounded with a knife when they refused to have sex with the security officers who then raped them.

[...]

"Since the renewal of armed incursions from Guinea into Lofa County in July 2000, the human rights situation has progressively deteriorated. Women and girls fleeing the outbreak of hostilities since February 2001 have been arrested at checkpoints and gang-raped by Liberian government forces. In early April 2001, a pregnant woman was grabbed near Zorzor, Lofa County, by an officer of the Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU), a special government security unit. She was repeatedly raped until being released a few days later. ATU officers beat her and stamped on her stomach, as a result of which she lost her baby." (AI, 30 April 2001)

For testimonies of rape victims, see AI report "Liberia: Killings, torture and rape continue in Lofa County" dated August 2001 [\[External link\]](#).

IDP children are forcibly recruited by security forces and armed groups in Liberia (October 2001)

- Displaced children are often victim to forced recruitment
- As many as 10,000 children fought as combatants in the Liberian civil war

"On-going conflict in the sub-region has resulted in the continued recruitment of minors into various armed groups. It is estimated that the number of children involved as combatants during the civil war in Liberia was as high as 10,000. Reports indicate that the risk of recruitment and conscription of youth under eighteen years of age is still a reality, with unemployment rates of 85% and only 57% of children attending primary school. Many Liberian youth are engaging in conflict within bordering countries lured by promises of US dollars and ill-gotten goods." (UN, November 2001)

"According to participants, forced recruitment has been a standard practice in Liberia's recent history, and one which is affecting in particular the displaced men fleeing Lofa County. Furthermore, displaced children are also victims of forced recruitment. One participant pointed out that less than 30% of Liberians possess birth certificates, which sometimes makes it difficult to determine who is a minor. Therefore, the workshop recommended the development of clear standards for recruitment into the armed forces and strict implementation of those rules." (NRC, October 2001)

Freedom of Movement

IDPs, in particular men and boys, have been denied freedom of movement out of Lofa county area

- Men and boys have been denied freedom of movement out of Lofa county over last months

- IDPs, in particular boys and men, are afraid of forced conscription and other abuses during registration by Liberian army
- Many IDPs have been held back at St. Paul's Bridge near Gbarnga
- Aid agencies have not been permitted to be present during registration of IDPs by Liberian security forces

"Relief agencies reported that only women, children, and elderly men are being permitted to leave Lofa County. GOL forces are detaining young men for fear they may be dissidents or forcing them to join the ranks of the GOL military." (USAID, 3 October 2001)

"People on the run are crossing the bridge [Saint Paul Bridge, close to Gbarnga] on foot, after having gone through rigorous army scrutiny on the Lofa side. Most of those who pass through are women and young children. It is rumored that young boys of above 12 years and able bodied men are afraid to go through the army checkpoints for fear of being conscripted into the army.

[...]

Most of the IDP's have been on the way for four to six weeks, trekking through the bush while heading for Belefanai. St Paul's river is quite big and only few people attempt to cross on self-made rafts. When reaching Belefanai, IDP's are scared to go into town for fear of being harassed, and raped. They wait in hiding until a group of IDP's has crossed the bridge and then go into town to be screened by the soldiers. Aid agencies are not allowed to be present." (ACT, 25 May 2001)

"Thousands of IDPs waiting to cross into Bong were being held up by security forces at a bridge over a river between the two counties." (IRIN-WA, 25 May 2001)

"Furthermore, hundreds of people are still blocked at the Saint Paul Bridge, close to Gbarnga. Although authorization to cross the bridge was given last week, only women, children and the elderly are effectively being allowed to cross, under the supervision of Liberian soldiers." (MSF, 21 May 2001)

Vulnerable groups

IDP children suffer great emotional and physical stress as result of abuses and generalised violence (August-November 2001)

- Child abuse, including sexual abuse, is worrying with IDP girls in camps at particular risk
- Inadequate legal frameworks leave children vulnerable to rape, sexual exploitation and forced recruitment

"The rights of Liberian children have been threatened, undermined, and in some cases, violated during the hostilities between Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Many children are now homeless, while others, particularly young boys, have been forcibly separated from their families. Child abuse, including sexual abuse, is of particular concern, with girls facing risks during displacement and in camps." (UN, November 2001)

"Displaced children suffer the emotional distress of being uprooted from their homes, as well as extreme material deprivation. These children have little or no access to educational opportunities or livelihood options that are not exploitative. Variable access to food sources means that children do not sustain a good level of nutrition, while variable access to health services including few if any reproductive and sexual health services makes it difficult for them to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. Minimal access to water and sanitation services exposes children to the risk of

disease. In addition to this, inadequate legal frameworks to protect children leave them open to abuse in the form of rape, exploitation and recruitment into the armed forces." (SCF, 2 August 2001)

SUBSISTENCE NEEDS (HEALTH NUTRITION AND SHELTER)

General

Poverty deepens as fighting spreads (2002)

- Continuous displacement has caused another large-scale humanitarian crisis - almost 5 years after the end of Liberia's civil war in the 1990s
- Approximately one third of the country is inaccessible to humanitarian organisations
- More than 80 percent of the population live below the poverty line

"Four and a half years after the end of a 10-year devastating civil war, Liberia is again faced with a large humanitarian crisis due to persistent fighting and continuous dislocation of population. The insecurity situation has rendered about one-third of the country (Lofa, Gbarpolu and Bong) non-functional and largely inaccessible to the international humanitarian community. The insecurity and poor governance have delayed reconstruction and social reintegration programmes deepened poverty and made the resilient communities more vulnerable to diseases and HIV/AIDS. Over 80 per cent of the population live below the poverty line and more than half in abject poverty. The unemployment is at a high of 85%. With adult literacy of only 39% (25% for females), infant mortality rate of 117 per 1,000 live births, under-five mortality of 194 per 1,000 and maternal mortality rate of 578 per 100,000, Liberia remains one of the poorest countries in the world." (UNICEF, 29 May 2002)

Basic humanitarian needs of civilians caught in the conflict are not being met, according to MSF (May 2002)

- MSF describes humanitarian response to the growing Liberian crisis as 'weak and inadequate'
- 'Corrupt system' prevents relief reaching the most vulnerable, charges MSF
- Civilians are constantly on the move, according to MSF, because the relevant government body has put them in sites too close to military bases or front lines

"The conflict in Liberia is escalating daily. Fresh attacks around Gbarnga have emptied out six camps in Bong County. Camp and town residents alike, approximately 40,000 people in total, have fled the area. In addition, an unknown number of people are hiding in the bush, trapped by the fighting and completely cut off from assistance and protection. According to testimonies gathered by MSF, people's movements are being controlled and they are suffering from atrocities perpetrated by all parties to the conflict.

Still, there is no strong international commitment to meet the growing humanitarian needs in Liberia. This is clearly reflected in a lack of initiatives to increase funding for UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. As a result, the humanitarian response is weak and inadequate, and the basic needs of the civilians caught in this conflict are not being met.

Although given the responsibility by the Secretary General in 1997 to act as the lead agency for IDPs, OCHA is not assuming its role. Since OCHA is not operational in Liberia, by default the LRRRC is left alone to care for the IDPs. However, LRRRC is a government agency and therefore driven by political objectives rather than humanitarian needs.

For example, camp population figures declared by LRRRC are accepted as official UN figures and dictate the allocation of material assistance. Recently, the LRRRC/UN said that there are 63,000 people living in four displaced camps near Monrovia, but the MSF teams working in these camps estimate a total population of less than 20,000. Even with inflated numbers, this corrupt system prevents relief from reaching those who are most vulnerable.

In addition, civilians are constantly on the move because the LRRRC has installed them in sites too close to military bases or the front lines. Most disturbingly, the displaced cannot raise issues of concern to an independent humanitarian presence in the camps with the mandate to protect them.

As in Sierra Leone, the UN mission in Liberia is under pressure due to its dual mandate: on the one hand to monitor the sanctions and on the other hand to carry out its humanitarian role. Once again, these objectives are often contradictory.

MSF is extremely concerned with the lack of freedom of movement and right to seek safe refuge for Liberian civilians. Guinea continues to keep its border closed without condemnation from the international community and the obstacles to reach Sierra Leone are still there." (MSF, 21 May 2002)

Health

IRC assessment reveals critical health situation of IDPs in camps (September 2002)

- An IRC health assessment in 11 IDP camps and schools reveals a deteriorating health situation facing IDPs, with mortality rates above the emergency threshold
- According to IRC, the situation facing IDPs is much worse than that facing refugees
- Water and sanitation facilities in camps are identified as a major problem
- Malaria and diarrhoea are the main causes of mortality

"The health situation facing internally displaced Liberians has deteriorated recently and mortality rates have risen above the emergency threshold, a new assessment reported on Tuesday.

'Crude mortality rates are two times over the emergency threshold. Under five mortality rates are three times over the threshold,' the International Rescue Committee (IRC) reported.

'The situation deteriorated during the last months and requires urgent, continuous support from the international community. Compared with Liberian refugees, their situation [that of internally displaced persons, or IDPs] is much worse,' IRC added.

The agency's warning was based on a health assessment it conducted in July and August in IDP camps in Bong and Montserrado Counties, in north-central and western Liberia respectively. There are 14 camps housing at least 100,000 IDPs in Liberia.

Eleven camps and schools were included in the IDP assessment. Five of the camps: Serghbeh, Blamese, Ricks, Wilson and Jartondo, are located in Montserrado County, which has an estimated IDP population of 77,000.

The remaining six camps are in Bong County, where there is an estimated IDP population of 39,000 people.

'132 deaths were reported between July 2001 and 13 August 2002 in Bong and Montserrado camps. Sixty six of the deaths were in children under five,' the IRC reported.

'Nearly 60 percent occurred during the months of July and August,' it said, adding that this was 'consistent with recent reports of IDP management teams during that period.'

According to the assessment, the number of latrines varies from 30 in Serghbeh camp to 200 in Blamese, but none of the camps meets the minimum Sphere standards for humanitarian relief of one pit latrine per 20 people.

The IRC said there was a need to increase the number of latrines to at least one per 50 people in the short term, and to construct emergency trench latrines.

Water availability in the camps was a problem, too, the agency said, recommending: an increase in supply availability to 15 litres per person per day; that drinking water should be chlorinated; and that [water and sanitation] teams should be placed in camps to ensure access to safe water.

The IRC said there should be an aggressive hygiene promotion campaign focusing on four messages: use of safe water sources, latrine usage, safe water handling, and the need for hand washing.

'It is recommended that an additional health post be built, equipped and staffed in the Maimu 1 camp. Serghbeh health facilities should be provided with additional qualified staff and logistical support. Shelter needs of IDPs in Ganta need to be solved,' the agency stated.

Since May 2002, thousands of Liberians have been displaced as a result of clashes between government forces and dissidents.

'The last wave of displacement has created additional needs in terms of shelter, health, sanitation and food aid,' according to the IRC.

Morbidity data from three health units in Ganta showed that malaria is the first cause of consultation, followed by diarrhoea, it said.

Given the current situation and the worrying nature of scenarios that may arise, funding will need to be increased to meet IDP demands, the IRC added.

However, the usual sources of funding are being reduced and response to the United Nations-led Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for 2002 had only received 22 percent of the funds requested by May." (IRIN, 2 October 2002)

For the full IRC health assessment report, [click here](#)

Poor health facilities in IDP camps in and around Monrovia (2002)

- In five camps visited near Monrovia in August 2002, poor water and sanitation facilities led to outbreaks of diarrhoea
- A diarrhoea/ cholera epidemic is anticipated in and around Monrovia

"Heavy rains and the recent flooding in Montserrado County has increased the risk of contracting diarrhea for most of the population who are using shallow wells as sources of drinking water. In response to recent reports of diarrhea cases in IDP camps, a fact finding team comprising WHO and the Ministry of Health (MOH), was fielded in Montserrado camps to identify the underlying causes of the alleged diarrhea cases in the camps and to assess the adequacy of existing response capacity and immediate additional needs.

The team observed the problem in the five camps visited, range from unsanitary disposal of waste/garbage; insufficient sanitary facilities/tools/water supply and inadequate hygiene promotion to poor health services/structure, lack of reproductive health facilities, ORT corners and Immunization services including lack of a 24 hour health service and base radio or ambulance for referral, starvation, increased death cases and insufficient shelter. The team recommended improving sanitary conditions and the addition of health facilities and improving camp management.

As part of additional response to the diarrhea incident in IDP camps, and parts of Monrovia, the Ministry of Health and NGOs in the health sector have decided to carry out a thorough assessment of the diarrhea situation in order to recommend appropriate measures to address the situation. Meanwhile, all health sector NGOs providing services at IDP Camps have been requested to pre-position drugs and medical supplies as part of an emergency preparedness action for an anticipated diarrhea/cholera epidemic in and around Monrovia." (UN OCHA, 30 August 2002)

Access to health services in Liberia is poor (November 2001)

- Access to health care limited
- Major causes of morbidity in children are acute respiratory infection, malaria and diarrhoeah
- Infant mortality stands at 117/1000 live births and under-five mortality stands at 235/1000 live births

"Access to health care for most of the population is extremely limited. The major causes of morbidity in children, especially the under five-year-old, are acute respiratory infection (53%), malaria (35%) and diarrhoea (22%). The leading causes of mortality in children are mainly due to preventable diseases: neonatal tetanus (23%), acute respiratory infection (18%), and malaria (15%). Infant mortality stands at 117/1000 live births (DHS, 1999) and under-five mortality stands at 235/1000 live births (2000). With these high rates, Liberia is among the ten most underdeveloped countries in the world.

There is a prevalence of iron deficiency anaemia among children, especially among the under-fives throughout the country. There is also a high prevalence of iron deficiency anaemia in women, particularly pregnant women. The average rate in women of childbearing age is approximately 34% (pregnant women 57.8% and 30.9% for non-pregnant women). In 1997, mild to severe acute malnutrition in Liberia was 6.1%, while chronic malnutrition was 18.5%. In 1998, 56% of Liberian children under five-year-old were moderately to severely malnourished with stunting of growth apparent. These conditions are expected to be much worse today particularly in areas affected by the current instability.

Despite the recorded upward trend in sexually transmitted diseases in Liberia since the advent of HIV/AIDS, only 47% of the population believe that the virus and its deadly ailment are acquired through sexual transmission, while only 31% believe that they are acquired through blood transmission." (UN, November 2001)

IDP children are at particular risk when it comes to health (March-November 2001)

- UNICEF assessments in IDP camps reveal rising diarrhoea, malaria and vaccine-preventable diseases among children
- Health services are poor due to conflict, affecting children first

"Assessments carried out by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the IDP camps reveal rising diarrhoea, malaria and a growing incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases among children." (UN, November 2001)

"As a result of the volatile situation and the massive displacement of people, children are being denied of their rights to basic health and education. Basic social services are virtually non-existent in the inaccessible and difficult-to-reach areas. The increased vulnerability and low capacity of the families to provide care, infant mortality is reportedly unacceptably high - close to twice the national average of 159 per 1,000 live births." (UNICEF, 13 June 2001)

"Post-war Liberia is faced with enormous challenges including increasing numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees and impoverished communities who have had to begin resettlement from scratch. This has been made more difficult by frequent cross-border incursions by rebel groups and the movement of thousands of families seeking refuge in outlying counties - most notably Lofa, Bong and Nimba. As a result of recent hostilities, an estimated additional 40,000 children's basic survival is at risk in those counties and an estimated 80,000 in other counties affected by displacement. Consequently the additional load to the already minimal basic services will severely stretch capacity.

The under-five mortality rate in the affected areas is above the national average of 159 per 1,000 live births. Malaria, acute respiratory infections, diarrhoeal diseases are the major causes of morbidity and mortality in children under five years of age. These preventable diseases are closely linked to the lack of safe drinking water, environmental sanitation and inadequate knowledge and inappropriate practices by household/community. The proportion of fully immunised children under the age of one remains alarmingly low at 33%. The proportion of pregnant women vaccinated against tetanus stands at 14%. As a result of the currently low vaccine coverage rates, Liberian children frequently face outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases. This is particularly complex when a community experiences a population influx – which dramatically increases the potential for epidemics. The availability of qualified staff, particularly at the rural and peripheral health facilities is limited." (UN OCHA, 23 March 2001, p.125)

Food and Nutrition

IDPs living in highly precarious conditions are dependent on food aid for survival (February 2002)

- 30,000 IDPs in Bong County are receiving WFP food aid

- WFP is extremely concerned about the fate of many thousands of others in the north and north west who are out of the reach of aid agencies

"WFP's food represents a vital lifeline for the IDPs who are living in partially destroyed buildings, warehouses or, simply, the open air.

Many have had to walk several days through forest after abandoning their villages and are showing clear signs of physical weakness.

When fighting broke out between pro- and anti-government forces in Lofa County, northern Liberia, in May 2001, some 40,000 people were displaced.

Of these, 30,000 are still in Bong County where they are receiving WFP food aid, but aid workers remain extremely concerned about the fate of thousands who remain out of reach in the north and north west and are surviving in highly insecure conditions.

The conflict in Liberia is part of an on-going, constantly shifting conflict in a diamond-rich area, where the borders of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone frequently intersect." (WFP, 5 February 2002)

Food shortages and malnutrition have been problems throughout the course of 2001 (May-November 2001)

- New IDPs from Gbarpolu county are arriving in a worse state of health, the majority suffering from malnutrition
- Number of malnourished children was steadily increasing at mid-year
- At mid-year aid agencies voiced serious concerns about the availability of food for IDPs

"Amidst reports of movements of dissident groups in Gbarpolu County, vulnerable Liberians continue to flee their homes for the relative safety of IDP camps. The new IDPs are arriving in a worse state of health, the majority suffering from malnutrition. There are many women-headed and even child-headed households in the camps, who are more vulnerable to sexual violence and are at increased risk from contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The continual influx of IDPs is putting an increasing pressure on the coping mechanisms of already impoverished host communities as well as a strain on existing facilities in the camps." (OCHA, 5 November 2001)

"For the past few days, at those sites which MSF teams have been able to access, the number of malnourished children has been increasing as the families have used up their food stocks. In addition to respiratory infections and malaria, cases of bloody diarrhea have also been reported. At Belefannah, where humanitarian organizations have had limited access for the past month, the fate of around 6,000 people is particularly alarming." (MSF, 3 July 2001)

"She [the resident head of UNICEF, Scholastica Kimaryo] said the fighting had seriously undermined food supplies. 'The threat of food insecurity is very high, not least because Lofa County is Liberia's bread basket and as long as the war is going on and people are on the run, it means there will not be a harvest in the next season,' she said." (AFP 7 June 2001)

"The shortage of relief food items to adequately cater for more than 80,000 persons displaced by fighting in Liberia has posed questions about their survival, an official has said.

'The plight of the displaced is very pathetic, and it is difficult to find relief assistance for them,' says G. Wamleh Elliott, central region director for the government relief agency.

The displaced come from all six districts in northern Lofa County where government troops and dissidents have battled since 1999.

Recent intense fighting in the area gushed out nearly 25,000 new displaced now hosted in the western and central regions.

Elliott told PANA in the central Liberian city of Gbarnga both national and international institutions 'must heed the urgency and come to the aid of the innocent war-stricken civilians.'

Some 12 relief groups have rushed to the camps in the central region, but their aid has fallen short of demands, PANA observed at many camps.

'The relief agencies are trying their best, but it's like a drop in the bucket... And they need to stop this fire brigade approach. We need a sustained relief program,' said one school teacher who spoke for his camp.

Even 50 bags of rice and 100,000 Liberian dollars (about 2,000 US dollars) donated by Liberian president Charles Taylor represented a tip of the relief iceberg, in spite of Elliott's assertions that it brought 'so much relief' to the 50,000 displaced in the central region." (PANA, 22 May 2001)

Shelter

Thousands of IDPs from Gbarnga area are living in makeshift camps along the road to Monrovia (June 2002)

- Residents of three IDP camps near Gbarnga flee southwards when attacked by LURD rebels, and are afraid to return even when government forces have regained control of the area
- About 10,000 IDPs are living in public buildings in Totota, as well as in the homes of local people
- Displaced people face serious difficulties in trying to build their own shelters

"Tens of thousands of people displaced by the recent fighting in and around Gbarnga, are living in misery in villages and makeshift camps on the main road leading to the capital, Monrovia.

The vast majority of them were previously living in three camps for displaced people on the outskirts of Gbarnga when the town was attacked and briefly captured by Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, Lurd, rebels and they had to move again.

Although government troops are now back in control of Gbarnga, the displaced people have been reluctant to return due to security concerns.

Others find it difficult to go back because during the four days of fighting in Gbarnga, much property was looted by the rebel fighters, government troops and civilians.

Shelter

Around 10,000 internal refugees, who are virtually stranded in the palm-growing highway town of Totota, some 50 kilometres from Gbarnga, have not been sheltered since their arrival in May.

The displaced people - mainly women and children - are temporarily housed in church and school buildings and in the homes of local people, and have to trek every morning to a spot designated for them to build a camp.

So serious is the struggle to build their own shelters that the bush around Totota has nearly been depleted of sticks, palm thatches and ropes that are needed for the construction.

The setting in of the rainy season has greatly undermined efforts to complete work on the huts which are plastered with mud.

Tens of thousands of other people displaced from Gbarnga are staying in the commercial town of Ganta, in nearby Nimba county, on the border with Guinea." (BBC News, 17 June 2002)

Descriptions of various shelters for IDPs in different camps and regions (July-October 2001)

- TV Tower camp contains over 500 mud-walled huts in addition to permanent cement structures
- In Bong county, IDPs were living in open air and in destroyed buildings in August 2001
- MSF in charge of shelter at Jenna Manna camp; parts of forest had to be cut down to allow room for shelters

In TV Tower camp:

"Along with permanent cement structures, the camp contains over 500 mud-walled huts for IDPs. 'The ICRC provides them with the materials and training to build their own mud homes with tarpaulin roofs,' explains camp manager Tito Gartor, a national Red Cross staff member employed by the ICRC. 'Red Cross volunteers then supervise the construction to make sure they fit the agreed design.' Tito runs the camp in collaboration with leaders chosen by the IDPs themselves." (IFRC, 29 October 2001)

In Bong county:

"Armed incursions of pro- and anti-government forces into the northern county of Lofa have forced tens of thousands of people to take refuge in neighbouring Bong.

The IDPs are living in partially destroyed buildings, warehouses or the open air." (WFP, 1 August 2001)

In Jenna Manna camp:

"Testimony from Aneley, an MSF physician at Jenne Manna, July 9:

The people arriving were tired and sick. Many of them had diarrhea and fever, and their feet were swollen from all the walking.

Some big tents have been put up to house people, and we've found a good site for the shelters to be put up. Because the forest is very dense all around us, it took many days of work to chop down trees so that people could move in. There are now 524 huts. The families have been given plastic sheeting, to keep their homes watertight. It's the rainy season, and the rain pours down onto our site every day." (MSF, 19 July 2001)

"Old caseload" IDPs in Monrovia either lived in squalid make-shift shelters or with family and friends (1998-2000)

- Over half of internally displaced living in abandoned buildings
- Displaced persons living with family and friends often remain uncounted

- Between 4,000 and 5,000 displaced persons squat in Monrovia in unfinished highrises, homes, schools and other abandoned buildings
- Of displaced, there are 226,000 displaced persons residing in approved shelters, another 45,000 are living as squatters

"At the start of 1999, an estimated 75,000 Liberians resided at designated displacement sites in Monrovia. By the year's end, about 10,000 remained. Thousands of other displaced Liberian families living with friends or on their own remained uncounted in Monrovia." (USCR, 2000, p. 101)

"The size of the internally displaced population in Liberia has long been uncertain because large numbers of Liberians live outside formal shelters." (USCR, 1999, p. 74)

"Most internally displaced people have been living in squalid and destitute conditions for a number of years, some displaced several times during the course of the war.

[...]

In July 1997, the Liberia Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) estimated that over half of all the internally displaced people were living in abandoned buildings, such as the shell of the Ministry of Health building, under construction when the war broke out, where some 3000 have lived for years in makeshift overcrowded rooms. There were six toilets and one water pump for these residents. At Samukai camp, some 9000 internally displaced Liberians and Sierra Leonean refugees lived side by side. There were only seven toilets and a few water pumps in working order. Because these camps grew gradually, without humanitarian assistance, they were not well laid out in terms of services." (Nowrojee, 1998, pp. 42, 44)

Displaced persons in Monrovia, including an estimated 40,000 or more people in unapproved shelters, often inhabited filthy, overcrowded, government-owned buildings, which government officials sought to empty so that their offices could reopen." (USCR, 1998, p. 77)

"Between 4,000 and 5,000 displaced persons squat in Monrovia in unfinished highrises, homes, schools and other abandoned buildings such as the once elegant but now mildewed Ducor Intercontinental Hotel and the unfinished housing bank." (IRIN-WA, 20 July 2000, para. 3)

Of displaced, there are 226,000 displaced persons residing in approved shelters, another 45,000 are living as squatters . . . (OCHA, 20 January 1998, UNDP project for IDPs, "Summary")

Water and Sanitation

Poor water and sanitation facilities cause cholera in Monrovia and nearby IDP camps (2002)

- Hundreds of people from the densely populated suburbs of Monrovia and from IDP camps on the outskirts of the city are suffering from diarrhoea
- Some cholera cases have been reported, and more are expected due to poor water supply and sanitary conditions in the camps and in the country in general
- Water treatment plants and other facilities were damaged during hostilities, leaving the vast majority of Liberians without access to safe water or proper sanitation

"At least four out of over 600 diarrhoea patients reported in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, since July were suffering from cholera, according to government health officers.

Additional cholera cases are likely to be reported because of poor water supply and sanitary conditions in the country generally and in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), they said. Continuing heavy rains could help the spread of the disease, they added.

Most of the people presenting with diarrhoea, and who were treated at the main John F Kennedy hospital, were from the densely populated suburbs of the city centre, from Gardnerville and Paynesville, and from IDP camps on the outskirts of the capital, according to sources in Monrovia.

Health ministry epidemiologist Charles Nagbe told IRIN on Friday - after a disease surveillance meeting held at the ministry - that chlorination of wells in Monrovia and around the country was due to begin.

The United Nations' World Health Organization (WHO) was helping the ministry conduct a month-long water and sanitation needs assessment, Nagbe said. Some members of the assessment team had been dispatched to the seven rural counties of Grand Bassa, Rivercess, Rivergee, Grand Kru, Maryland, Grand Gedeh and Sinoe.

A workshop to train 50 local health environment workers was also planned, Francis Kanu, head of the assessment team told IRIN.

Some 68 percent of Liberians have no access to safe water and 64 percent have no access to proper sanitation. In Monrovia, which has a population of at least one million people, residents have no access to treated pipe-borne water.

The main water treatment plant at White Plains on the outskirts of Monrovia suffered extensive damage during the country's civil war in the 1990s. Power supply systems were also damaged, leaving the country without electricity.

The public water company, Liberia Water and Sanitation Corporation, has not been able to repair the water treatment plant and restore safe water supply since then." (IRIN, 9 September 2002)

IDPS fleeing to Weinsu find inadequate water resources (April 2002)

- Fighting causes more than 7,000 IDPs to flee from Bellefanai camps to Weinsu, near the central town of Gbarnga
- Humanitarian organizations highlight the water shortage in the area

"Following the attack on Gbalatuah, an estimated 7,289 IDPs in Bellefanai Camps 1 and 2 had moved into Weinsu, 15 km south towards Gbarnga. This population has been on the move since the first attack on Lofa in 1999. An inter-agency meeting was held in Phebe on 20th April to discuss the crisis and agreed that an assessment mission be fielded to assess the situation at Bellefanai and Wiensu. However, humanitarian organizations have not been authorized to travel to Bellefanai. The mission visited Weinsu where most of the IDPs were stationed and one of the main findings indicate that the area has only one hand pump and a small water creek as the only sources of water. Considering the number of IDP and local population influxes, this water resource was considered inadequate and could soon be depleted. Taking into account the security situation and the lack of resources, Wiensu was also found not suitable location to establish a camp. Clearance is being sought from the Government through LRRRC to relocate the IDPs to CARI and TV Tower. However, while this clearance is being sought, IDPs have started moving to these camps." (UN OCHA, 23 April 2002)

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

General

IDP schools in Bong County forced to close due to further fighting (May 2002)

- May attack on Gbarnga forced four IRC-supported IDP schools in Bong County to close
- The majority of displaced children and youth have no schools to attend - presenting an urgent need for emergency education programmes

"Activities at the four IDP schools in Bong that were supported by IRC through its Emergency Education Program, were disrupted due to the 9th May attack on Gbarnga. The schools were widely supported by the IDP leadership and Parents, teachers and administrators working together to keep the schools opened for their children, 7,500 ABC/KG -- 9th grade students who were facing yet another displacement. However, some of these students have been absorbed in some of the Ministry of Education (MOE) schools in Bong and Monrovia putting further stress on the already under-resourced schools. The closure of the Bong County IDP schools makes the need for emergency education even more acute. With the exception of approximately 1,300 IDP students that have been able to enroll in the IRC/UNHCR-supported Refugee camp schools in Grand Cape Mount and Montserrado counties, the majority of displaced children and youth have no schools to attend." (UN OCHA, 23 May 2002)

"Access to education for IDP children need to be addressed in the camps. The capacity of local community schools to absorb additional children is limited and over crowding is anticipated when the schools reopen. There is need to consider establishing emergency education structures in the camps to alleviate the need for space, train local teachers among the IDPs and strengthen the Parent Teachers Associations in the host community schools." (UN OCHA, 30 August 2002)

Few internally displaced receive schooling (1998-2001)

- IDP girls in special need of emergency education in life skills to protect them from sexual abuse
- Other education needs of IDPs include advocacy, hygiene education, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS/STD control
- Overall, school enrollment in Liberia is low due to civil war and renewed violence since 1999-2000

"In the absence of education and livelihood opportunities, disaffected youth have little opportunities for a constructive future, and may become a threat to security. Analysis of displacement has shown that girls face the highest risk, both during displacement and in camps, where they are exposed to rape and prostitution. Hence, the need for special emergency education in life skills such as hygiene, reproductive health and the prevention of STDs and HIV/AIDS.

Following the war, years of underdevelopment and national debt, education sector indicators are depressingly unfavourable, and particularly prejudiced against girls. Enrolment data reflects access to basic education, while showing elements of quality and relevance and the effects of these last two factors on retention of girls in the school system.

The education system reflects significant gaps in enrolment, retention, and performance with gender disparity in all of Liberia's 14 counties. Like other countries in West and Central Africa, there is stronger evidence of parity of enrolment during early childhood followed by unacceptably low completion rates of the primary education cycle. Of a total enrolment of 507,192 primary school students, 42.3% are female. By high school, more than 70% of secondary school-age girls have dropped out of school – many due to teenage pregnancy, early marriage or other traditional practices, which hamper girls' access to education. Gender gaps have the most debilitating effects on girls and women when viewed in the context of adult literacy rates, at 48.9% for males and only 26.3% for females.

Further analysis of the situation, within the IDP context, shows that girls face the highest risk both during the migration and in the camps where they are exposed to rape and prostitution. Furthermore, a number of families have been separated as men and boys are forced into recruitment making them more vulnerable. In the absence of education and livelihood opportunities, these youth remain a threat to themselves and to regional peace and security. Hence, the need for special emergency intervention activities, including life skills education, advocacy, hygiene education, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS/STD control.

[...]

Low government investment in basic services for children, coupled with limited donor response for education activities, means that many of the children of school-going age are not attending school. In particular, schooling is out of reach for those children in the war-affected areas of Lofa and the IDP camps. Subsequently, there is a high level of juvenile delinquency with many children and youth prone to recruitment into the military and other armed groups." (UN, November 2001)

"[After the flaring up of fighting in the Lofa County in February and March 2001], schools [were] closed in the area. Once again the education of hundreds of thousands of Liberian children from this area, who had earlier lost a decade of schooling during the civil crisis, are again out of school." (ACT, Appeal Liberia, 30 March 2001, p. 4)

"Although secondary school enrollment more than doubled during the year as families returned home and some schools re-opened, more than half of school-age children still did not attend school, according to one estimate. Low teacher salaries equivalent to as little as \$10 per month, coupled with late payment of salaries and lack of school supplies, triggered frequent strikes by teachers and students in some areas of the country." (USCR, 2000, p. 101)

"For instance, in a number of displaced persons' camps, Liberian children at the elementary school level were able to attend the schooling provided by UNHCR. At the high school level, however, only Sierra Leonean refugees received scholarships from UNHCR. In other cases, children were attending elementary schools set up by humanitarian organizations in the area. However, little or no educational opportunities were available for displaced children of high school age. In some camps, children were not at school at all. In Kakata, one teacher noted that their makeshift schools were full, even though many children were not in school. However, even when children attended school, teachers found it difficult to get them to concentrate, often because they were hungry." (Nowrojee, 1998, p. 44)

ISSUES OF SELF-RELIANCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Self-reliance

Food security situation is fragile due to continuous displacement (2002)

- Disrupted agricultural activity in much of western Liberia exacerbates the already fragile food security situation
- ACF assessment in Salala district in May 2002 confirms that major constraint facing IDPs is lack of cash with which to purchase food
- Coping mechanisms include selling of personal items and assets, and widespread begging
- In some places, farming inputs provided by humanitarian agencies have been looted by assailants

"ACF conducted a food security assessment in May 2002 in the town of Tota in Salala district. The town has remained free of security incidents but has been hosting a large IDP population from surrounding areas and, in particular, from the attacks on Gbarnga. The assessment indicated that farming activities are ongoing but are seriously curtailed by the ongoing insecurity. The availability of food in the markets is good but it is not available to IDPs and to the majority of the local population. Since most of western Liberia has been effected by insecurity, which has traditionally supplied the capital with much of its food requirements, the central regions are under increased pressure to supply food. As a result, available food sources are bought by traders from Monrovia and shipped straight to the capital.

The major constraint faced by IDPs is the lack of cash with which they can purchase food. One of the main sources of cash is through casual work but this is becoming increasingly scarce due to the large number of people available. Wild food sources are increasingly limited and the increasing number of IDPs means that residents are increasingly unable to support them. Many of the IDPs interviewed indicated that they had already resorted to erosive coping strategies such as the selling of personal items and key assets and more than half indicated that begging had been their main source of food the previous day (ACF 05/02). The main concerns from the assessment were that both food availability and accessibility were extremely poor and that there were indications of more desperate coping strategies employed by IDPs. The assessment also indicated that there was increasing evidence of poor nutritional status although no data exists. The IDPs must be considered to be extremely vulnerable and further deteriorations in their situation can be expected unless the overall security situation improves dramatically in the near future." (UN SSCN, 26 July 2002)

"A humanitarian source also expressed fear that the ongoing insecurity could impact negatively on the mid-term food security in the country, given that this is the planting season.

'According to a recent rapid food assessment by various relief organisations, coping mechanisms of the freshly displaced people were becoming limited,' the source told IRIN.

'In some places, where the displaced settled for a while, farming tools or seeds given by humanitarian agencies were looted by assailants,' the source added. In other areas, land acquisition had proved difficult for the displaced. Due to the insecurity, the IDPs had been unable to go to the forest to forage for food as an alternative, he added.

Food security will be adversely affected since fighting has affected the farm belts of the country, he noted, saying 'These are the areas that produce the largest amounts of rice which is the country's main staple food.'

'We cannot talk of people buying imported rice in a country with an 85 percent unemployment rate. People simply don't have money to purchase imported food,' he added." (IRIN, 6 June 2002)

Repeated displacement has eroded family and community coping mechanisms (2002)

- Some IDPs have been displaced as many as five times in six months, further destabilising their coping mechanisms as they lose everything in flight
- Overall condition of IDPs who are almost constantly on the move is deteriorating rapidly, despite humanitarian assistance
- Increasing number of IDPs is also placing a heavy burden on impoverished host communities, further stretching their coping mechanisms as well

"Most displaced persons are women and children, and their condition is deteriorating rapidly despite humanitarian assistance. IDPs are currently on the road during what is the difficult long rainy season (until November). Deteriorating health, poor nutritional condition, trauma, socio-economic dislocation and the breakdown of family and community coping mechanisms are some of the challenges faced by these communities. Some IDPs have been displaced up to five times in six months. Each time their coping mechanisms have been further destabilized and the mental and physical impact is considerable as they lose everything in their flight. There is a definite danger of creating assistance dependence for these vulnerable people. Numerous families have become separated because they suddenly had to leave the scene in a panic.

Fearful of possible attacks, civilians have been fleeing their homes in advance, hence avoiding being trapped in conflict zones. However, vacated areas are very often later looted. Even if the situation were to improve there is little to return back to.

At the same time, Phebe Hospital, the only referral hospital for the Bong County and the surrounding IDP camps, had to close down and evacuate the inpatients to Totota and to the St Joseph Catholic hospital in Monrovia.

The further displacement and increase of IDPs is also a factor of tension in Liberian society. IDPs place a heavy burden on the coping mechanism of already impoverished host communities. This in turn leads to the registration of a considerable number of host communities' members as IDPs in the established camps. Further displacement of populations is likely to have far reaching consequences on the survival economy of the already weakened rural communities throughout the country." (ICRC, 24 May 2002)

IDPs involved in various self-help activities (October 2001)

- IDPs with a professional background in education, health and the like serve as volunteers or for humanitarian aid agencies
- Some informal income-generating activities have been undertaken
- Protection needs and conflict-resolution have also been addressed by IDPs in certain camps

"It was clear from the plenary discussion that IDPs are involved in a series of self-help activities. Those with a professional background, particularly in health or education, are often hired or involved as volunteers by the authorities and the humanitarian agencies. The professional jobs held by IDPs include:

nurses, midwives, hygiene promoters, physician assistants and teachers. In an effort to provide for IDP children's education, displaced teachers are often asked to continue their profession in the camps. Furthermore, some informal income generating activities are also undertaken, often in the form of small businesses or temporary employment with NGOs or the host community. In addition, some IDPs supplement the food aid they receive by growing their own food in small backyard gardens.

Protection needs have also been addressed through IDPs own self-help strategies. Unarmed IDP Camp Guards, with responsibility for internal security in the camps, have been recruited from within the IDPs themselves. IDPs are also involved in conflict resolution in the camps through the camp leadership and the representatives of LRRRC." (NRC, October 2001)

Displacements have led to strain on host communities (June-November 2001)

"IDPs place a heavy burden on the coping mechanisms of impoverished host communities who have yet to recover from the seven-year civil conflict, threatening to push them deeper into the vicious cycle of poverty and dependence upon humanitarian assistance." (UN, November 2001)

"Due to the worsening insecurity, health and sanitation situation of IDPs in two poorly served camps (Gbalatuah and Belefane), UNICEF organised their trucking to other camps. Other IDPs have moved into the villages, a factor that has over-stretched the already limited basic infrastructure and challenged the resilience as well as the coping mechanisms of the host communities. More than 10,000 families of the host communities cannot cope with the additional stress. They require assistance especially in the provision of basic education, health care, clean water and adequate sanitation and shelter." (UNICEF, 13 June 2001)

Public participation

Guidelines have been set out for IDP camp management (October 2001)

- A Draft Policy Framework for IDP Camp Management drawn up by the LRRRC foresees IDP representatives on the Camp Management Teams

"3.1 The Camp Management Team

The Camp Management Team shall be structured as follows:

LRRRC - Chairman/Camp Coordinator
Lead NGO - Co-Chairman
Selected INGO - member
IDP Center Block Leaders - 1 representative per block
Women's Representative

Responsibilities of the Camp Management Team

The responsibilities of the Camp Management Team shall consist of but not be limited to the following:

Daily general supervision/management of the camp
Monitor all humanitarian interventions
Resolve all minor disputes/issues in the Camp
Collect data for a unified and credible Data Base
Promulgate rules and guidelines for the block leadership teams in accordance with these guidelines

Establish information center for proper and timely information dissemination to IDPs, NGOs, INGOs, UN Agencies and the local and national government institutions.

Ensure that assistance to the block residents is equitably distributed in accordance with the norm defined by the donor or contributor. (see sectoral guidelines in Annex for more details)

Organize sectoral committees

Promote the active participation of IDPs in all daily activities in the camp.

Perform any and all other functions that favour the general welfare of the IDPs

Responsibilities of the Camp Coordinator

Perform daily general supervision and administration of their respective CDPs

Coordinate the overall supervision and administration of all humanitarian assistance

Intervene in resolving all inter-agency issues arising thereof and the resolution of minor infraction in the CDP

Organize NGO Coordination Meeting at all CDP

Establish Camp Management Team

Report to LRRRC Central Office on a weekly basis all issues and outstanding needs of concern pertaining to the welfare of the IDPs

Perform any other function assigned thereto by the LRRRC Management.

Build harmonious relationship with the NGO Community.

Record new arrivals and departures from a CDP.

Ensure good sanitation condition in CDP.

Provide physical protection for staff of the INGOs, NGOs, UN Agencies and the IDPs in the CDPs.

3.2 Lead Agency

The concept of a lead agency is not a new development in the management of camps for internally displaced persons in Liberia. The lead agency concept entails that a particular agency is the head of all other humanitarian agencies in a camp.

Responsibilities of the Lead Agency are to:

Direct, co-ordinate and report on humanitarian intervention in a camp.

Assist the LRRRC to maintain a credible database of humanitarian interventions and the demography of the internally displaced people.

Assist the LRRRC in the general management of the camp.

3.3 Block Leaders

Each block shall have a leadership structure of five persons. The inclusion of women in the structure is highly emphasised.

The Block leadership Team shall comprise the following positions:

Block Leader

Block Co-Leader

Secretary

Women's Representative

Adviser

3.4 Procedures for Selection of IDP Leadership

All members of the block leadership will be elected by sleeping resident and ration cardholders. In an event where the block residents can not by themselves, make a selection, the Camp Management Team will assist them make a decision. All blocks should be kept to a maximum size of about 2000 residents.

Block leadership tenure of office shall initially be for a period of six (6) months. Thereafter, block leadership tenure shall be extended for a period of one (1) year.

In the election of block leadership, all efforts should be made to include females' participation. Female leadership should particularly be emphasized and encouraged.

4.0 Coordination Mechanisms

4.1 In order to ensure maximum collaboration amongst LRRRC, the IDPs, implementing INGOs and NGOs and the UN Agencies, the Camp Management Team is required to meet in full session once every week. At these meetings, a thorough review of activities of the camp will be discussed with appropriate action(s) taken.

At the Camp/Center Management Meeting, decisions reached should focus on:

- a. Ongoing interventions
- b. Identification and prioritization of outstanding needs (immediate)
- c. Issues of concern, which should be immediately transmitted to the IDP humanitarian coordination meeting through the LRRRC Central Office in Monrovia. The Resident Representative of an intervening organization may report the same issues to their relevant head offices.

4.2 The field IDP humanitarian co-ordination meeting will be held weekly to discuss the reports of the Camp Management Team and make recommendations, where appropriate, to the central coordination meeting.

4.3 A humanitarian or intervening agency may decide to take action in response to the needs of the IDPs. Said action or intervention should be with the consent of the Liberia Refugee Repatriation & Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) and within the context of the general policy framework of government as pursued by the LRRRC and the Camp Management Teams.

4.4 No institution, NGO or non-intervening partner is allowed to conduct workshops, seminars, symposia; similarly, there shall be no mass meeting held by any organization without the prior consent of the LRRRC Management.

5.0 Sectoral Committees

5.1 There shall be in every camp the below listed Sectoral Committees, which shall be headed by an agency with specialisation in that sector:

Shelter Committee
Food Committee
Water and Sanitation Committee
Health Committee
Non-food Item Committee
Child Protection and Family Unification Committee
Agriculture and Food Security Committee

5.2 The responsibilities and functions of these committees will be defined appropriately to form part of these guidelines. See attached Sectoral Guidelines.

6.0 Maintenance of Safety and Protection

The Camp Management Team will make every effort to ensure the safety and protection of the camp and its inhabitants at all times. The block team leadership is the first level of conflict or dispute resolution amongst its residents. The Camp/Center Management Team is the final level of dispute resolution amongst the residents of a given camp.

Decision of the Camp Management Team is appealable to the Programme Office of the LRRRC. Any party to a dispute who is not satisfied with the decision of Programme Office/LRRRC may seek redress with the Executive Management of LRRRC.

Cases involving criminal nature shall be forwarded immediately to the nearby magisterial or Justice of the Peace Court without delay for prosecution

7.0 Registration Procedure

The LRRRC in collaboration with INGOs, NGOs, UN Agencies and the Camp Management Committee will register incoming IDPs into recognized IDP Centers after being screened by the Joint Security Authorities.

See attached Ministry of Justice Screening Guidelines.

Registration Process

1. Upon the arrival at the CDP, the prospective IDP along with his/her family is ushered to the main registration center for identification and regulation purpose.
2. The prospective IDP family information is recorded in the primary ledger, either as a family head or as a single person. Ration cards will be issued by the Camp Management Team. This ration card will indicate the registration number and name of the family head, family size and the block or transit center to which he/she is assigned, while his/her family structure is being constructed. The card will be used for identification and distribution purposes.
3. Having received the Ration Card, the family head with his/her family will be taken to the block or transit center and introduced to the block team, who shall recount the members of the family as registered on the ration card. Upon confirmation that all members of the family are accounted for, the name of each person in the family is to be recorded in the block ledger. The block ledger represents the manifest of all individuals residing in the block.
4. The block manifest is the most detailed record of a camp. The block manifest is very important for the distribution of relief assistance, monitoring and the provision of services." (Draft IDP Camp Management Guidelines as found in NRC Training Workshop document October 2001)

Participants at NRC training agreed that IDPs should be involved in decision-making processes (October 2001)

- Participants at NRC training agreed that IDPs should be involved in camp management
- Participants pointed out that women IDPs had a special role to play in management and leadership of the camps

"Participants agreed that IDPs are to some extent involved in decision-making processes and activities affecting their lives as displaced persons. When there is a need to discuss issues related to the well-being of the displaced persons in the camps an assigned person, a so called "community crier", calls a general meeting of camp residents. In these meetings, issues such as camp layout, installation of hand pumps, construction of pit latrines etc. have been discussed. The concerns raised during these meetings are later referred to the representatives of the LRRRC.

The recently developed Draft Policy Framework for IDP Camp Management (see annex) foresees IDP representatives on the Camp Management Team. The next administrative level in the camps, the Block Teams (IDP camp sections housing up to 2000 camp residents), are entirely made up of camp residents elected by the IDP community.

The issue of women's participation caused a lively discussion among participants. Currently all camp leaders are men, which was seen as far from ideal. On the level of the Block Teams (currently ad hoc), there are some IDP women represented and the Draft Policy Framework encourages female leadership. However, in the future, all members of the Block Teams will be elected and there is no guarantee that IDP women will be among them. The international agencies have therefore suggested that the LRRRC make the participation of at least one woman on each Block Team compulsory." (NRC, October 2001)

National Red Cross training IDPs to run certain camp facilities at TV Tower camp (October 2001)

- IDP camp chairman at TV Tower camp helps to settle disputes and give advice
- Red Cross has helped IDPs to play a greater role in decision-making and management at the camp

"George Paywala, an IDP, is camp chairman [at TV Tower camp]. He explains, 'I am something like a village chief. Along with the other elders I settle disputes and give advice. This is my role. The Red Cross has done a great job for us and we have worked hand-in-hand to make this camp a decent place for us to live. We will not soon forget what the Red Cross has done.

But the situation in Lofa is still unstable and people in the camp are reluctant to go home. 'Over the next few months, the ICRC will be helping the National Society develop its capacity to assume responsibility for TV Tower camp,' says Liberian Red Cross Secretary General Daniel Clarke. 'We in turn are training IDPs to run certain camp facilities. Over time, we hope to see the camp increasingly run by the IDPs themselves.'" (IFRC, 29 October 2001)

ISSUES OF FAMILY UNITY, IDENTITY AND CULTURE

General

Fighting in Lofa results in separation of families (December 2000-August 2001)

- SCF has documented over 6,000 cases of child separation as result of new displacements in Lofa county
- Separated children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse
- Reunification efforts are made difficult by multiple waves of displacement in the country
- ICRC in concert with National Societies is helping re-establish contact both within and across borders in the region

"Between February and June of this year [2001] 241 children (145 boys and 96 girls) from current conflict related displacement were identified and rapidly reunified with their families, mainly by SCF's CBO partners. 153 children (89 boys and 64 girls) are waiting reunification.

[...]

"Many displaced children became separated from their families; SCUK has documented over 6,000 such cases, and there are now new family separations as a result of the recent displacement of people from Lofa County.

Separated children are often particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. They can be recruited as soldiers in the fighting forces or, as in the case of young girls, may be abducted as wives or domestic slaves, forced into exploitative labour or commercial sex or into abusive foster care situations and suffer long term or perhaps permanent family separation. Most of the teenage girls who were reunited with their families were either pregnant, were already mothers, or had experienced either sexual abuse or sexual exploitation. Some of the boys and girls have experienced multiple foster care or have lived in abusive foster family situations. Some of those who came into conflict with the law also suffered from abusive treatments at the hands of the law enforcement agencies.

Seven years of war and displacement have hampered reunification efforts: in some cases parents and other family members have died; in others they have moved so many times that they are impossible to trace. But even when parents or relatives can be found, reunification may be difficult. Families may not be able to support their children or, if the child has been separated for a long period, reintegration can be too traumatic. As a result, children do sometimes drop out of their families." (SCF, 2 August 2001)

"There is also a major need to help separated families re-establish contact [...] the tracing network is being strengthened to respond to increased needs; so far the ICRC has set up tracing antennae in all the camps to enable separated families to make use of the Red Cross message network to re-establish contact with their family members; the family reunification of unaccompanied children (UACs) will be extended to include Liberian refugees children and displaced UACs." (ICRC, 31 July 2001)

"The Red Cross tracing network in the three countries of the region [Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone] is instrumental in restoring family links between displaced people, refugees and returnees and their relatives who have been separated. Between January and September [2000], the ICRC, together with the Sierra Leone Red Cross, handled more than 46,000 Red Cross messages (RCMs) inside Sierra Leone as well as between Sierra Leone and other countries. In Liberia 2,437 RCMs were handled in cooperation with the Liberian Red Cross Society and 7,638 RCMs were handled by the ICRC in Guinea over the same period." (ICRC, 15 December 2000)

"Many displaced children became separated from their families; SCUK has documented 4,993 such cases, and there are now reports of further separation as a result of the recent displacement of people from Zorzor town.

[...]

Seven years of war and displacement have hampered reunification efforts: in many cases all the family members are dead. In others they have moved so many times that they are impossible to trace. But even when parents or relatives can be found, reunification may be difficult. Families may not be able to support their children. Or, if the child has been separated for a long period, difficulties during the reintegration process could lead to the children dropping out of their families.

[...]

"At present, there are an estimated 20,000 separated children in Liberia and neighbouring countries. SCUK has helped to reunite over 2,000 of these children in Liberia alone with their families." (SCF, 24 November 2000)

PROPERTY ISSUES

General

Fighting in Lofa County has led to destruction of property and infrastructure (April 2001)

- Pattern of disrespect and destruction of property has developed over last years
- IDPs forced to leave their homes have been heavily affected by destruction and looting of property
- The crisis has had adverse effect on infrastructure, including churches, schools, health facilities and communities
- There has been a lost of harvest, tools, seeds and other properties including household utensils, with fighters massively looting these items

"Lastly, the protection of IDP property, insufficiently addressed by international law but covered by the Guiding Principles, was a cause of concern among participants. During the last decade of almost on-going conflict, a pattern of disrespect for private and public property has reportedly developed. Destruction and theft of property has affected the displaced from Lofa County as well as those who chose to stay behind. The armed actors were seen as the main culprits, but participants agreed that civilians also take advantage of the general turmoil during armed conflict.

In relation to theft of humanitarian assistance, a representative of the security forces argued that one way to prevent diversion of humanitarian relief items would be to assign 5% of the deliveries to IDPs for the armed forces in order to guarantee their minimum needs and to avoid theft. Other participants rejected this proposal and favored a solution linked to better and more regular pay for the soldiers.

In conclusion, a representative of the LRRRC reminded participants that his agency has a number of Legal Officers, which can advocate and defend the rights of IDPs if protection cases are drawn to their attention. In response, a participant expressed concern that the LRRRC is effectively addressing issues of humanitarian assistance, but that sensitive protection issues, such as rape and sexual abuse, have not received sufficient attention by the agency, partly because these issues are often not brought to the attention of LRRRC." (NRC, October 2001)

"Reports from conflict areas speak of wanton destruction of properties and lives. In the absence of a settlement to the conflict, people are using feeder and bush routes to find their way to safety. In Liberia, serious damage has been done to public and private properties in western Liberia. About three years ago, farmers abandoned the border areas where about 12,500 hectares of rice and cassava were cultivated before the civil war. The situation is much worse now on the north-west border with Sierra Leone and Guinea.

The crisis has had an adverse effect on infrastructure including churches, schools, health facilities and communities. For example, the major town of north-west Liberia, Voinjama (the seat of Lofa County) has almost been completely destroyed with few houses left standing. Foya district has seen several bombardments in recent times and massive property destruction. Currently, reports abound of Guinean forces taking over two border towns within Liberia. Should this be true, it is clear that any attempt to remove those forces from that area will lead to the destruction of lives and properties.

[...]

Homes of civilians fleeing the fighting have been completely looted; while some homes have been burned.

[...]

The war in Liberia destroyed nearly all infrastructures including private homes, public buildings, schools, hospitals and clinics. Opposing forces indiscriminately burned down buildings. There is a loss of harvest, tools, seeds and other properties including household utensils. Fighters massively looted these items." (ACT Appeal Liberia, 23 April 2001)

Ethnic Mandingoes unable to reclaim land from squatters (1998-2000)

"Returnees in some areas, particularly ethnic Mandingoes in northern Liberia's Lofa and Nimba counties, reportedly were unable to reclaim their land from squatters. Farmers in some areas complained that land disputes, harassment by government security personnel, and shortages of seeds and tools were hurting crop production." (USCR, 2000, p. 101)

"In some cases, displaced people returned to find what remained of their homes occupied. In particular, returnees of Mandingo origin returned to find their houses occupied. The long-standing discrimination in Liberia against Mandingos as 'aliens' or 'foreigners' has contributed to the sentiment that Mandingo-owned property could be appropriated." (Nowrojee, 1998, pp. 44-45)

PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

General

Returnees to Tubmanburg face grim conditions (September 2002)

- About 1,000 people - mostly women and children - returned to Tubmanburg from Bopolu and surrounding villages after government forces dislodged rebels from the town in July 2002
- Inter-agency assessment mission found limited access to food, curtailed freedom of movement, destruction of homes and property, and lack of assistance

"On 3 September, an Inter-agency assessment mission led by OCHA and LRRRC visited Tubmanburg. Agencies that participated include WHO, CRS, OXFAM, LWF/WS, WVI, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP and UN Information Center.

The assessment mission aim was to determine the security and the humanitarian situation in Tubmanburg and its immediate surroundings following reports of return of civilians to the city in poor humanitarian conditions. The government forces had taken control of the city in July when they dislodged the LURD rebels. The mission estimated that there were about 1,000 persons that returned from Bopolu and surrounding villages. Access to food was limited and they are foraging for food in nearby abandoned farms. They are forced to obtain clearance from the local security forces to gather food and firewood.

Destruction and looting of town houses was evident as some of the buildings were riddled with bullet and artillery holes. The hospital as well as offices of the humanitarian agencies were also looted. A part from MSF-CH that provides twice a week mobile clinic services, there were no other assistance to the returnees who are mainly composed of women and children. The mission recommended that local authorities return to the city as soon as possible to restore law and order and boost confidence of the local population. There

is need to provide a one month food distribution to the local residents and humanitarian agencies to carry out a more in-depth assessment of needs." (UN OCHA, 14 September 2002)

Reintegration of IDPs and refugees seen as major aspect of peace building (November 2001)

- UN says restoration of basic social services to serve as catalyst for resettlement and reintegration of IDPs
- Social reintegration, including the rehabilitation of ex-combatants, identified as key element towards consolidation of peace

"The recent fighting in northern Lofa County has caused substantial displacement of IDPs into neighbouring counties of Bong, Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu. Most of the social infrastructure - schools and clinics - have been damaged. There is immediate need for a wide range of communitybased relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance to help already impoverished rural communities to cope with the influx of IDPs. Restoration of basic social services will serve as a catalyst for the resettlement and reintegration of IDPs and returnees from Guinea, should the prospect for peace in the Mano River Union be consolidated. Assistance will also improve the well-being of the host communities, who have been exposed to tremendous suffering.

Social reintegration of communities, including the rehabilitation of ex-combatants and the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons within existing communities, was identified as a key element towards the consolidation of peace and democracy following the seven-year civil conflict in Liberia. However, the absence of functioning infrastructure prevented the social reintegration of communities and the reconstruction of community life.

In this context, the international community has provided support for the resettlement and reintegration of IDPs and returning refugees as well as receiving communities in rural towns and villages, primarily through the restoration of basic social services. This includes the rehabilitation of schools, clinics and hospitals, economic infrastructure, construction of culverts and bridges, water wells and latrines and support to community-based agriculture activities through the provision of seeds and tools. However, given the severity of war-related damage, there is need to further support communities and to extend assistance to others that have not yet benefited from the programme, which is greater than the existing resources within UNDP and other agencies.

In addition to the rehabilitation of the social infrastructure through discrete community-level interventions, support will be provided to strengthen the coping capacity of the host communities, thus contributing to political and economic stability through a participatory approach. Collaboration with other partners providing similar services will be encouraged." (UN, November 2001

Some IDPs in Monrovia made assisted move home in early 2001 (February 2001)

- By March 2001, 1,500 IDPs returned home from Monrovia to Sinoe County with the help of ICRC
- LRRRC has been able to resettle some 126,243 displaced persons since 1998
- The Red Cross has transported 2,321 IDPs to the Southeast since 1998
- Internally displaced persons are supplied with shelter materials and tools
- Nearly 90 percent of all internally displaced to have returned home by end of 1999

"Today, Monrovia is still temporary home to almost 3,000 displaced persons from the south. For nearly a decade, unusable or dangerous roads have prevented these people from returning to their homes. But this is changing.

On 27 February, an ICRC-chartered ship began taking on board the first 288 persons prepared to return to the area of Greenville, in Sinoe county. " (ICRC 1 March 2001)"Between 27 February and 28 March, more than 1,500 displaced people were brought back by boat from Monrovia, the Liberian capital, to the coastal cities of Greenville and Harper. This marked the end of a four-stage operation organized by the ICRC in cooperation with the Liberia National Red Cross Society and the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission. Those returning to their homes had fled the conflict area in south-eastern Liberia during the 1990s to take refuge in Monrovia, where they had lived a precarious existence ever since.

For their journey by boat, which lasted between 36 and 48 hours, the passengers were given food, water and blankets. Upon arrival in Greenville and Harper, they were cared for in a transit centre. Most were then ferried by truck to their home regions. They were given tarpaulins and soap by the ICRC and dry food rations (50 kg for four persons) by the World Food Programme.

Of the 2,700 or so displaced people registered by the ICRC, nearly 1,200 decided in the end to remain in Monrovia. The other 1,500 chose to return to their home villages with the help of the ICRC. The majority of these were women (45% of the registered heads of households) and children. Several international humanitarian organizations took part in this operation." (ICRC, 1 April 2001)

"In August 2000, the Red Cross helped some 604 IDPs, from 348 families, to return to their homesteads in the Southeast (counties of Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Sinoe, Maryland). This brought to 2,321 the total number of IDPs transported back to the region since the operation started in 1998. Family kits were distributed to the returnees, as well as 23 community kits of shelter materials and tools. The community kits, which are intended to boost communities' efforts to rehabilitate basic social services, were distributed after a joint chapter and relief department assessment targeting the most vulnerable." (IFRC, 20 February 2001)

"As a result of the civil war, there were 157,000 IDPs in approximately 36 camps in 1997. International agencies and the Liberian Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) have been able to resettle approximately 126,243 displaced persons since 1998. In October [2000] the fighting in northern Lofa county further increased the number of displaced persons. There were an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 IDPs in the country at year's end. International and local NGOs faced limited funding and resources to assist these IDPs." (USDOS, February 2001, sect. 2, d)

Nearly 90% of all internally displaced to have returned home by end of 1999

"Approximately two-thirds of all Liberian refugees and nearly 90 percent of all internally displaced Liberians had returned to their home areas by the end of 1999. An estimated 350,000 refugees have repatriated since mid-1997. In 1999, some 80,000 to 100,000 refugees and tens of thousands of internally displaced persons returned home." (USCR, 2000, p. 100)

"We [UNDP] assisted over 130,000 [IDPs] to relocate to communities of origin from late 1997 to early this year [2000]." (UNDP, 26 September 2000)

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

General

Humanitarian agencies have little or no access to IDP and refugee camps cut off by the fighting (May 2002)

- Two Sinje camps, near the Sierra Leone border, are cut off from the road to Monrovia by fighting
- Sinje camps, as well as two other refugee camps, are also home to thousands of IDPs and frightened local residents
- The camps have a heavy military presence, and are vulnerable to 'visits' by both government forces and dissidents
- After weeks of no access, UNHCR finally reached the Sinje camps in June
- Liberian government policy that refugees and IDPs don't live side by side for 'security reasons' leads to the establishment of a new site for IDPs

"Refugees in the Sinje camps, near the border with Sierra Leone, are said to be very anxious about the deteriorating situation. Last week's fighting in Gbah and Medina, halfway between Sinje and Monrovia, effectively cut off the main road from the camps to the capital.

In addition to their usual refugee population of 11,000, Sinje I and II camps are now hosting about 8,000 internally displaced Liberians, plus an unknown number of local residents frightened by the fighting. The camps have reportedly received frequent visits from agitated government fighters and irregular militia, allegedly visiting family members or searching for dissidents.

The situation is somewhat similar in Zuannah camp, north-west of Monrovia, which is hosting 3,000 refugees from Sierra Leone and where some 5,000 displaced Liberians have arrived in recent weeks. The camp is situated on a small forest track that has been used by residents fleeing fighting in Gbah, Medina, Tubmanburg and Kle Junction, a well-known landmark 35 km north of Monrovia. Although Zuannah, like other camps in Montserrado county, is still accessible by road, the delivery of assistance to refugees has slowed down considerably due to the large numbers of displaced Liberians among them.

Security is also tight around Samukai, another refugee camp north-east of Monrovia with 5,000 refugees. The camp is situated on a strategic road between Monrovia and Gbarnga which the government suspects could be used by dissidents attempting to enter the capital. Heavily-armed security forces conduct frequent patrols in the area and numerous checkpoints have been set up around Monrovia.

As a result of the fighting, UNHCR has been unable to access Sinje camps for more than two weeks now, and has only been able to establish regular radio contact with refugee leaders there. However, fuel for the generator is running out quickly and no delivery is as yet possible." (UNHCR, 27 May 2002)

"Sinje camps, situated about 50 km northwest of the Liberian capital, Monrovia, which had been cut off by recent fighting were accessed by humanitarian agencies this week, aid workers in Monrovia told IRIN.

A team from the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, that visited the camps on Friday reported that the situation in and around the camps had improved. 'If the trend continues we could return to the camps by Monday,' UNHCR Deputy Representative Theophilus Vodounou told IRIN on Friday.

'The militia who had moved into the camps and were scaring off the refugees have been ordered to leave by officers from the ministry of defence,' Vodounou said.

Sinje camps, Vodounou said, are home to some 11,000 refugees and the same number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). A similar case of refugees living side by side with IDPs exists in Zuannah camp near Monrovia where there are 3,000 refugees and more than 10,000 IDPs, he added.

However it is the Liberian government policy that refugees and IDPs don't live side by side for 'security reasons'. The government has now allocated a site in Sinje and another in Segbeh (near Monrovia) for the relocation of IDPs from Sinje camps and those in Zuannah respectively.

'We are now in dialogue with NGOs to construct the camps so that the IDPs can move in,' Vodounou added.

A team from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and that of the World Food Programme also visited the camps early in the week and are planning the next course of action, a humanitarian source said." (IRIN, 14 June 2002)

Government refuses to allow aid agencies beyond Klay Junction (January 2002)

- Relief agencies are allowed back to Klay Town, 47km from Monrovia, but no further
- IDPs in Klay Town reported to need food, water and shelter
- Government wants to avoid thousands of IDPs entering Monrovia

"Relief agencies have returned to Klay Town, north of the Liberian capital, Monrovia, to help thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing fighting between anti-government forces and the army some 35-50 km farther north, a UN humanitarian worker told IRIN on Thursday. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) returned on Wednesday to Klay Town, some 47 km north of Monrovia, Mohammed Siryon, national field officer for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Liberia, said. After getting permission from the Justice Ministry to go to Klay, at least 10 groups are now in the town providing aid, Siryon said. He said the ministry had told the NGOs they could not travel north of Klay.

Groups present in Klay include Medecins sans Frontieres, which is providing water, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is providing sanitation services. Save the Children's Fund is giving aid to children and minimal health services, while the Lutheran World Service is putting up large transit tents. Siryon said the World Food Programme was sending a food assessment team to Klay: on Sunday the IDPs there did not have sufficient food, water and shelter.

Some 1,500 people lived in Klay Town before the influx of IDPs, who fled their temporary camp at Sawmill on Sunday when anti-government forces entered it and ordered them to leave. 'They fled with what they had on,' Siryon said.

He said some 50 troops from the government's Joint Security Command were manning a checkpoint at Klay Junction, an important crossroads about one km south of the town. One of the roads at this junction leads to Sierra Leone and the other to Tubmanburg, capital of Bomi County, where government troops are deployed.

'The government wants the IDPs to stay in Klay Town until Tubmanburg is secure,' Siryon said.

Humanitarian workers said the government did not want thousands of IDPs heading into Monrovia, where many victims of earlier displacements still squat in unfinished and war-damaged buildings." (IRIN, 31 January 2002)

IDPs and aid workers forced to flee Bopolu camp in December 2001 (December 2001)

- IDPs and aid workers finally fled from Bopolu camp after decreased security in the Gbarpolu region over the last two months

IDPs and aid workers leave Bopolu camp:

"Aid workers and internally displaced people (IDPs) were forced to flee Bopolu camp on Friday after fresh fighting erupted in northwestern Liberia, humanitarian sources told IRIN on Tuesday. Diplomats in the capital Monrovia as well told IRIN that the situation in the north and northwest of the country had 'worsened' since Friday.

'There were reports of heavy gunfire heard from north of Bopolu and everybody from the camp just fled,' an aid worker told IRIN. NGOs and government authorities converged in Sawmill town, in Central Liberia, at the weekend from where they are responding to needs of more than 4,000 displaced people who have reached the town, the source said.

'We are thinking of finally relocating the displaced people to Tubmanburg [also in the northwest],' the source added.

The NGOs at Sawmill were the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) who were the last to leave Bopolu on Saturday, Save the Children Fund, Medecins Sans Frontieres, WFP, the International Committee for the Red Cross, and Action Contre la Faim (ACF), the source said." (IRIN, 11 December 2001)

Aid agencies had withdrawn from Bopolu in November due to security problems:

"Aid workers, who this week pulled out of Liberia's northwestern Gbarpolu county because of fresh fighting, were on Friday striving to maintain contact with internally displaced people (IDPs) in the camps of Gemana and Bopolu, to ensure that basic services remain available to them.

'We are very concerned that health, social and food services are maintained,' Jane Gibreel, Programme Director for Save the Children Fund (SCF), told IRIN from the capital Monrovia.

She explained that it had become very difficult to work in the area because of insecurity and lack of proper infrastructure. But, Gibreel said, aid workers helped by the government, were trying to find other ways to reach the needy.

[...]

Aid workers from the Lutheran World Federation, SCF, World Vision and the local Red Cross were on Monday forced to withdraw their teams to Monrovia after fresh fighting erupted between suspected dissidents and government troops.

'As aid agencies, our biggest fear is the possibility of relocation. Relocation would exert a lot of pressure on the NGOs resource-wise and it will pose physical risk to the civilians in this area which is now not as safe as it appears,' an aid worker told IRIN on Friday. 'The situation is really worrying.'

A vaccination team heading for a polio vaccination campaign in Bopolu was forced to abandon its trip on Sunday after it encountered civilians fleeing intense fighting in Belle Fassama, some 100 km north of Bopolu, he said.

A rented Ministry of Health vehicle in which the vaccination team were travelling was commandeered on Sunday evening. 'Following the incidents, all staff members of the agencies decided to pull out and return to Monrovia,' he added." (IRIN, 30 November 2001)

"Humanitarian agencies including WFP have temporarily suspended their activities in Gbarpolu County pending improved security conditions." (WFP, 7 December 2001)

They returned temporarily at the beginning of December:

"Aid agencies have returned to Gbarpolu County in western Liberia after being forced to withdraw from the area last week when fierce fighting broke out between suspected rebels and government troops. Humanitarian workers told IRIN on Thursday that the situation had returned to normal in and around camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) which they had vacated.

'We are back in Bopolu and Gemana,' Jane Gibreel, programme director for Save the Children Fund (SCF) told IRIN. 'Our assessment team went to Bopolu at the weekend and reported that everything was back to normal so our staff moved back on Tuesday.' An SCF assessment team will visit Gemana camp on Wednesday to see if there are any needs, she added.

[...]

Staff of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) also returned to Bopolu on Tuesday. More staff were due to go back on Thursday, Moses Vankpanah, agriculture planning assistant at LWF, told IRIN. 'We are busy constructing shelter for newly arrived IDPs,' he said. 'We will continue with the agriculture programmes too.'" (IRIN, 6 December 2001)

MSF pulled out of Jenna Manna camp in November 2001

- MSF pulled out of Jenna Manna camp in November due to security concerns
- MSF does not consider zones of southwestern Liberia to give sufficient security to host IDPs
- Medicines and other basic necessities were left with medical workers living in Jenna Manna
- Some 8,000 IDPs remain at the camp

"French medical charity MSF (Doctors without Borders) announced Friday it was withdrawing teams of aid workers from southwestern Liberia in view of increasing security risks and conflict there.

The organisation said in a statement the decision to pull out its two expatriate workers and around 40 local staff from the Jenne Manna camp meant it had 'to leave some 8,000 displaced people to their fate'.

MSF had been caring for the people since they fled war-racked Lofa County in the north of the west African country in May.

'Médecins sans Frontières considers today that these zones (in the southwest) no longer give sufficient security conditions to host these people,' MSF said in a statement.

It said it had left medicines and other basic necessities with medical workers who actually live at Jenne Manna to allow them to continue their work.

MSF has already suspended its activities in Liberia on several occasions on security grounds." (AFP, 30 November 2001)

Access to Lofa county has been cut off repeatedly by armed attacks and fighting (September 2000-November 2001)

- By end 2001, aid agencies were not always able to conduct assessments
- Renewed fighting has forced humanitarian agencies to scale down or pull out
- UN Country Team has cited access to Lofa as serious concern throughout the year
- A recent assessment by MSF noted that pockets of civilians exist in Lofa; these people apparently want to stay close to their crops

Access problematic throughout 2001:

"However, access of UN staff to Lofa County remains restricted for security reasons. From 8 to 20 November, WFP prepositioned or dispatched to its NGO partners a total of 476 tons of food for distribution under various programmes in Montserrado, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi and Gbarpolu Counties." (WFP, 23 November 2001)

"In particular, access to Lofa county remains restricted and humanitarian agencies have been unable to conduct assessments in the county to determine the condition of the residents who have remained there throughout the hostilities." (UN, November 2001)

"MSF still does not have regular access to much of Lofa county. During assessment missions in the region, we came across destroyed villages and towns, but also found pockets of civilians who prefer to stay in their village so as to take care of their crops, despite nearby fighting. But those in camps, who have already missed the planting season, show no intention of returning to Lofa in the near future, nor is it likely they could do so safely." (MSF, 17 October 2001)

"In February 2001, the latest fighting erupted in Kolahun District in Lofa [which] [...] produced a new wave of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

[...]

The situation forced humanitarian agencies working in the area to either scale down their activities, while others have pulled out completely.

[...]

"A UN official Wednesday expressed concern about "what appears to be prospects of increased fighting in Liberia."

[...]

McAskie said relief groups are catering for the victims from a distance since because they have seen it to be "too dangerous to go deeper" into the crisis area." (PANA, 25 April 2001)

Access restricted by military theatre of operations in late 2000:

"We were also advised not to beyond Zorzor by the government forces,' a relief worker said.

The relief workers had gone into embattled Lofa County as part of a consortium of non-governmental organizations to distribute food and other relief items to some 13,000 internally displaced persons after an earlier assessment mission.

The aid workers said the relief distribution had to be called off as a result of the attack.

Other convoys of relief items headed for the area were ordered back due to insecurity in the operational areas." (PANA, 10 October 2000, "Thousands Flee Fresh Fighting")

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

General

Stronger coordination needed to ensure concerted action on behalf of IDPs, reports OCHA IDP Unit (May 2002)

- The long absence of a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) in Liberia had a negative impact on overall IDP response, reports the OCHA IDP Unit
- With OCHA support, a new HC introduced new coordination mechanisms aimed at ensuring concerted action on behalf of IDPs
- In sectors such as protection and camp management, coordination must still be improved, says the Unit

"Due to a long absence of an HC, coordination mechanisms disintegrated leading to a piece-meal approach by the agencies with at times, widely diverging views among them on the appropriate responses to IDP needs. The recent arrival of a new HC has raised hopes of a revitalized collaborative approach, which together with a reinforced OCHA presence will enhance inter-agency cooperation.

With the support of OCHA, the HC has introduced new coordination mechanisms involving the UN, NGOs and Government departments with a view to ensuring concerted action on behalf of IDPs. In this connection, the strengthening of OCHA should be further pursued to ensure the provision of accurate and timely information on IDP needs and projects. OCHA/Sierra Leone's expertise in this area should be shared with the Liberia office.

NGOs have maintained practical coordination arrangements among themselves and with some UN agencies at the sectoral level based on expertise and capacity. However, sector coordination meetings could be more action-oriented and not limited to information sharing. Furthermore, coordination in other sectors or on cross-sectoral themes needs to be re-activated or established, notably on protection and camp management." (OCHA IDP Unit, 21 May 2002)

No agency with an exclusive mandate for the internally displaced has meant insufficient and irregular aid during period of national recovery (1996-1998)

- Without a specific agency tasked to care for displaced persons, assistance has been less than satisfactory
- Responsibility for caring for internally displaced often fell, by default, on the UN

"[T]here appeared to be little or no preparation at the national or international level to plan for the return of this huge population to their homes'. Even information on the numbers and location of the internally displaced was much more scarce than on refugees, because no national or international body has had the exclusive task of addressing the needs of the internally displaced. As a result, conditions for the internally displaced remained much worse than those of Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries." (Nowrojee, 1998, pp. 42-44)

"As with internally displaced populations in many parts of the world, most of Liberia's IDPs are, unfortunately, very much on their own. UNHCR has been in the country to help refugees and to map plans for a long-awaited return of those who fled the country. But funding even these mandate activities is difficult, particularly in view of the renewed violence in Monrovia in April (1996), which resulted in the looting of many aid agency offices – UNHCR included – and the evacuations of some staff members. 'No international humanitarian agency has a specific mandate to care for displaced persons,' explained Kalumiya, UNHCR's representative in Liberia." (Kpatindé, 1996, "Internally Displaced Persons", para. 13)

"Many of the dilemmas of meeting the needs of the displaced fell, often by default, into the UN system where political, security, and humanitarian concerns intersect . . . There was no agency specifically responsible for the welfare of the internally displaced." (Scott, 1998, p. 120)

National response

Government capacity to fulfil its IDP protection responsibilities has 'serious shortcomings' (2002)

- Government bodies responsible for protection and for camp management and relief coordination lack necessary IDP expertise and resources
- Vital collaboration between humanitarian agencies and the government has at times been less than smooth
- OCHA IDP Unit proposed, in May 2002, that a protection expert be deployed to assist the UN Country Team in the elaboration of a protection framework
- Deficiencies in camp management must also be addressed

"IDP protection falls under the overall responsibility of the Ministry of Justice, and the LRRRC oversees the management of camps and coordination of relief. However, the LRRRC and the Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Justice lack the necessary IDP expertise and resources to discharge their respective functions. Serious shortcomings in the capacity of the Government to fulfill its protection responsibility have been reported, not the least in conjunction with the recent findings related to practices of sexual exploitation and abuse of refugee and IDP girls in camps.

In this context, the complementary role of humanitarian actors in support of IDPs becomes a necessity of vital importance for the well-being of IDPs. However, collaboration between humanitarian agencies and the Government has not always been as smooth as desirable. There is therefore a need to engage the Government in an open dialogue with a view to jointly developing an accountability system in which the roles and responsibilities of all concerned actors are clearly designated. Support to government institutions could then be linked to the respect of mutually-agreed operational standards based on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

In the framework of the CAP mid-term review and in light of changed circumstances, the Country Team is undertaking a thorough review of the Humanitarian Action Plan and formulating a revised strategy with a prominent focus on IDP/refugee protection and the provision of basic relief. The revised strategy will integrate the results of the work of the Task Force against sexual exploitation and abuse, including its draft plan of action. The reactivation of a protection committee co-chaired by the HC and the Government, comprising the Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Justice, the LRRRC and agencies with protection/human rights expertise such as ICRC, HCR and UNICEF could provide an appropriate forum for enhanced coordination and concerted action.

As part of this process of revitalizing protection, the mission proposed that an IDP protection expert be urgently deployed to the operation to help the Country Team in the elaboration of a protection framework setting out common protection standards and indicators to guide the implementation of assistance in the various programmatic sectors, and advise the HC on adequate arrangements/ division of responsibility on protection within the Country Team. Such a mission fielded initially for a 4-week period could be subsequently strengthened by a protection officer. Joint responsibility through reinforced international presence in camps and a common monitoring and reporting system are key elements in the effort of revitalizing protection activities. Some agencies, such as ICRC are already taking steps to increase their protection capacity through the deployment of specialized staff. It would also be appropriate to organize a workshop on the Guiding Principles, this time to be addressed primarily to the Country Team, as a complement to the training conducted by NRC last year.

Deficiencies in camp management were also reported to the Mission. The lack of transparencies in the overall management, including in the registration of families and allocation of lots for shelter were mentioned as examples to illustrate this gap. The system put in place by NRC in Porto Loko IDP camp in Sierra Leone as well as the camp management committee functioning in that country are two experiences worth analyzing for their eventual implementation in Liberia. Whilst the NRC system implies the direct involvement in camp management of an international NGO, in the current Liberia model an international NGO is designated as camp lead agency without management responsibility. Camp management in Liberia is entrusted to a local team under the overall supervision of the LRRRC. Direct assignment of camp management to an international NGO would likely improve the delivery of protection and assistance to IDPs.

Given the acute levels of poverty among vast segments of the population and the risk of creating tensions between IDPs and the local neighbors if the former were perceived as being privileged, the IDP program should promote greater self-reliance. Needy residents of communities where IDP camps are located should also benefit from basic camp services such as health, sanitation and education." (OCHA IDP Unit, 21 May 2002)

National Humanitarian Task Force established to assist IDPs (2002)

"The National Humanitarian Task Force, recently constituted by President Taylor, has begun distributing relief items to internally displaced persons around the country. The Task Force, led by the Liberian First Lady, distributed 125 metric tons of rice to over 34,000 IDPs in four camps around Monrovia. According to a post distribution report, signed by the First Lady, the IDPs also received 9,700 packages of assorted used clothing. Future distributions are expected in Sinje and Kakata." (UN OCHA, 7 March 2002)

Liberia Refugee, Repatriation, and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) is national agency responsible for return of internally displaced persons (1998-2001)

- LRRRC has full responsibility to select a safe settlement for internally displaced persons
- LRRRC plays lead role in coordination of humanitarian assistance for IDPs
- LRRRC has limited technical, financial and logistical capacity
- LRRRC has had trouble with funding in the past and has been helped by UNDP and IFRC

"The Liberia Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC), has limited human, technical, financial and logistical capacity. The LRRRC administrative structure at camp level has a narrow span of control with many layers headed by a regional coordinator, followed by camp supervisors and camp monitors. This arrangement does not permit timely information flow, quick decision making and sometimes impedes efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance. There is urgent need for institutional capacity

building for LRRRC, particularly in policy development for population movement, data collection and analysis, and effective management." (UN, November 2001)

"The Liberian Government, through its designated agency, the Liberia Refugee Repatriation & Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) has full responsibility to select a safe settlement for internally displaced persons. The selection shall begin with a multi-sectoral assessment, which shall involve other stakeholders including UN Agencies, Donors, NGOs, INGOs, other agencies of the Liberian Government, the local authority and representatives of the affected population, including women.

The selection shall be based on the initial assessment. The criteria for site selection and camp development shall be in line with the minimum standard as provided for in the Sphere Guidelines (Minimum Standards for Disaster Response). However, the LRRRC in collaboration with other stakeholders may develop standards for camp development that befit the prevailing reality. Details of the standards can be found in the sectoral guidelines attached in the Annex." (LRRRC as included in NRC Training Report,, NRC October 2001)

"The Liberia Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) plays a lead role in the coordination of humanitarian assistance to IDPs. The 46,000 IDPs are currently not receiving any assistance as no detailed needs assessment has been conducted due to insecurity in the area." (UN, November 2000)

"The LRRRC's programme officer, James Youquoi, said although the United Nations did not have a specific mandate on IDPs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 'has consistently assisted' his commission in getting funds. The International Federation of the Red Cross, the British Red Cross and SIDA, the Swedish aid agency, have also helped, he said.

With this aid, the LRRRC has been able to relocate 126,243 IDPs since 1998. Youquoi said 300 more were registered for transportation to the southeastern counties of Grand Gedeh, Sinoe and Maryland, but there was no money for the operation.

[...]

Each individual gets one 10 X 16-foot (3 X 4.8-metre) sheet of plastic, two cutlasses, one hoe, one kilogramme of nails, twine and a bag of laundry soap. The Liberian Red Cross provides footwear and used clothing.

[...]

The LRRRC is still looking for aid for the IDPs and needs between US\$1 million to \$1.5 million to strengthen its capacity for intervention. It needs communications to link its regional offices to each other and to headquarters so that coordination can be possible but money has not been forthcoming from the cash-strapped government." (IRIN-WA, 20 July 2000)

Ministry of Health and Social Welfare establishes children's network (November 2001)

- A Protection Network for children has been established within the Bureau of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
- Members include representatives from Government, UN agencies and NGOs
- The needs of separated children, many of who are IDPs, are discussed in this forum

"A Protection Network has been established within the Bureau of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. Members include representatives from Government, UN agencies and NGOs. Within this forum, policy issues related to the protection of children are reviewed and the tracing and reunification of separated children are coordinated. Many experienced NGOs are also active in the area of child protection.

There is need to develop a child protection advocacy strategy at the grass-roots level to raise awareness on child abuse, recruitment of child soldiers and other child protection issues. Focus will be placed on the rehabilitation of children who were traumatised by violence or involved as soldiers in conflict. The rapid reunification of children with their families will be promoted and separation prevented, in particular through the strengthening of cross-border child protection coordination mechanisms. Close linkages will be built with other programmes including education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, agriculture and shelter to ensure that special needs of children are met. Life skills training are an important complementary activity." (UN, November 2001)

Regional response

Various regional peace initiatives try to tackle Liberia's crisis (2002)

- Presidents of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea first meet in Morocco in February to discuss cross-border security
- Meeting is hailed as turning point for West African stability - but fighting in Liberia continues
- Weeks later, the Liberian government rejects ECOWAS call for an immediate ceasefire - while continuing to accuse Guinea of supporting the rebels in Liberia
- Peace talks convened in Burkina Faso in July by Liberian opposition politicians and civil organisations are seen as futile due to absence of the Liberian government
- In July 2002, a month-long national reconciliation conference is convened by the government in Monrovia - but the opposition stays away
- ECOWAS continues to put forward peace proposals for Liberia, while President Taylor is seen to be increasing isolated

"The presidents of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone agreed Wednesday to work together to put an end to years of cross-border insurgencies at a summit billed as a turning point for West African stability.

Liberian President Charles Taylor and his counterparts Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone and Guinea's Lansana Conte rapidly agreed to the wording of a draft communique calling for an end to hostilities, Sierra Leone's Foreign Minister Ramadan Dumbuya said as the summit got underway.

The text also calls for the three countries, which all border the Mayo (sic) river, to end all interference in the internal affairs of their neighbours, and for a follow-up mechanism to be put in place to ensure that commitment is upheld.

The Rabat summit began as rebel forces, which Liberia claims are backed by Guinea, were reportedly closing in on the Liberian capital Monrovia.

The rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), which has bases in neighbouring Guinea, is leading the insurgency in northern Liberia and extended its fight to Monrovia's doorstep, prompting Taylor to declare a state of emergency on February 8.

Cross-border attacks in southern Guinea at the border with Liberia and Sierra Leone have flared since late 2000 but Taylor had, up until a few months ago, refused to meet with Conte, whom he held responsible for the instability in west Africa.

Relations are particularly strained between Guinea and Liberia which have accused each other of backing rebels trying to topple their respective regimes.

For its part, Sierra Leone has accused Liberia of backing rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) during its 10-year rebellion against the Freetown government which ended only last May.

The United Nations imposed sanctions on Liberia for backing the RUF, but Monrovia argues that, with the war in Sierra Leone officially over, the embargo should be lifted.

Sources in Rabat said the three leaders hoped to reach an agreement that would bar rebels from neighboring states from using their respective territories." (AFP, 27 February 2002)

"The Liberian government has rejected the call by the West African states' economic community (ECOWAS) for an immediate ceasefire between government troops and armed opposition fighters, saying this would give the rebels an opportunity to re-group.

The government was 'baffled' by the call which suggested a parity between the government and the armed opposition fighters, Information Minister Reginald Goodridge, was reported by news agencies as saying, on Tuesday.

Liberia, was however, interested in a regional intervention force, as suggested by ECOWAS chairman, President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal on Friday, the minister added.

'Calling for a ceasefire at a time when the Liberian government has already broken the back of a very large attack in Gbarnga, in Arthington and in Klay, will only give the terrorists the opportunity to regroup and attack Liberia,' BBC quoted Goodridge as saying.

The minister urged the West African nations to instead address neighbouring 'Guinea's support' to the opposition fighters. 'We do know that it's the policy of most democratic governments in the world not to negotiate with terrorists,' he said.

Wade had said ECOWAS members would consider creating a peacekeeping force to intervene in Liberia if negotiations between the government and rebels failed. But ECOWAS first wanted an immediate ceasefire, he told a news conference in Cote d'Ivoire's capital, Yamoussoukro.

At least 70,000 internally displaced people and their host communities in the Liberian town of Gbarnga, 224 km north of the capital, Monrovia, fled fighting between government troops and armed opposition fighters last week, an inter-agency assessment mission reported on Thursday.

Several towns that the armed opposition fighters of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) claimed to have taken last week, were regained by government troops." (IRIN, 21 May 2002)

"A military team from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on Wednesday met Liberian President Charles Taylor to discuss plans for peace talks to stop the ongoing civil war, a diplomatic source told IRIN.

Taylor however reportedly told the team, led by Nigerian Colonel James Oladipo, that his government was at the moment interested in the Rabat initiative brokered in February by King Mohammed VI of Morocco. The initiative involved the presidents of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, news agencies reported.

The Rabat meeting is due to be reviewed by the presidents on 20 June, the source said. The first meeting called for deployment of troops along the common borders to prevent cross-border incursions.

Continuing fighting between Liberian forces and rebels of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) was reported in Bong and Tubmanburg counties this week." (IRIN, 13 June 2002)

"A three-day conference aimed at bringing peace to war-torn Liberia opened in Burkina Faso on Monday but the chances of a breakthrough were almost zero because of the absence of the Liberian government.

The Liberian government told AFP it had not been invited to the peace talks and said they were a non-event.

Although the rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) group had earlier said it would boycott the conference, it was represented at the talks in the Burkina Faso capital, Ouagadougou, organisers said.

[...]

The peace talks are sponsored by prominent Liberian politicians living in exile, such as former interim president Amos Sawyer and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who was runner-up to President Charles Taylor in the last elections.

Representatives of nine political parties and five civil organisations are represented at the conference, which is being funded by the George Soros Foundation and the Burkina Faso government.

[...]

Monday's meeting follows two conferences on Liberia this year sponsored by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), one in the Nigerian capital Abuja, the other in Ivory Coast's political capital Yamoussoukro.

The Yamoussoukro meeting ended with the ECOWAS proposing a ceasefire or negotiations between the government and the rebels.

Taylor's regime rejected it on the grounds that these would 'legitimise' the LURD." (AFP, 8 July 2002)

"A national reconciliation conference opened on Saturday in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, with President Charles Taylor urging opposition leaders abroad to return home. 'Nothing, absolutely nothing, will be done to them,' sources quoted him as saying.

However, Taylor's opponents stayed away from the month-long conference, including the rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), which issued a statement on Monday vowing to continue its armed struggle against forces loyal to the Liberian president.

'We are at the moment close to retaking the provincial city-town of Tubmanburg,' LURD said on Monday in a statement. 'Our forces will not only aim at retaking Tubmanburg, but do all to conclude the war very soon by hitting Monrovia and calling for a government of national consensus.' " (IRIN, 30 July 2002)

"While President Charles Taylor sits increasingly isolated in Monrovia, momentum is building behind peace proposals drawn up by Taylor opponents, regional analysts and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

ECOWAS, the regional body overseeing the peace process, hopes to convene a meeting of a proposed contact group on Liberia on the sidelines of a discussion of the New Partnership for Africa's Development at the U.N. General Assembly in New York on September 16.

The group is made up of the United States, France, Britain, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Senegal, and would oversee a ceasefire, disarmament and deployment of an international stabilisation force.

Taylor's foes hope that the international community will not want to see its efforts to bring peace to Sierra Leone wasted by a new flare-up of the region's conflict, which began when Taylor invaded Liberia from Ivory Coast in December 1989 and spread to Sierra Leone and Guinea." (AlertNet, 12 September 2002)

International political response

UN imposes sanctions against Government of Liberia for its support of RUF in Sierra Leone (2001-2002)

- UN sanctions instituted from May 2001 for Government of Liberia's support of RUF rebels in Sierra Leone
- Sanctions seek to block all diamond sales by Liberia, restrict international travel of Liberian officials and sustain arms embargo against Liberia
- Sanctions are targeted; however, the standard of living for Liberians has further deteriorated as a result
- In 2002, UN sanctions on Liberia are extended for 12 months, until May 2003
- Reason for the extension is the Liberian government's failure to fully comply with demands to stop support for armed rebel groups in the region, particularly the RUF in neighbouring Sierra Leone

"The UN Security Council voted in March 2001 to impose sanctions on Liberia in retaliation for the government's support for rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone. The UN sanctions, which took effect in May, seek to block all diamond sales by Liberia, restrict international travel by top Liberian officials, and sustain the arms embargo against Liberia." (USCR, August 2001)

"Liberia is increasingly feeling the bite of UN sanctions imposed exactly six months ago for Monrovia's perceived support for Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group.

On May 7, the UN Security Council imposed a slew of sanctions -- which include tight travel restrictions on Liberian leaders, other key officials and some businessmen, a diamond export ban and an ongoing arms embargo -- for Liberia's alleged backing to the RUF.

President Charles Taylor has repeatedly slammed the sanctions as the work of 'neo-colonial powers' and has denied trading in the so-called 'conflict diamonds' mined by the RUF in return for arms.

Although Taylor says the west African country will tide over the present hard times, Liberia -- which has already suffered from a seven-year-old civil war -- is facing the pinch.

Since May, major foreign exchange earners such as the Bong Mines, the LAMCO iron ore company and the Union Glass factory remain closed with no signs of being revived.

Major rubber concessions like Firestone, LAC and Guthrie are operating at less than half their capacities. Unemployment is currently pegged at an alarming 85 percent and rising and foreign investors have adopted a wait-and see attitude.

The government owes civil servants salary arrears ranging from four to seven months. And the Liberian dollar has dropped sharply against the greenback from 40 in May to 52 at present.

At one point it had risen to 62 to the dollar and a further fall was stemmed by intervention from the Central Bank of Liberia." (AFP, 7 November 2001)

"The political and economic situation of the country has been aggravated by the imposition of UN Security Council sanctions (Resolution 1343 [2001]) against the Government of Liberia for supporting armed rebel groups, in particular, its support of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, and for its role in the illicit diamond trade. While these sanctions are targeted in scope, there are concerns that they may have far-reaching socio-economic and humanitarian implications. The standard of living amongst the most vulnerable Liberians has further deteriorated; inflation has become prevalent, while basic goods and services are either lacking or not affordable for the average Liberians." (UN, November 2001)

"The United Nations Security Council has extended sanctions on the Liberia Government for 12 months, saying the country had not fully complied with demands to stop support for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and other armed rebel groups in the region.

The extension, effective from 7 May, was decided unanimously. It covers an arms embargo, travel ban on government officials, and a prohibition on the exports of rough diamonds, the UN reported on Monday.

The Council, however, requested the Secretary-General, within three months to set up another panel of experts to investigate in Liberia and neighbouring states, compliance with its demands, the potential economic, humanitarian and social impact of the resolutions on Liberia's population, and any further violations.

The extension could 'be immediately terminated if the Council decides that the government has complied with the resolution', the UN said. The Council, it added, had noted that Liberia had complied with one demand of the resolution, concerning the registration and ownership of each aircraft flying the Liberian flag." (IRIN, 6 May 2002)

See the following original documents for further information about sanctions in Liberia:

- a.) Report of the Secretary-General in pursuance of paragraph 13 (a) of resolution 1343 (2001) concerning Liberia dated 5 October 2001 [\[External link\]](#);*
- b.) Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 13 (b) of Security Council resolution 1343 (2001) concerning Liberia (S/2001/965) dated 11 October 2001 [\[External link\]](#);*
- c.) Second report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraphs 2 and 3 of Security Council resolution 1343 (2001) regarding Liberia dated 31 October 2001 [\[External link\]](#);*
- d.) Letter from Liberia to the UN Secretary General dated 1 November 2001 [\[External link\]](#).*

For analysis of Liberia's internal and external prospects for peace and stability, see the April 2002 report by the International Crisis Group (ICG), 'Liberia: The key to ending regional instability' [\[External link\]](#)

EU opens consultations on human rights with Liberian government (July 2001)

- The EU decided to open consultations with Liberia in light of worsening human rights situation
- Consultations were held in Brussels in November 2001
- EU considered that considerable changes needed in Liberia on political, legal, economic and financial fronts

"The European Union decided, on 23 July 2001, to open consultations with the Liberian authorities in order to discuss issues relating to human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law, which are essential elements of the Cotonou Agreement, as well as the question of good governance, which is a fundamental element of that Agreement.

The consultations were held in Brussels on 9 November 2001 in order to examine thoroughly the situation in Liberia and to consider measures taken or to be taken to remedy it. The Liberian delegation was led by the Hon. Nathaniel BARNES, Minister of Finance. These consultations took place in an open and constructive spirit.

The European Union considered that considerable changes were needed in Liberia on the political, legal, economic and financial fronts in order to guarantee free and fair elections in 2003, and to meet the conditions for full co-operation in accordance with the terms of the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement.

The European Union noted the Liberian authorities' willingness to remedy the problems. It was encouraged by the commitments made by the Liberian government.

The European Union indicated, however, that clear and concrete initiatives to comply with these commitments would have to be taken without delay by the Government of Liberia. The European Union is ready to provide financial assistance to support the implementation of commitments mentioned above when appropriate." (EU, 9 November 2001)

"On 23 July 2001, the European Union agreed to open consultations on human rights with the Liberian government in the light of the worsening human rights situation." (AI 1 August 2001)

Carter Center closes at end of 2000

- Former US President Jimmy Carter cites "prevailing conditions" in Liberia and the actions of the Liberian government as reasons that Center can no longer continue its human rights and democracy work

"The US-based Carter Center has closed its office in Liberia, where it worked for a decade to promote human rights and democracy through local nongovernmental organisations and other groups.

Former US President Jimmy Carter said in a letter to President Charles Taylor that 'prevailing conditions and the actions of your government have made it increasingly difficult for the center and others to be effective in supporting democracy, human rights and the rule of law'.

'Much to our dismay, Liberia is a country where reports of serious human rights abuses are common, where journalists, human rights organisations and political activists work in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, and where there is little political space for meaningful democratic debate,' Carter said." (IRIN-WA, 10 November 2000)

International funding

UN Consolidated Appeal 2002 requests US\$17.2 million - but response is poor (2001-2002)

- Priorities for 2002 Appeal are to address the needs of IDPs, refugees, and returnees whilst strengthening the capacity of the host population
- Donor response to the CAP is poor, forcing humanitarian organisations to reduce their level of support to IDPs and other vulnerable populations
- Poor response is at least partly due to international scepticism of the government of President Taylor, which is still under UN sanctions

By November 2002, only 36.4 percent of the 2002 CAP was funded (ie. US\$ 5.55 million out of the revised total of US\$ 15.3 million). Up-to-date summaries of CAP requirements and contributions can be accessed on the financial tracking system of the UN OCHA ReliefWeb [\[External link\]](#)

"Four months after the launch of the revised CAP for the IDP crisis in Liberia, funding remains a major challenge. To date, there has been no response to the revised CAP for Liberia and the response to the upcoming CAP 2002 remains to be seen. The overall decline in donor support for humanitarian, reconstruction and development assistance in Liberia is having a serious and negative impact on the most vulnerable segments of Liberia's population. Since January 2000, lack of financial support for NGOs in Liberia has caused them to scale down their reconstruction and development activities and reduce the level of support they are providing to the vulnerable people.

At present, the humanitarian community has redirected existing programme funds to meet the basic emergency non-food needs of the IDPs. However, the majority of intervening agencies predict that, without additional support, they will not have sufficient financial capacity to maintain their current programming in reconstruction/development or emergency response beyond December 2001.

Given the volatile security conditions in the country, especially in Lofa County, it is unlikely that the IDPs will return to their communities in the immediate future. Even now, IDPs continue to flee the insecurity in their villages and towns.

Without additional resources, it is going to become increasingly difficult to maintain the provision of much needed assistance to the IDPs and their host communities.

The lack of funding for reconstruction/development activities is also expected to compound existing and emerging problems. The UN Agencies and NGOs provide significant support to the country's clinics, schools, water and sanitation facilities, rural infrastructure and food security. In addition, they are providing livelihood opportunities to many of the country's poor and vulnerable helping them to sustain themselves. However, the reduction in donor support for Liberia is rapidly diminishing the humanitarian community's ability to meet these basic needs of the Liberian population, over 80% of whom already live in abject poverty. Life in Liberia, for both IDPs and host communities, has again become a precarious matter of survival and dependence on humanitarian assistance. Without a rapid increase in donor support the fragile situation in Liberia could easily degenerate again into a major humanitarian emergency." (UN OCHA, 5 November 2001)

"The main priorities for 2002 are to address the needs of the displaced population (IDPs, refugees, returnees), whilst strengthening the capacity of the host population and other vulnerable communities in rural Liberia through the rehabilitation and revitalisation of basic infrastructure and services, and the restoration of traditional economic and agricultural activities. This dual approach aims to reduce vulnerability through strengthening capacity and reducing poverty by safeguarding lives and livelihoods. Better living conditions and a functioning economy for war-affected populations are the best prevention against renewed fighting. To implement this dual approach, the UN and its partners are seeking US\$ 17.2 million to address priority humanitarian needs in 2002." (UN, November 2001)

For details of funding requirements, please access original document [\[External link\]](#).

European Union and USAID have given money for improvements in health, nutrition, and education among other sectors (2001-2002)

- US Government provides almost US\$5 million for humanitarian assistance to Liberia in the first six months of 2002
- EU approved development aid package for Liberia worth US\$24 million in July 2001
- As of 2001, EU and USAID only donors with representation in Liberia

USAID:

Liberia - FY 2002				
USAID				\$3,251,086
USAID/OFDA				\$275,000
	UN OCHA	Coordination and Information		\$250,000
	USAID/Monrovia	Health		\$25,000
USAID/FFP				\$2,976,086
	WFP	P.L. 480 Title II Food Assistance - 5,300 MT		\$2,976,086
STATE/PRM*				\$1,530,856
	ACF	Health, Nutrition		\$193,500
	IRC	Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence		\$107,356
	UNHCR	Refugee Support		\$1,230,000
Total USG Humanitarian Assistance to Liberia in FY 2002				\$4,781,942

(USAID, 12 June 2002)

European Union:

"In July 2001, the European Commission in Brussels approved a development aid package of US\$24 million for Liberia. These funds will cover activities in several sectors, including health, food security, provision of drinking water and infrastructure, over the next two years. Although some of the funds will be channeled through UN Agencies and NGOs, the majority will be channeled through the private sector and specialized government agencies." (UN OCHA, 5 November 2001)

General:

"The only donors represented in Liberia are the European Union and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Most other donor countries are represented in Côte d'Ivoire. There is currently no International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Bank programmes. Over the last few years, there has been an obvious decline and, in some cases, suspension of aid to Liberia due to the political environment in the

country. Since January 2000, NGOs have had to scale down their reconstruction and development activities and reduce the level of support they are providing to the vulnerable population. Furthermore, the humanitarian community has had to redirect existing programme funds to meet the emergency needs of the displaced population. Without a rapid increase in donor support, the fragile situation in Liberia could easily degenerate into another humanitarian emergency." (UN, November 2001)

Selected UN activities (2002)

Protection Coalition, created by UN OCHA's IDP Unit, begins work in Liberia (2002)

- OCHA IDP Unit established a 'Protection Coalition' in consultation with IASC members and bodies interested in strengthening protection for IDPs at the field level
- The Coalition provides a forum for review of protection coverage and support in IDP situations
- In Liberia, the Humanitarian Coordinator requested the Coalition to provide guidance and support to deal with protection issues ranging from IDP camp management to registration and redress mechanisms for victims of abuses
- Response by the Coalition includes the deployment of an IDP Protection Officer to Liberia, an IDP Workshop in Monrovia and a follow-up mission to take place in November 2002

For general information on the Protection Coalition, go to the website of the OCHA IDP Unit [\[External link\]](#)

"Upon the recommendation of the IASC Working Group, the IDP Unit undertook a mission to the Mano River countries from 15-24 April 2002 in order to examine primarily protection issues in Liberia. One of the recommendations of this mission was the deployment of an IDP protection officer to the OCHA office in Liberia who started working in Liberia as of the beginning of August 2002.

The Protection Coalition met thereafter two times on Liberia on 5 August and 10 October 2002 to further clarify the protection gaps which have been brought to the attention of the Coalition primarily by the said mission and through the Humanitarian Coordinator in Liberia.

At its meeting on 10 October 2002 the Coalition endorsed a proposal to send a follow up mission possibly including other Coalition members to evaluate, in collaboration with the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Country Team, the implementation of the recommendations formulated by the Coalition at its meetings, in particular in the fields of camp management, IDP registration, prevention of and consequences of sexual and gender based violence, security issues related to the provision of health and psychological services, and legal support of IDPs and respect of international human rights and humanitarian law standards.

This proposal reflects also the recommendation made by an IDP Workshop held in Monrovia from 1 to 4 October where Government officials and CT [Country Team] members were trained in the field of Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and discussed the implementation of these principles in the Liberia context." (OCHA IDP Unit, November 2002)

UNDP project aims to strengthen protection of IDPs and other vulnerable groups (August 2002)

- UNDP initiative aimed at strengthening protection of vulnerable groups is based on strategy developed by UN Country Team, in collaboration with various organisations

- One of the project's goals is to promote awareness of human rights among displaced people and host communities where camps are located
- The project aims to build self-reliance among IDPs and host communities

"The UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) has designed an initiative to bolster protection of vulnerable groups. It is based on a strategy developed by the UN Country Team in consultation with the Government, the International Committee of the Red Cross, other international and local NGOs, and local human rights groups.

The UNDP Office in Liberia, in collaboration with these partners and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, is carrying out the US\$500,000 project, co-funded by BCPR and the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy.

The project will improve camp management; strengthen systems for reporting, monitoring and following up on rights abuses; and promote awareness of human rights among displaced people and host communities where camps are located.

The initiative will also provide training for government officials and police and security forces to reinforce the government's ability to spread understanding of and respect for the civil rights of all citizens, working within the framework provided by the Liberian Ministerial Task Force on Protection

'UNDP has a critical role to play in promoting recovery for displaced people, even in the midst of a crisis,' said Marie Dimond, programme specialist with BCPR.

'This approach identifies durable solutions to building self-reliance among displaced people and their host communities. It will also help strengthen the capacity of local and national institutions to facilitate safe reintegration of the displaced back into their communities,' she said.

The initiative will work with local communities, women's groups and the Government to build a collaborative, community-based approach for protecting human rights. These efforts will facilitate resettlement of displaced people, once conditions have stabilized sufficiently for them to return home." (UNDP, 12 August 2002)

FAO help for displaced farmers (July 2002)

- UN FAO develops project to help the Liberian government provide emergency agricultural assistance to displaced farmers
- By providing farmers with essential agricultural inputs, the project aims to encourage sustainable livelihood activities through food production

"The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is to help Liberia's government provide emergency agricultural assistance to war-affected farmers through a project worth US \$237,000.

FAO said in a news release on 13 July that the project, titled 'Emergency Provision of Agricultural Inputs to Refugees, Host Communities and Internally Displaced Farmers in Montserrado County', aimed to encourage sustainable livelihood activities through food production.

The project will provide farmers with essential agricultural inputs, including farm tools, rice and assorted vegetable seeds, fertilisers, groundnuts and sweet potato cuttings. It targets about 7,000 farm families, including 2,000 refugee families, 4,000 displaced families and 1,000 families in host communities.

The Ministry of Agriculture, FAO and NGOs will coordinate project activities. Assistance for refugees will be coordinated with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)." (IRIN, 17 July 2002)

WHO provides wide-ranging emergency and humanitarian assistance to IDPs (May 2002)

- In May 2002, the health needs of large numbers of displaced people increased due to intensifying fighting in various parts of the country
- WHO responded through intervention in reproductive health, essential drugs and medical supplies, and disease prevention and control

"The month of May 2002 witnessed the exacerbation of the health needs of large segment of the population. The displacement was due to continued and intensified rebel attacks which spread to 2 additional counties, Grand Cape Mount and Montserrado.

The WHO/Liberia emergency and humanitarian response to the situation included intervention in reproductive health, essential drugs and medical supplies, and disease prevention and control. The goal, to reduce avoidable loss of life and burden of disease to which displaced populations are predisposed.

[...]

With the support of WHO, the Ministry of Health commenced the provision of RH services in 6 IDP camps in and around the Monrovia area. The exercise began with an assessment of the RH situation, looking at NGO partners who are providing services and the type of services they provide. The purpose is to bridge the gap in service delivery. All but one camp was found to have some form of RH service in place. This camp with no RH service has been given contraceptives for distribution through NGO already providing health service for its residents.

A meeting of all RH service providers including trained traditional midwives (TTM), has been held. The TTMs were given refresher training and their kit materials replenished. At the end of the entire exercise, it is hoped that the RH service in all IDP camp will be at the minimum level/standard required in the RH protocol.

WHO formed part of two joint UN agencies assessment mission to IDP centers created from recent fighting between LURD rebels and the Liberia Government. The first mission was to Phebe Hospital which has had to close down. IDPs originally in the Gbarnga area where Phebe is located have relocated to the Totota area. At the health post in Gbarnga, first aid and dressing materials were delivered. During the second mission which took the team to Ganta, a basic kit was given to the Ganta United Methodist Hospital for IDPs while ORS sachets were given to the International Rescue Committee (an NGO), which is the major provider of health service in Ganta." (WHO, 31 May 2002)

[*Click here for the full WHO report*](#)

UNHCR distributes aid to IDPs fleeing renewed fighting (February 2002)

- UNHCR distributes aid packages to thousands of IDPs seeking shelter in camps meant for Sierra Leonean refugees
- About 5,000 IDPs were estimated to have gathered in a total of six camps around Monrovia
- IDPs include civilians from Lofa and Gbarpolu counties, and former refugees whom UNHCR assisted in returning to Liberia before the resurgence of violence

- UNHCR calls upon the Liberian government to identify a fixed and secure location to accommodate the IDPs

"The U.N. refugee agency has distributed aid packages to thousands of internally displaced Liberians who sought shelter in camps for Sierra Leoneans, but cautioned that their continued presence could undermine existing refugee programmes in the country.

Some of the displaced Liberians were living with Sierra Leonean relatives or friends, while others occupied schools and other community centres. Their presence over a lengthy period of time could undermine refugee programmes in the camps, which were established for the Sierra Leoneans fleeing a vicious ten-year civil war in their country.

An estimated 20,000 people sought shelter in Klay Junction, an important crossing some 30 kilometres north of the capital of Monrovia on the road to Sierra Leone, during the past week as they sought to flee reported fighting between forces loyal to President Charles Taylor and rebels belonging to Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy.

But reports Wednesday indicated that thousands of the displaced had begun returning to their homes in Tubmanburg on trucks provided by the government.

The fighting last week flared around Tubmanburg and Sawmill, respectively west and north of the capital. But the security situation appears to have improved in the area as the fighting moved back further north into Gbarpolu County.

UNHCR officials estimated that as many as 5,000 people sought safety in six camps, but their numbers were reported to be decreasing. The aid materials were distributed through the government agency for refugees and through non-governmental organisations, and form part of regular ad-hoc contributions for displaced persons made by the refugee agency. Since last year, several consignments of materials, including 3,000 jerrycans, 2,500 plastic mats, blankets and tents have been distributed.

UNHCR staff last week noticed a growing number of displaced Liberians who had settled among the refugee population in camps around Monrovia. These include civilians from areas such as the Lofa and Gbarpolu Counties - which are still not pacified - who have been displaced several times.

The sudden flight of displaced Liberians has again raised the issue of providing them with proper assistance in a fixed and secure location. UNHCR has called on the Liberian government to rapidly identify an appropriate location for the relief community to assist the displaced persons.

Many of those receiving the materials are former refugees whom UNHCR assisted in returning to Liberia before the conflict between government troops and the insurgents flared up again in 2000." (UNHCR, 6 February 2002)

UNICEF provides wide-ranging assistance to IDPs (2002)

- UNICEF provides emergency assistance to victims of renewed fighting (2002)
- 'Child Friendly Spaces' are established in IDP camps to protect and support displaced children
- UNICEF is supporting management and coordination of services in IDP camps
- Some 30,000 displaced children will receive emergency education
- UNICEF will deploy a child protection officer to work with international NGOs in developing a UNICEF-led child protection advocacy strategy

- UNICEF to help develop a child protection advocacy strategy
- UNICEF is providing support to various health and nutrition programmes

"UNICEF continues to work closely with the humanitarian community, particularly with OCHA and LRRRC (the local government body in charge of Management of IDPs and Refugees) in the key sectors of health, nutrition, water, sanitation, emergency education and child protection.

Response to the crisis through support to NGOs

In response to the current crisis and based on new assessments, UNICEF Liberia has provided emergency medical kits, tarpaulins and high energy/protein biscuits to meet the immediate emergency needs of the fleeing IDPs. With support from UNICEF, the Phebe Hospital Team and Bong County Health Team have set-up temporary clinics in Totota and Salala. They are also operating a mobile clinic along the Gbarnga - Monrovia highway to provide health support to the IDPs. UNICEF has also provided support to Concern Worldwide who has set-up transit shelters in Totota town. UNICEF has also provided Dry Skimmed Milk (DSM) and high energy and protein biscuits to Action Contre la Faim (ACF) for distribution to the IDPs.

In light of the growing number of IDPs in the suburbs of Monrovia, UNICEF has extended its support to SC-UK (for maternal and child health), World Vision (health clinic), ACF (nutrition), International Rescue Committee (emergency education), Lutheran World Federation (shelter), Child Assistance Programme and Community and Human Development Agency (COHDA) (management of Child Friendly Spaces and camps). UNICEF has identified the need for better management and co-ordination at the camp level to ensure that environmental standards are respected, efficiency in service delivery is maintained and codes of conduct are upheld at all times. With support from the Norwegian Government, UNICEF is due to receive in-kind supplies of nutrition, water and shelter (worth US\$ 219,000), and technical support in camp management to enhance child protection interventions. In addition, UNICEF urgently requires essential drugs, emergency health kits, therapeutic milk (F100) and Oral Rehydration Salt. Funds are also required to support construction of shelters and procurement of non-food items.

Child Friendly Spaces improving the environment of children

Working closely with SC-UK, ACF, World Vision International, Child Assistance Programme and COHDA, UNICEF has established Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) and commenced emergency education programme (including Early Childhood Development (ECD) and recreation) in two of the four camps around Monrovia. The other two are under construction. These spaces are used to enhance participation and protection of children in difficult IDP camp environment. The CFS would increase the visibility of children, promote integration of services and monitor provision of services. A CFS comprises of recreational corners for various age levels of children with opportunities for recreation, basic learning, ECD training and trauma relief support. These centres are also supporting mothers by allowing them to engage in income generating activities around the camps and in the communities, and at the same time, improving environment of children and young.

Coordination of IDP support in camps

UNICEF is also supporting management and co-ordination of services in the camps especially in ensuring that services meet the set standards and are environmentally sound. UNICEF is working with local NGO partners and the Government's Liberia Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) to improve registration of IDPs, camp management, security of IDPs especially for the vulnerable groups. UNICEF is supporting proper camp layout, erection of proper shelter units and setting-up of sanitation facilities. It is also advocating for the protection of children from joining the fighting factions. The interventions include strong information and communication campaigns which aim at increasing commitment and resources to address the compound and complex situation of the IDPs, especially the children, young and women.

Emergency Education

UNICEF will support an emergency education programme for all Liberian primary school children displaced by the conflict. Out of the 75,000 IDPs, an estimated 30,000 are children suitable for participating in ECD and emergency education activities. UNICEF will expand its support by supplying 'school-in-a-box' and recreation kits. It will work in partnership with the International Rescue Committee in providing emergency education and strengthening host communities so that they can absorb IDP children in community schools.

Water and Sanitation

There is an immediate need to increase access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation especially in the new camps around Monrovia and the new sites at Totota, Salala, Ganta and Buchanan. UNICEF will support promotion of behavioural changes that are necessary for the maintenance of hygiene and health in the IDP shelters.

Child Protection measures must be undertaken to curb human rights violations

The protection needs of the IDPs are grave. During the movement into safer areas, there is growing fear that children may have been conscripted as soldiers and helpers by the fighting forces. Girls face the highest risk both during migration and in the camps, where they are exposed to rape and prostitution. The need for special intervention such as advocacy, reproductive health and life skills to improve their situation are of paramount concern. UNICEF will deploy an experienced child protection officer to work with international NGOs (including SC-UK) in developing a UNICEF-led child protection advocacy strategy and redress interventions.

UNICEF will work with partners to support a programme advocating for the release of children being conscripted into the fighting factions. To this end, it will work with a reputable group of human rights lawyers to advocate for the release of abducted children and young. UNICEF will also work with SC-UK to strengthen the exercise of tracing and reunification of separated/unaccompanied children.

Health and Nutrition

UNICEF, in collaboration with SC-UK and World Vision International, is providing support for the treatment of common illnesses and dehydration; reproductive health care; immunization of children under five years of age and pregnant women; malaria prevention; and treatment of diarrhoea, eye infections and acute respiratory infections. UNICEF is working with ACF and SC-UK in therapeutic feeding and nutritional assessment. Support is also being extended to other partners in the areas of psychosocial counseling and safe motherhood." (UNICEF, 29 May 2002)

WFP provides assistance to IDPs (2002)

- WFP caseload of displaced people rose from 45,000 in January 2002 to over 126,000 in August - a direct result of a government offensive against LURD rebels
- IDPs, as well as refugees, being assisted by WFP are located in camps in Montserrado, Bong and Nimba counties
- The majority of recipients are women and children, who are 'in high need of food aid'
- There is growing concern over the plight of thousands of IDPs who are inaccessible to aid agencies

"The United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) in Liberia has resumed distribution of full food aid rations to internally displaced Liberians and Sierra Leonean refugees.

The caseload of the displaced has risen from 45,000 in January to 126,427 in August, while the number of Sierra Leonean refugees being assisted was 24,540, WFP stated this week.

The UN food agency had reduced the quantity of bulgar wheat it provided in July by half because of delayed arrival of cereal commodities, Justine Bagirishya, WFP country representative in Liberia, stated on Monday.

However, it had increased the quantity of peas by 50 percent to compensate beneficiaries for the reduction of the bulgar wheat, Bagirishya added.

Humanitarian sources have linked the rising number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) with a government offensive against the rebel group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).

The displaced people and refugees being assisted by WFP are located in camps in Montserrado, Bong and Nimba Counties.

'In addition, about 11,181 beneficiaries are assisted through special feeding programmes in Margibi, Nimba, Bong and Montserrado Counties,' the agency said.

'Each displaced Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugee receives a ration of 12 kg of cereal, 1.5 kg of peas, 75 grams of oil and 150 grams of salt monthly,' it added.

WFP has provided food aid assistance of approximately 6,820 mt to assist the IDPs and refugees in Liberia in 2002, at a cost of some US \$4 million, it added." (IRIN, 5 September 2002)

"Some 93,000 people displaced by fighting in Liberia now depend on supplies provided by the World Food Programme (WFP), according to the UN agency, which said some 43,000 of the beneficiaries were living in camps near the capital, Monrovia.

WFP's regional office for West Africa said on Wednesday that women and children constituted the majority of recipients and were 'in high need of food aid'. As a result of the rainy season, dubbed the 'hunger gap season', the need for food aid had increased because IDPs had no other means of sustenance. Medical NGOs had registered an increase in moderately malnourished children from 1,500 two months ago to over 3,000 this month, WFP said.

WFP also expressed growing concern over the condition of thousands of people in hard-to-reach areas in Lofa, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount counties who fled their home areas in January and February. They were likely to face an 'immediate and long-term food shortage' because they fled at a time when they were supposed to planting food crops, the UN agency said.

Fighting between pro- and anti-government forces in the northwestern county of Lofa and neighbouring Gbarpolu spread this year to Grand Cape Mount, which is farther south. All three counties border on Sierra Leone, while Lofa also shares a border with Guinea." (IRIN, 26 July 2002)

Selected activities of international organisations and NGOs (2002)

ICRC coordinating Red Cross Movement response to victims of displacements (2002)

- ICRC is providing emergency response to victims of the crisis in accessible areas, including with shelter material, water and sanitation, mobile medical teams, medical evacuations and follow-up on protection issues
- In June 2002, ICRC provided emergency assistance to a group of 138 displaced lepers, with some 400 family members, whom they discovered in the previously inaccessible town of Sinje
- In July 2002, ICRC launched an appeal effectively doubling their planned budget, mainly in order to set up a surgical unit in a Monrovia hospital to help the ever-growing number of displaced people
- Decision to open surgical unit was taken after a survey showed that surgical facilities were practically non-existent in Liberia, and that only 20 doctors remained in the country

"Since the last ICRC Update No 6/2002 – Liberia, dated 27 February 2002, the highly volatile political and security situation in the country has continued to cause a serious deterioration in the ever-complex humanitarian crisis. Fighting between government forces and dissidents has spread from Lofa and Gbarpoplu Counties to Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi and Bong Counties, causing further population movements and a significant increase in the overall IDP caseload;

As lead agency for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the ICRC is coordinating the joint Red Cross response, working with Liberian National Red Cross Society (LNRCS) to assist the victims of the recent displacements and fighting in Liberia. The ICRC provides an emergency response for victims of the crisis in accessible areas, notably with shelter material, water and sanitation, mobile medical teams, medical evacuations and follows up protection issues. The ICRC has also been lobbying the authorities to ensure the proper mid-term relocation and settlement of displaced persons (IDPs) in safe locations." (ICRC, 24 May 2002)

"On 12 June, in the town of Sinje in north-western Liberia near the border with Sierra Leone, the ICRC provided a group of 138 lepers accompanied by some 400 family members with mats, blankets, kitchen utensils, soap, and other basic necessities.

When a team of delegates went to assess the situation of internally displaced people in the town, which had been inaccessible for several weeks because of intense fighting, they discovered the lepers, who had had to flee the fighting near the northern Liberian town of Kolakare at the beginning of the month. Not only had the lepers and their families been compelled to leave their homes in great haste, taking with them only the strict minimum, but they had also been the victims of highwaymen. Abandoned by all and in rags, they finally arrived at a camp in Sinje formerly used by Sierra Leonean refugees, most of whom were repatriated at the beginning of the year. The lepers and their families moved into two buildings which had previously been used as workshops, where there was so little space that they could lie down only by taking turns.

The action taken by the ICRC was a stopgap measure to help the people concerned until they are registered by humanitarian organizations that specifically handle these kinds of cases." (ICRC, 13 June 2002)

"The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) launched an appeal today for a budget extension of 6.8 million Swiss francs, bringing the total budget for Liberia to 13 million francs, or twice the amount initially planned (6.2 million francs). The funds will mainly be used to set up a surgical unit in an annexe of the JFK hospital in Monrovia and to help internally displaced persons, whose numbers have been constantly rising in recent months.

The ICRC estimates that nearly 80,000 displaced persons are scattered throughout the country today. The organization is currently providing one form of aid or another for nearly 65,000 of those living in camps and it fears that the present disturbances could cause the displacement of thousands more. ICRC head of operations for West Africa Laurent Corbaz, who recently came back from Liberia, was struck by the disastrous situation in the country. 'The victims' needs, which were already considerable, have simply increased with this new crisis and we must respond to them', he said.

The ICRC will continue to play a key role in providing civilians and the war-wounded with protection and assistance. It will also build up its tracing agency's network in Liberia and in neighbouring countries, mobilizing the local branches of the National Red Cross Societies concerned with a view to locating the relatives of hundreds of children who have been separated from their families by the conflict.

The budget increase was considered necessary given the humanitarian situation in Liberia, which has become steadily worse as a result of the crisis that has been affecting the country since last year. The ICRC will also need to improve its ability to act by increasing the number of its expatriates from 10 to 23." (ICRC, 5 July 2002)

"On 9 July the ICRC signed an agreement with representatives of the board of JFK hospital, in Monrovia, to open a trauma surgery unit there.

The annexe in which the unit will be set up is the only building in the complex - one of the largest in West Africa - to have been rehabilitated after major damage was caused to the hospital when the conflict broke out in 1990.

A six-person medical team will leave for Liberia next week and should be operational by mid-July. Surgical instruments and materials from Norway will be flown in on an Antonov 12 chartered by the ICRC. The unit, which will treat war casualties and local residents, will have an initial capacity of 50 beds but will subsequently be able to take in up to 160 patients if need be.

The decision to open this unit was taken after a field survey showed that surgical facilities were practically inexistent in Liberia and that only 20 doctors were still in the country. The situation has become worse since clashes between government troops and LURD rebels in Lofa county caused a dozen clinics and hospitals to shut down." (ICRC, 12 July 2002)

National Red Cross Society, with ICRC, works in IDP camps (April 2002)

- As of April 2002, four IDP centres in Bong County housing more than 18,000 IDPs were managed by the Red Cross
- The Red Cross was responsible for IDP registration, food distribution and the coordination of assigning temporary shelter to the most vulnerable people

"From 21 April, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), supported by the Bong Chapter of the Liberian National Red Cross Society (LNRCS), worked in the IDP camps. The Bong Chapter was responsible for the registration of the displaced population, distribution of food provided by World Food Programme (WFP) and for the coordination, with local authorities and the Liberian Relief, Relocation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC), of assigning temporary shelter to the most vulnerable population in

the following centres. The Bong Chapter is also responsible for first aid and preventive health/hygiene campaigns at the centres.

Red Cross Managed IDP Centres

Centre	Population	Lead Role	Responsibility
Gbalatuah / Reception Centre	6,918 persons (1,995 families)	ICRC / Bong Chapter	Management, food and non-food distribution, tracing, and protection.
TV Tower / Transit Centre	4,638 persons (931 families)	ICRC / Bong Chapter	Management, food and non-food distribution, tracing and protection.
CARI / IDP Centre	7,011 persons (1,788 families)	Bong Chapter	Management, shelter, food and non-food distribution, and tracing.
Total	18,562 persons (4,714 families)		

(IFRC, 31 May 2002)

[Click here](#) to see the full IFRC Liberia Annual Report

IOM assesses IDP situation in Liberia with a view to developing a humanitarian assistance programme (October 2002)

- IOM mission assesses IDP numbers, needs and vulnerability, the likely cost of an assistance programme, potential IDP camp management, and vocational skills training projects

"IOM this week dispatched an assessment team to Liberia, at the invitation of UNOCHA and UNHCR, to review the IDP situation with a view to developing a future humanitarian assistance programme. Funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the mission will assess the IDP population in terms of their numbers, needs and vulnerability, and will look at the likely cost of an assistance programme. The team will also look at potential IDP camp management and vocational skills training projects.

Estimates of the number of IDPs in Liberia vary, but currently stand at around 130,000. The majority are located in the greater Monrovia area and were displaced by fighting between Liberian Government Forces (AFL) and the rebel group known as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).

There are also some 10,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in camps in the Monrovia area, 4,600 of whom had been registered by UNHCR by the end of August 2002. Elsewhere in the country, there are an estimated further 5,000 refugees, many of them displaced former residents of the Sinje refugee camp, 50 miles from Monrovia, which was attacked by rebels on 20th June." (IOM, 11 October 2002)

Save the Children Fund activities (2002)

- Displacement has led to large numbers of children being at particular risk of malnutrition and disease, as well as being vulnerable to exploitation and abuse
- SCF response includes emergency assistance, child protection activities and family reunification

"Key issues affecting children

- In 2002, cross border conflict has displaced an estimated 60,000 people from northern Liberia, of which more than 30,000 are currently accessing emergency services in seven camps in three counties.
- Large numbers of children are at risk of malnutrition and disease due to lack of access to food, water and sanitation, and health services.
- Displacement is putting children at risk of family separation.
- Lack of income-earning opportunities are forcing many children into exploitative livelihoods such as prostitution, leaving them vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse.

Save the Children's response

Assessing movements of displaced people and providing assistance such as mother and child health, reproductive and sexual health services, provision of non-food items such as clothing and household items, and family tracing services.

Protecting children from exploitation and abuse and working to prevent them from being separated from their families and being recruited into fighting forces.

Reuniting children with their families and supporting community-based child protection structures." (SCF, 18 September 2002)

[Click here](#) for the full SCF emergency update of September 2002

CRS activities (2002)

- CRS, together with implementing partners, is involved in screening and registering IDPs in four sites near the town of Buchanan
- CRS also distributed emergency food aid in the IDP centres
- Other CRS activities in Liberia are in the fields of agriculture, health, capacity building, justice and peace - as well as relief and rehabilitation

"Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the US-based humanitarian agency, continues to respond to the crisis of Liberians displaced from their homes by the recent conflict in the north/central part of the country. On June 6th, CRS carried out an emergency food distribution in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County. The majority of the internally displaced now residing in Buchanan fled fresh fighting from the northeastern Bong County area.

Sporadic clashes between Liberia government forces and rebels have caused significant population movements, affecting large parts of the country. The fluidity of these population displacements has plagued the registration and verification processes in the majority of internally displaced camps in Liberia, which are now scattered throughout much of the country. CRS is working closely with its implementing partner Caritas, as well as the Liberian Red Cross, and Action Contre La Faim to accurately screen and register the 1,346 internally displaced people in four separate sites with the Buchanan city limits. Following the registration, CRS executed a rapid emergency food distribution to the targeted population to meet their immediate basic needs for the next two weeks. Family heads were given a food packet consisting of lentils, bulgur wheat, oil and a nutritious porridge mix called corn-soya blend.

CRS is the overseas relief and development arm of the US Catholic Church. Our presence in Liberia dates back to 1990, and activities include a variety of developmental programs -- agriculture, health, capacity

building, justice and peace -- in addition to relief and rehabilitation. CRS provides assistance to all those in need regardless of religious creed, ethnicity or gender." (CRS, 11 June 2002)

World Vision activities (2002)

- In August 2002, World Vision Liberia and UNICEF launched a joint project aimed at assisting 52,000 IDPs in three counties
- The project involves the provision of various health services, including vaccination and obstetric care
- World Vision providing health services to IDPs in two temporary clinics near Monrovia (February 2002)

"The UNICEF office in Liberia and World Vision Liberia have signed a new project cooperation agreement to assist 52,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in three counties.

This six-month emergency project, valued at U\$106,856.19 in cash and supplies, will cover four IDP centres and nearby communities in Montserrado, Bong and Margibi Counties, and is the second of such a venture between the two entities to help IDPs in Liberia.

The latest undertaking targets 8,400 children under five years, 10,500 women of child-bearing age, 2,100 pregnant women, and 10,000 community residents to receive curative and preventive health services.

The children will be fully immunised against the six childhood vaccine-preventable diseases - poliomyelitis, measles, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and tuberculosis. Pregnant women and women of child-bearing age will be vaccinated against tetanus, while multi-antigen campaigns will be carried out for women of child-bearing age and children under five years.

Other services will be antenatal and post-natal care, delivery services; training of community health workers, including traditional midwives, in life-saving and safe delivery practices; increasing awareness about sexually transmitted infections/HIV/AIDS among IDPs; and promotion of condom use.

Under the first UNICEF/WV IDPs project (worth US\$390,444.), to which WV US provided a match of US\$34,666, about 100,000 IDPs in Gbapolu, Montserrado, Margibi, Bomi and Bong Counties received similar health care over a one-year duration - July 2001 to June 2002.

The latest project will be implemented along side the recently approved German Government assistance package for 5,000 Liberian IDPs to be implemented by WV Liberia." (World Vision, 20 August 2002)

"From two temporary clinics set up on February 9 and 11, in VOA Refugee Camp and at Ricks Institute Campus, both close to Monrovia, WV Liberia has provided health services to 235 internally displaced people (IDPs) who are part of more than 10,000 others fleeing to the areas, becoming the first International NGO to give such services to the new arrivals.

The IDPs are victims of the ongoing war from Lofa County in northern Liberia where they were uprooted two years ago and scattered around various nearby counties. They are currently on the run from Klay, having sought refuge following the January 27 attack on their temporary center in Sawmill.

The VOA Camp and Ricks Institute Campus are just two of the many areas near Monrovia where the IDPs have been arriving since the attack on Klay. WVLI will continue to carry out needs assessment in accessible areas with the aim to give whatever available assistance.

At the moment, these fleeing war victims are without food, clothes and safe drinking water." (WV, 12 February 2002)

Lutheran World Federation activities (2002)

- Lutheran World Relief, a partner of Lutheran World Federation, appeals for funds to provide IDPs with shelter, water and sanitation (February 2002)
- LWF providing temporary shelter for thousands of newly arrived IDPs near Klay Town (February 2002)
- LWF subsequently revises its programmes to assist more than 30,000 IDPs with shelter, water/sanitation, food and non-food items, and counselling
- LWF is pivotal in coordinating the response by ACT members to the Liberian emergency

"In Liberia, thousands of people have fled renewed fighting days (sic) between government forces and rebel soldiers in recent days. The conflict has now spread to areas near Monrovia, the capital. Lutheran World Relief is appealing for contributions to provide people displaced by the conflict with shelter, water and sanitation.

Last weekend the fighting affected the 20,000 people who had gathered near the town of Klay about 25 miles from Monrovia. Lutheran World Relief's partner in Liberia, the Lutheran World Federation, had been helping provide temporary shelter for thousands of people there. Hundreds more were still living in the open when fighting broke out February 10 and thousands fled. Klay had been a place of refuge and aid for people from Liberia's troubled north and west.

LWF has clothing and other supplies from LWR, plus \$10,000 for seeds and tools so that displaced people can grow their own food in areas where the situation is stable. However, there is an immediate need for emergency assistance.

Earlier this month LWF's offices and warehouse in the northwestern city of Tubmanburg were looted. "We found a town that was practically deserted," said Rev. Sabine Foerster, a Lutheran Church in Liberia pastor who visited the town. "The only people who remained were the elderly and sick people and a priest who has given shelter to about 600 IDPs (internally displaced people) in the Roman Catholic Church compound."

LWR is seeking contributions for three months of crisis relief and nine months of rehabilitation assistance for 22,000 people in Liberia. Some have been forced to move four times by more than a year of intermittent fighting." (LWF, 13 February 2002)

"Fighting between the security forces of the Liberian Government and LURD dissidents in Lofa, Gbarpolu, Bomi, Cape Mount, and Bong Counties has once more created massive displacement of people. Around 130,000 persons have settled in 14 camps in the Western suburbs of Monrovia, in Bong, Kakata, Margibi, Grand Bassa, and Nimba counties. The majority of the IDPs are said to be women and children who are in desperate need of relief assistance as the majority have lost all their belongings during multiple displacements from the fighting. Presently, all life support assistance being provided by the humanitarian community such as shelter, water, sanitation, and medical care are described by LWF - Liberia and other humanitarian players in the country as grossly inadequate.

In this revision, Lutheran World Federation / World Service (LWF/WS) are revising their programs to reach out to more than 30,000 of the 130,000 IDPs. LWF/WS will provide shelter, WatSan, non food items, high protein foods to malnourished children, psychosocial counselling and create awareness for the prevention of sexual exploitation of 6,000 women and girl children. In the area of counselling, LWF will

collaborate closely with the Lutheran Church of Liberia (LCL) who are also providing health services to some of the IDPs through their mobile health clinics. The implementation period of the appeal will now run from January 2002 to March 2003. The additional activities described in this revision are planned for the period October 2002 to March 2003.

LWF is also playing a very crucial role in the co-ordination efforts of the ACT members responding to the emergency in the country and at the same time, collaborating with UN agencies, the EU and USAID offices in Monrovia. It is also an active member of the management Steering Group (MSG), a consultative body of the International Non Governmental Organisations in Liberia." (ACT, 3 October 2002)

Concerned Christian Community (CCC) assisting IDP victims of sexual abuse (2002)

- Concerned Christian Communities (CCC) is providing emergency health care to rape victims who are IDPs in the Sawmill-Tubmanburg areas, as well as material assistance and income-generating activities

"Concerned Christian Communities (CCC), a member of the Liberia Christian Council (LCC), a CWS partner, is responding to the psycho-social needs of women and children who have suffered sexual abuse in the ongoing fighting in the North West county (Lofa) of Liberia.

Emergency Appeal:

The assistance will include basic emergency health care to the rape victims, material assistance and also small grants for income generating activities to enable them re-establish their livelihood. The completion date of this project is Dec. 31, 2002.

Specifically, CCC will work with internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Sawmill-Tubmanburg, where more than 15,000 persons sleep in an open field. Sawmill is the nearest 'safe' city to Gbarpolu County where fleeing civilians could reach without much difficulty. CCC is assisting with psycho-social assistance for female Liberians and refugees who were raped or harassed while fleeing the military activities in the North West county (Lofa) of Liberia as well as to conclude the work with Refugees in Cape Mount.

This includes counseling services to women and girls in target response locations; emergency health care to female victims; craft-training for rape survivors; the provision of small grants, seeds and tools to traumatized victims undergoing counseling to enable them re-establish their livelihood; the eradication of prostitution and idleness among target beneficiaries.

The targeted beneficiaries include women and girls from the IDP and refugee camps along with the elderly victims of the military activities in Liberia. All targeted beneficiaries are rural farmers." (CWS, 5 February 2002)

MSF briefs the UN Security Council on the humanitarian situation in the Mano River region (May 2002)

- MSF tells the UN Security Council that 'the political agenda of the international community is significantly undermining the humanitarian needs of the people of this region', referring to both Liberia and Sierra Leone
- MSF has been working in the region for ten years

"Médecins Sans Frontières is grateful for this opportunity to address members of the Security Council on our current concerns for the people of the Mano River Union in West Africa, a region where our organization has worked extensively over the past decade.

This is the third time in the last year that MSF has brought the problems facing the people of West Africa to your attention.

The war in Sierra Leone has been officially declared over and the largest UN peacekeeping force in the world has been deployed throughout that country. Meanwhile, the conflict in Liberia is gaining momentum.

The problems facing West Africa today cannot be dealt with in isolation, but rather must be handled with a regional approach. The council must not consider the problems in Sierra Leone resolved as long as the troubles are increasing in Liberia.

Between February and May 2002, MSF carried out an extensive study in order to gain a global perspective on the humanitarian situation in the region. The report we have distributed to you today shows an acute picture of the current problems and challenges that the most vulnerable populations are facing. Given the clear lack of protection of civilians that exists in this context, the findings outlined in the Save the Children and UNHCR report on sexual exploitation in the camps are not surprising.

Today, MSF is concerned that the political agenda of the international community is significantly undermining the humanitarian needs of the people of this region." (MSF, 21 May 2002)

[Click here](#) for the full text of the MSF briefing.

See also the section on 'subsistence needs/general' in this profile.

References to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

Known references to the Guiding Principles (as of November 2002)

- References to the Guiding Principles in the national legislation
- Other references to the Guiding Principles (in chronological order)
- Availability of the Guiding Principles in local languages
- Training on the Guiding Principles (in chronological order)

References to the Guiding Principles in the national legislation

None

Other references to the Guiding Principles (in chronological order)

LRRRC Draft IDP Camp Management Guidelines: "Internally Displaced Persons shall enjoy, in full equality, the same rights and freedom as provided for under the Humanitarian Charter, the UN Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement and other international and domestic instruments. The Humanitarian Charter and the UN Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement reaffirm the fundamental importance of three key principles on internal displacement:

The right to life with dignity

The distinction between combatants and non-combatants

The right to be protected against forcible return to or resettlement in any place where their life, safety and liberty and/or health would be at risk."
Source: Liberian Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC)
Date: October 2001
Documents: Included in the NRC Training Report October 2001

Availability of the Guiding Principles in local languages

None

Training on the Guiding Principles

NRC training workshop: The Global IDP Project of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), in collaboration with the Liberian government ministry responsible for the protection and assistance of refugees, returnees and IDPs (Liberian Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission, LRRRC), held a 3-day training workshop on the Guiding Principles in Monrovia, Liberia. The workshop was part of a global NRC effort to disseminate and explain the Guiding Principles to representatives of governments, NGOs, the UN agencies and the displaced themselves, in order to ensure better protection and assistance to internally displaced persons. A total of 48 participants attended the workshop, more than 25 of whom had travelled to Monrovia from the provinces.
Sources: LRRRC, other government agencies, national and international NGOs, UN agencies, IDP community representatives
Date: 23-25 October 2001
Document: Report of the Training Workshop on the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, NRC, 23-25 October 2001

OCHA IDP Unit training workshop: On the recommendation of the Protection Coalition, the OCHA IDP Unit organised an IDP workshop in Monrovia, in October 2002. Government officials as well as UN Country Team members were given training on the Guiding Principles. Discussions focused on the implementation of the Principles in the Liberian context.
Sources: Government officials and UN Country Team members
Date: 1-4 October 2002
Document: As of November 2002, the workshop report was not yet available. For further information and updates, go to the website of the OCHA IDP Unit.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFL	Armed forces of Liberia
BHR	Bureau for Humanitarian Response (United States)
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
CGP	Common Ground Productions (Search for Common Ground)
FFP	Food for Peace Office (United States)
FY	Fiscal year
GOL	Government of Liberia
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally displaced person
IGNU	Interim Government of National Unity
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LNRCS	Liberian National Red Cross Society
LNTG	Liberian National Transitional Government
LNTG II	Liberian National Transitional Government II
LRRRC	Liberia Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission
MP	Military police
MSF	Medecins sans Frontieres
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPP	National Patriotic Party
OFDA	Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SCG	Search for Common Ground
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement for Democracy
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nation's Children's Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission to Liberia
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USCR	United States Committee for Refugees
USD	United States Dollars
VOA	Voice of America
WFP	World Food Programme
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
AFP	Agence France Presse
SOD	Special Operations Division
ORS	Oral Rehydration Solution
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunization
WHO	World Health Organization
NFI	Non Food Items

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