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Liberia Marks the End of IDP Return Process;
UN Humanitarian Coordinator Pledges UN support as IDPs return to their communities

Salala, Bong County, Liberia – The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Recovery and Governance and UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Jordan Ryan, together with the Vice President of Liberia, Hon. Joseph Boakai, and representatives from the various UN agencies and international and national NGOs, today marked the end of the IDP return process in Liberia during a ceremony at the former IDP camp in Salala, Bong County, approximately 200 km north-east of the capital, Monrovia.



Vice President Boakai demolishes an IDP hut at Salala camp

Addressing the community dwellers and guests at the former IDP camp, DSRSG Ryan recognized that life in an IDP camp presents many challenges and that residents want to return home. He thanked the Government of Liberia, humanitarian organizations, donors and all international and national partners whose efforts during the past 16 months ensured that all IDPs who wanted to return were able to go back to their communities. “This was made possible by building and managing camps, feeding, providing water and shelter, but most of all providing a refuge from the dangers of war that they fled from,” he said. “Today, we are here to celebrate the fact that every Liberian IDP has now been provided with the assistance required to return home.”

Mr. Ryan reminded donors that the job of resettling the IDPs is not yet finished. “Getting back home is just the beginning of a long and difficult journey the IDPs and other members of the community will have to face as they reconstruct their lives, their communities, their country,” he said. He also pledged the continued assistance of the UN and maintained that the international humanitarian community will work hard to support community-based recovery programmes, provide medical assistance and agricultural implements, and ensure that education facilities are functional.



From left: DSRSG Ryan, Vice President Boakai and Mr. Kebede

Vice President Boakai urged all displaced Liberians, who had not returned to their communities to go back home and ensured that the government is committed to help them to rebuild their lives. He cautioned that the goodwill of the donor community would not last forever and that Liberians must regain self-respect, build their homes, farm lands, and provide education and services for themselves.

The UNHCR Country Representative, Mr. Mengesha Kebede, noted that since the launch of the return programme, UNHCR has contributed over \$24 million to meet the government’s efforts to promote IDP protection and provide direct assistance in the form of non-food items and transport grants. “We call on the international community and the donor countries in particular to assist UNHCR to fulfil its mandate and commitment to returnees,” he said.

A former IDP, Mr. Augustine Mayango, thanked the international community for their assistance and urged them to continue to help the government of Liberia to rebuild the country. “It takes 18 years to raise a child, so Liberia still needs assistance of the international community,” he said.

At the end of the ceremony, Hon. Boakai and representatives of the international community demolished a hut at the former IDP camp to signify the end of the IDP return process in Liberia.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have played major roles to facilitate the return of the IDPs to their homes by providing protection, transportation, food rations, non-food items and transportation allowances. The UN Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and UNICEF, together with international and national non-governmental organizations ensured that the returns were sustainable and the returnees’ protection concerns were met. The European Commission, the United States, Norway and Japan were key donors providing major financial resources.

At the end of Liberia’s civil war, there were 314,000 registered IDPs in the country. Since the return process began on 8 November 2004, all registered IDPs living in Liberia’s 35 IDP camps and spontaneous settlements have received their return assistance package made up of food rations, non-food items and a transportation allowance.
