

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
54th MEETING**

17-18 September 2003

**UNFPA Headquarters, New York
Meeting Room: Rafael Salas (19th Floor)**

Liberia: Background Note

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Summary:

Humanitarian assistance has been delivered cautiously, albeit at a limited scale to areas under Government, LURD and MODEL control. However, of grave concern is the absence of security, which provides a safe operating environment for humanitarian staff, but most importantly, ensuring the safety of populations in general and in particular those receiving assistance. In some cases, IDPs have discouraged the distribution of food, despite acute food needs, in light of potential harassment and looting by armed forces. The deployment of ECOMIL and eventually UN Peacekeeping forces up country will be the major factor in providing a secure environment and boosting the confidence of humanitarian agencies and populations to delivery of assistance throughout the country.

A) ACCESS:

An *Agreement on the distribution of humanitarian aid and assistance in Liberia* was signed by the Government of Liberia, MODEL, LURD, ECOWAS, African Union and the United Nations on the 17th of August 2003, during the Peace Talks in Accra. The agreement secures free and unimpeded access and guarantees the security of humanitarian staff and assets. Efforts have been made by the Special Humanitarian Coordinator and the humanitarian community to negotiate access with all parties to the conflict. Though there have been positive developments in establishing contacts with faction leaders who have all pledged their cooperation, visits to the field indicate that little, if any efforts have been made by the signatories of the Agreement to disseminate the message to all ranks. Furthermore, the lack of coherence and discipline within the command structures is an obstacle in ensuring adherence to the agreement.

Negotiating access to vulnerable populations through neighboring countries has also been perused, and agreements have been granted by the Governments of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. Meanwhile UN Agencies and NGOs are drafting an operational plan for a phased deployment upcountry, as access is secured based on identified priorities. This includes cross border operations as of mid September.

B) PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

The protection of civilians in Liberia is severely compromised and violated by all parties to the conflict. Reports from visits to many settlements indicate a high rate of sexual gender based violence, abductions, forced recruitment especially of children, forced labour, lack of freedom of movement, forced displacement and family separations. Common trends also include consistent harassment, looting of personal assets and food stocks. A key aspect of protection is the provision of and access to basic social services. The lack of food, adequate shelter, health and water and sanitation services are identified as the most pressing needs by all populations.

C) SECURITY:

Area Security: Improvement of the security situation is seen as the prerequisite for an improved humanitarian situation. The ceasefire seems to be holding in most areas of the country, though rumors of skirmishes have led to significant population displacements. The security situation in Monrovia has relatively improved but remains tense. Despite the limited capacity of ECOMIL forces, regular patrols to areas outside Monrovia have been effective in raising the confidence of the local population. ECOMIL forces have made efforts to cooperate with the humanitarian community, by patrolling areas around IDP camps.

Staff Security: The security of humanitarian staff is a major concern. Prior to the evacuations UN agencies were compliant with Minimum Operating Standards for Security (MOSS), they no longer meet these criteria due to increased number of staff, expanded operations and looting of humanitarian assets. Lack of communication and telecom equipment is also a major hindrance in ensuring the safety of staff.

D) DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION, RESETTLEMENT AND REINTEGRATION (DDRR)

The peace process in Liberia cannot bear fruit without the implementation of a DDR programme. Stakeholders, including the UN, World Bank, Donors and NGOs have commenced planning for the DDR programme. It is encouraging to note the commitment shown to developing an integrated plan and incorporating previous lessons learned from DDRR programmes in Liberia, and the region. Particular consideration will be given to child and female combatants and camp followers.

E) RESPONSE TO IDP SITUATION:

IDPs in Monrovia: There are an estimated 300,000 IDPs in Monrovia; approximately 150,000 of them were formerly residing in 8 IDP Camps in Montserrado County. Many of them have expressed interest in returning to their former camps once security is guaranteed and services are resumed: some have already started to return independently. Assessments of the camps indicate that the conditions are feasible for return as most structures are intact and capacity to resume basic operations is sufficient.

A major challenge will now be to; organize transportation assistance for the return of the most vulnerable IDPs; vacating occupied schools and clinics to resume services; and providing shelter rehabilitation assistance for displaced residents in Monrovia. A comprehensive and common registration exercise will also be undertaken.

IDPs upcountry: There were an estimated 200,000 IDPs assisted in camps upcountry. Continued insecurity has led to the further displacement of the IDPs and their hosts towards the capital. IDPs and host communities alike are faced with severe food shortages, poor health and sanitation conditions. The sheer numbers of IDPs and complexity of the situation, calls for a coherent and coordinated response by the humanitarian community.

F) DONOR SUPPORT

There have already been positive indications of donor contributions increasing considerably, however, the rate of commitment of pledges still remains slow and uneven across sectors and agencies. In this regard it has been proposed that an International Donor Conference on Liberia is hosted in a donor capital to mobilize support, not only for humanitarian efforts, but also for peacekeeping and peace building efforts, especially the DDRR process. Efforts also need to be made to ensure a longer-term commitment of donors and the international community to support post war resettlement, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts to ensure that the peace process succeeds.

G) COOPERATION WITH PEACEKEEPING FORCES/OPERATIONS:

The Multidisciplinary Assessment Mission has been fielded to plan the establishment of the UN Peacekeeping mission. The Assessment mission includes humanitarian representatives from OCHA, UNHCR, OHCHR and UNICEF to ensure that humanitarian concerns are incorporated in

the mission design. The UNCT foresees UNMIL support to humanitarian efforts in the areas of: security, logistical support, common services, public information and strategic coordination. The Country team welcomed the replication of the Sierra Leone experience and supports the incorporation of the HC / RC function within the mission, through a Deputy SRSG post.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IASC WORKING GROUP MEETING

A) ACCESS:

- Support ongoing negotiations with concerned authorities on the need for their cooperation in organizing cross-border operations. Encourage operational agencies to develop strategies for cross-border activities.

B) PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

- Reinforce UN and NGO capacity to address issues of protection, in particular, deploy staff with expertise in monitoring, sensitization, counseling and other response for survivors;
- Advocacy – IASC members to develop clear advocacy strategies at HQ, regional and field levels to raise the profile of protection issues and maintain visibility. Target groups could include Security Council, ECOSOC, Donor governments/institutions, Regional Organizations (AU/ECOWAS), the general public, the media and local authorities. This should include provision of resources. Advocacy should focus on both prevention and response.
- Consider the establishment of an IASC working group on Protection to provide regular advice and guidance to the humanitarian community on how best to address the issues, track progress made, maintain momentum, ensure accountability in the implementation of action plans, act as a link between the work of the humanitarian community and international and regional bodies.
- Support the deployment of a Senior Protection Officer in the Office of the DSRSG / Humanitarian Coordinator. The SPO will be responsible for coordinating all aspects of protection between the UNCT and UNMIL.

C) SECURITY:

- The security system needs to be urgently reinforced: at least two additional FSCOs should be deployed and communication and other security equipment should be upgraded. In sum, secure funding for an elaborate security system that meets the current challenges.
- Continue advocacy for speedy deployment of ECOMIL forces, as well as timely deployment of the successor UN peacekeepers to stabilize the situation.

D) DISARMAMENT, REMOBILIZATION, REINTEGRATION AND RECONSTRUCTION (DDRR)

- Humanitarian actors should be included from the start in the conceptualization of the DDRR Programme. IASC members should advocate for the establishment of appropriate coordination mechanisms at all levels to address a cross-section of issues relating to DDRR. Humanitarian agencies should be represented in all committees and technical bodies established at both HQ and field.
- IASC members should advocate for a comprehensive reintegration programme with a long-term view. International agencies with the requisite capacity to engage in DDRR

should be identified and encouraged to deploy staff to Liberia to coordinate with the UN system. Support a series of international donor events around the issue of DDDR.

- The reintegration of ex-combatants should be carried out within the broader framework of repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of IDPs and refugees. The DDDR policy should take into account the needs of dependents and camp followers.
- Special consideration should be given to effective demobilization and reintegration of child ex-combatants, including interim care. Support to UNICEF and NGO partners in this regard will be critical. Consideration should be given to deployment of a Senior Child Protection Adviser in the Office of the SRSG.
- Advocate for a comprehensive mandate for the new UN mission, which includes regional security dimensions – a possible role in regional DDDR. Internment programmes where they do not exist, should be initiated and then linked to the Liberia DDDR programme.
- Support the integration of lessons learned from Sierra Leone and other countries in the policy and planning process.

E) RESPONSE TO IDP SITUATION:

- Promote assignment of senior IDP adviser to support the Humanitarian Coordinator in all aspects of IDP response.

F) FUNDING

- Ensure success of the proposed Donor Conference on Liberia in September, particular emphasis on security, DDDR, WATSAN, HEALTH, Protection, Logistics -- port rehabilitation and air operations and HIC.
- Encourage donors to dedicate resources for the Liberia crisis without diverting funding for equally affected neighboring countries such as Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire.
- Support to Revised CAP and promote 2004 CAP.

G) COOPERATION WITH PEACEKEEPING FORCES/OPERATIONS:

- Support Sierra Leone DSRSG model. DSRSG/HC/RC should have the relevant competence – humanitarian and development.
- Encourage clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between the UNMIL and the humanitarian community.
- Advocate for a Chapter 7 mandate with clear objectives on protection of civilians.
- Promote the establishment of a robust human rights section within the mission.
- Support UNCT requests that deployment of troops take into account humanitarian priorities; i.e. areas with high concentration of populations should be given priority in the deployment plans of both ECOMIL and UNMIL. Mission should also be equipped to fully support the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of IDPs and refugees.

Proposed Action Points/Decisions by IASC-WG:

To review and endorse the recommendations proposed above.

Prepared by: OCHA, 03 September 2003