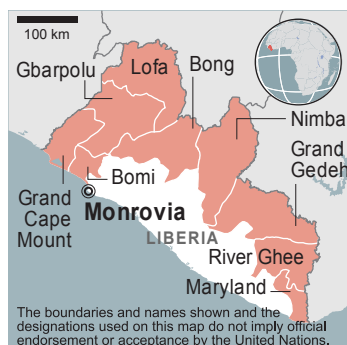


# Rebuilding communities in post-conflict Liberia: Empowerment for change



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



## Fast Facts

**Country:** Liberia

**Duration:** July 2006 to December 2009

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNDP; FAO; WFP

**Other Implementing Partners:** Ministry of Agriculture; local governments; NGOs; District Development Committees

**Budget:** \$3,965,571.12

**Key Words:** Post-conflict peacebuilding, reconciliation, community development, basic social services, poverty reduction, capacity-building

## BACKGROUND

Following two waves of protracted civil war, Liberia emerged with a devastated physical, economic and social infrastructure. Indiscriminate destruction by parties to the conflict left homes, schools, clinics, public buildings and other physical infrastructure heavily damaged. Massive displacement left many communities fractured, particularly in rural areas. At the end of the conflict, more than 76 per cent of the population was living below the poverty line and nearly 85 per cent of the labour force was either unemployed or underemployed. In addition, the agriculture sector, once considered the economic

backbone of Liberia, was badly hit thereby undermining food production and food security. While the post-conflict challenges were multiple, central among them was sustaining peace. To support peace consolidation, the root causes of conflict, in particular, disillusionment caused by long-term unemployment and poverty had to be addressed. Furthermore, improving the provision of basic services such as education and health care as well as addressing food insecurity were considered key factors for community reconciliation and stabilization.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the project was to contribute to the consolidation of peace by creating opportunities for gainful employment and enhancing community empowerment at the local level. To reach this goal, the primary objectives of the project were: i) to enable communities to participate in identifying and determining their needs, articulating and negotiating with partners, and effectively participating in the

monitoring and realization of such needs; ii) to replenish farming skills and technical support services lost during the conflict; iii) to support the revitalization of local economies by creating on- and off-farm opportunities for gainful employment; and iv) to enhance access to basic social services including education, health, water and sanitation.

### BENEFICIARIES

The direct beneficiaries of the project included 20,000 vulnerable households in Lofa, Bomi, Bong, Maryland, Grand Kru, Nimba, Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Montserrado, Grand

Bassa, Margibi and Sinoe counties. Indirect beneficiaries included the surrounding communities, reaching nearly 400,000 residents in the 14 counties.



Credit: UNDP



Credit: UNDP

## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) The project engaged District Development Committees (DDCs) – members of which were elected by the respective counties – to participate in decision-making processes on project identification, formulation, implementation, and monitoring. Capacity development workshops reached 630 members from 45 DDCs and strengthened local community structures for the planning and management of recovery and reintegration programmes. This community engagement ensured that project activities responded directly to the needs of local communities and empowered them to define and implement appropriate responses.

(ii) To support the revitalization of local economies, several capacity building workshops were conducted including: Farmer Field School for agriculture technicians, training in the fabrication of agro-processing machines for blacksmiths, and training in seed multiplication techniques for farmers. Similar trainings targeted women to increase their capacity to participate in agro-processing and micro enterprise management. In addition, awareness campaigns on

sustainable agricultural practices broadened the spread of the knowledge gained through these workshops to the counties at large. The combination of trainings and awareness campaigns resulted in improved domestic rice production, better household nutrition, and gains in household incomes.

(iii) Through 104 labor-intensive micro projects, immediate employment opportunities were created in five key sectors – roads and bridges, education, health, food, water and sanitation. As a result, the transportation infrastructure was significantly improved, transforming the lives of nearly 400,000 residents by opening up access to markets, improving communications and increasing access to schools and health facilities. In addition, water and sanitation facilities were enhanced and their distribution improved, resulting in the majority of towns in the target counties having access to safe drinking water and better sanitation. As an additional benefit, the improved transportation infrastructure also facilitated the resettlement of displaced people to their communities of origin.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The project highlighted the added value of a human security approach in post-conflict situations. By comprehensively addressing the root causes of conflict – in this case, the lack of employment and the disillusionment arising from long-term poverty – the advancement of human security gave rise to more immediate and tangible results, which deepened widespread community engagement in the process of reconciliation and recovery. Furthermore, through ensuring coherence between short-term and longer-

term responses, skills and knowledge within communities were expanded in line with strategies for economic and social development at the local and national level, providing an essential bridge from early recovery to long-term development. Lastly, the joint programming approach further strengthened the partnership between FAO, UNDP and WFP at the field level, ultimately serving as a catalyst for joint programming throughout the country.