



E.J. Yancy camp had a population of 18,650 as of 17 October 2003 when this photograph was taken  
[Credit: Nicole Allette, HIC Liberia]

## **UPDATE ON UNHCR-LED CLUSTERS IN LIBERIA**

**PROTECTION ● CAMP MANAGEMENT ● EMERGENCY SHELTER/NON FOOD ITEMS**

**SEPTEMBER 2006**



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**ACRONYMS**

ARC	American Refugee Council
CCF	Christian Children's Fund
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CPN	Child Protection Network
CST	County Support Team
FIND	Foundation for International Dignity
FOHRD	Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy
ICF	IDP Consultative Forum
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JPC	Justice and Peace Commission
LNP	Liberia National Police
LRRRC	Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission
MGD	Ministry of Gender and Development
MOH	Ministry of Health
MSG	Monitoring Steering Group
NACROG	National Child Rights Observatory Group
NGO	Non governmental organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PCG	Protection Core Group
SC-UK	Save the Children UK
SEA	Sexual exploitation and abuse
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
WCPS	Women and Children Protection Section
WFP	World Food Programme

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## FOREWORD

by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Liberia

The restoration of peace in Liberia has allowed the Government and the international community to focus on improving humanitarian conditions. Yet despite initial progress, including the successful closure of IDP camps, the majority of the population still survives without adequate health care, safe drinking water, shelter and education. As a result of the devastation brought on by the war, national capacity to respond to even minor emergencies remains weak.

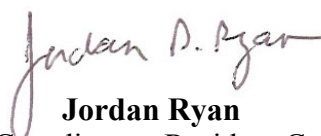
The new Government of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has been working hard to address these capacity gaps, with ongoing support from the humanitarian community. To further strengthen these efforts, the humanitarian actors in Liberia have recently come together around the “cluster approach”. Liberia is one of three pilot countries in Africa testing out this new approach. As part of a broader humanitarian reform process, the cluster approach assigns primary responsibility for leadership of each humanitarian cluster to a specific UN agency.

The introduction of the clusters in January of this year and the establishment of an in-country Inter-Agency Standing Committee Country Team have enabled the UN and our partners to further improve humanitarian coordination in Liberia. It has also helped to forge stronger partnerships among the Government, the donors, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations. We will continue to work together with our partners to help develop national capacity, in anticipation of a time when the cluster approach will give way to a more sustainable recovery and development effort accompanied by the requisite coordination structures led by the Liberian Government.

This report – a first of its kind for Liberia – attempts to capture progress as well as challenges in implementing the cluster approach. I want to thank UNHCR for their initiative in compiling this document, for its lead in the cluster and its continuing effort to make this approach a success.

The impressive achievements described on the following pages would not have been possible without the commitment and hard work of the various sub-clusters. I would therefore like to thank the Government, UNICEF, UNMIL Human Rights and Protection Section, UNFPA, UNMIL Civil Affairs, UNMIL Legal and Judicial Services Support Division, as well as all the members of the Protection Core Group and the In-Country Network on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse for their efforts.

We intend to use the cluster approach to move forward and advance Liberia's recovery process. In so doing, we will be guided by the commitment of the United Nations to strengthen national capacity to plan and coordinate humanitarian and development activities.



**Jordan Ryan**

Humanitarian Coordinator, Resident Coordinator and  
UNDP Resident Representative in Liberia

## PROGRESS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CLUSTER APPROACH

### Overview of major developments

**A**t the height of the political and humanitarian crisis in Liberia in mid-2003, which marked the climax of nearly 15 years of intense and sustained conflict, the population of IDPs was estimated to be around 500,000. Following the deployment of peacekeeping troops and the cessation of armed hostilities, a massive inter-agency effort was entered into to relocate the displaced persons from public places such as schools, stadiums and office buildings. In the process, 314,000 IDPs were registered by WFP. More than 50 national and international NGOs collaborated with United Nations agencies and the ICRC to provide protection and basic services to IDPs.

In November 2004, under the leadership of the Government and the Humanitarian Coordinator, the organised return of IDPs to their districts of origin commenced. The operation lasted eighteen months during which more than 314,000 IDPs received packages to support return to their communities. Through its implementing partners, UNHCR provided IDPs with non food items and a cash allowance for

The outcome statement of the IASC Principals' meeting which took place on 12 September 2005 and the letter from the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) dated 20 October, designated Liberia as of the pilot countries for implementation of the cluster approach to humanitarian response. Subsequently, at the Liberia level, with the agreement of UNMIL, the IASC Country Team endorsed a decision that UNHCR should assume lead responsibility for the wider protection role in Liberia.

transport, WFP provided food and IOM transported vulnerable individuals and their families. All 35 camps were closed and the IDP return operation was declared officially completed on 20 April 2006.

Lofa, Bomi and Bong counties have reabsorbed the vast majority of the returning IDPs as well as most of the returning refugees. UNHCR has repatriated more than 69,000 refugees from neighboring countries since October 2004. While return has been accomplished, long-term reintegration remains a challenge as many of the basic needs in communities of return are not met.



*Salala camp before departure of IDPs [Photo: UNMIL/IDP Unit]*

Sustainability of humanitarian interventions is also a challenge as sectors like health and education lack capacity and are still heavily dependent on external aid. The prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence remains a key issue of concern.

Large numbers of squatters continue to occupy vacant dilapidated buildings throughout the capital, Monrovia, including persons who were displaced by civil war and economic decline as

the mining, logging, rubber and agricultural complexes that provided livelihood in the countryside were wiped out. Today the city accommodates three times the 500,000 inhabitants it was built to hold. The majority live in congestion and squalor as basic services have broken down. This situation calls for innovative action by the Government and partners to reverse the conditions that continue to induce flight from rural areas and the proliferation of slums in the capital.

### **The coordination challenge**

**P**olicy on IDPs is determined by the IDP Consultative Forum (ICF). The ICF is co-chaired by the Government through the Executive Director of the LRRRC and the Humanitarian Coordinator. It comprises heads of UN agencies that are involved in IDP issues, donors, NGOs through the executive body of the MSG and representatives of IDP leadership.

Inevitably, there have been occasional differences of opinion among ICF members, for example, over the distribution of reintegration packages in IDP camps, amid concerns about beneficiaries' ability to safely carry goods all the way to remote locations (like Lofa County). Nonetheless, the value of a forum for Government to systematically engage with UN and other stakeholders on critical IDP-related issues is undisputed. With the introduction of the cluster approach, the ICF became the interface between the Government and lead agencies involved in IDP return and camp management.

The IDP Unit which was part of UNMIL's Humanitarian Coordination Section played a central role in the IDP response process until its closure in June 2006, including acting as the link between ICF and operational agencies.

During the IDP crisis, the absence of clear responsibility within the United Nations system or indeed the humanitarian community presented

In April 2006, the Monrovia-based Protection Core Group organized an evaluation workshop for agencies that were involved in providing humanitarian assistance to IDPs between 2004 and 2006. Participants highlighted shortcomings such as poor coordination in the absence of designated lead agencies, ad hoc interventions, inconsistent service provision, absence of IDP registration/profiling and weak protection/security response to problems arising in camps. On assistance, participants cited the absence of camp management and site planning alongside inadequate interventions in the sectors of water, sanitation, health and education, particularly in camps where IDPs had settled spontaneously.

major difficulties for efforts to bring about systematic responses to the needs of IDPs. The introduction of the cluster approach conferred this responsibility upon individual agencies thus establishing an accepted port of call for mobilisation and coordination of efforts.

This more effective coordination has facilitated more timely provision of funding to priority projects, either through quicker donor response or by way of a grant from the CERF mechanism, which in turn allowed for the completion of the IDP return process, the establishment of a comprehensive monitoring framework and quicker response in life-saving sectors such as health and WATSAN.

### Protection Cluster

The protection cluster is distinctive insofar as it is an umbrella group bringing together agencies with varying expertise: Cluster lead (UNHCR); child protection (UNICEF); human rights monitoring (UNMIL Human Rights); SGBV prevention and response (UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR); land, property and housing rights (UNHCR, UNMIL Civil Affairs); return and resettlement of IDPs (UNHCR)

#### *Protection Core Group*

The PCG was established as a forum for coordination and information exchange among protection and human rights agencies. In response to a widely recognized need for more effective monitoring and response, the Monrovia-based PCG set out to develop a ‘unified protection framework’. Meanwhile, at the request of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Jan Egeland, UNHCR agreed to assume the principal role in planning and implementation of the overall protection response to IDPs and became the chair of the PCG.

As of 1 January, the PCG was restructured and strengthened both at national and County level to implement the agenda of the protection cluster. New terms of reference were adopted and work plans developed by each sub cluster. This resulted in the establishment of a comprehensive monitoring framework to focus attention on key

protection priorities, and ensure more systematic information gathering and adequate follow-up.

Membership of the PCG is open to UNMIL, UN agencies, national and international NGOs, and Government agencies. The PCG at central level has been slow to engage with government counterparts. In contrast, the national SGBV and child protection sub-clusters are now lead by the MGD. In County level groups, government plays a more active role than in Monrovia. National NGOs, too, have been more active in County PCGs than at central level.

#### *Coordination*

In January UNHCR established a Secretariat to interact with County PCGs and protection sub clusters at Monrovia level. The Secretariat is tasked to analyze protection trends, and follow up on recommendations to address gaps. A similar arrangement is in place in six Counties with UNHCR Protection Units coordinating the activities of PCGs. Where UNHCR does not have offices, missions are carried out. In some areas, UNMIL Human Rights Officers provide support.

The CPN and the SGBV Task Force are chaired by the MGD and supported by UNICEF and UNFPA respectively. UNFPA support was stepped up in April with the arrival of a GBV Programme Officer. There are plans to support an SGBV secretariat within the MGD.

### **OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Protection Cluster**

A number of steps can be taken to strengthen the protection cluster:

- more intensive engagement with government
- establish linkages with government structures including through County Support Teams
- increase participation by national NGOs in the national-level PCG;
- strengthen information sharing between national and County level groups;
- development/management of a protection case database
- coordination with UNICEF and MGD on the child rights violation database
- coordination NACROG to improve referral and increase the rate of intervention
- increase government involvement in the management of protection cases to gradually begin the disengagement of external humanitarian actors
- intensify involvement in the rule of law sub cluster



*Protection monitoring*

Protection monitoring activities are undertaken by a wide range of national and international actors. In October 2004, NRC initiated a returnee monitoring project for UNHCR. 210 monitors based in communities of return were trained to collect data on the number of returnees, status of basic social services and general protection assessments at community level. In July 2005, NRC received direct funding to position monitors in IDP camps so as to report on protection cases, including those occurring during the IDP return exercise. Such cases were transferred to LRRRC and UNHCR protection staff for response. Training of NRC monitors was completed in April 2006. They visit communities on a roving basis; thus, cases will sometimes not come to light right away.

Comprehensive data on the outcome of referrals is not available for all Counties. However, initial indications show a variable 'success rate', with influencing factors such as location and accessibility of reported incidents, presence of international agencies with resources to follow cases, and capacity and motivation of officials resolve cases. The highest success rate was recorded in Lofa at 86%. Sinoe County, which had one of the highest number of cases reported registered a 29% referral success rate. Sinoe has the fewest humanitarian actors and protection agencies, and many inaccessible communities.

Examples of successful interventions include the prosecution of a rape case in the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court in Bong County, provision of psycho-social and medical services in the majority of SGBV cases reported, and mediation in land disputes. Cases that have been more difficult to address include those of harmful traditional practices, early marriage, domestic violence and child abuse. In part this is due lack of community awareness on human rights. Improvements through short-term interventions by the protection cluster may, in some locations, warrant training of local groups and/or logistical support. It is understood that a reversal of harmful traditional practices will entail sustained and concerted efforts involving Government, civil society and other opinion leaders to work with communities.



*The magistrate's court in Foya District, Lofa County. [Photo: Beldjelti/UNHCR]*

In general terms, protection reports illustrate the gaps in the national protection system including:

- absence of key stakeholders in national protection system such as government lawyers at County level, police etc;
- lack of community awareness about their rights;
- weak referral systems; and
- poor understanding of legal provisions.

The focus of monitoring will require a progressive shift from identifying gaps and prioritizing responses to strengthening national institutions and monitoring government's adherence to basic international principles.

Between January and June 2006, trained protection monitors reported 818 cases using the Protection Monitoring Form. The majority of cases were identified in communities of return, while a small number originated from IDP camps that were not closed April 2006. The cases included:

- 129 (16%) child rights violations including child beating, child labor and early marriage;
- 121 (15%) rape cases;
- 101 (12%) incidents of domestic violence;
- 114 (14%) physical assault;
- 124 (15%) property disputes

Victims were mostly women and children. The highest number of property disputes were reported in Lofa, Grand Gedeh and Sinoe. There were few reports of unlawful arrest and detention, political or ethnic tensions, murder and traditional harmful practices. These trends are considered to be indicative of the nature of protection challenges in Liberia.

### Camp Management Cluster

The focus of the camp management cluster was to conclude return assistance to IDPs, and develop and implement a camp closure strategy in support of the Government's Community Resettlement and Reintegration Strategy. In this connection, at the request of the ICF, UNHCR spearheaded the multi-agency assessment of conditions in 34 former. It involved 75 staff from 20 agencies of Government, the United Nations and NGOs, with expertise in protection, property rights, provision of basic services and environment. Terms of reference were developed jointly.

The main findings included a population of an estimated 30,000 persons living in former IDP sites, of whom about 50% had received return assistance and yet had opted to remain. Reasons cited included expectations of further assistance, cost of transportation, vulnerability, education and shelter needs. About 400 persons were identified as having special vulnerabilities. A large number of people claimed to have been registered IDPs who did not receive assistance to return home; their claims were brought to the ICF for a policy decision. Protection concerns in former IDP sites include child protection, SGBV and theft cases. Experts who participated in the assessment observed that environmental concerns were not taken into consideration during the setting up of sites, with adverse ramifications which, in some locations, call for urgent rehabilitation.

The recommendations of the assessment team included provision of transport for holders of genuine cards, shelter for persons with special needs, and education and health facilities in certain former host communities. The team also recommended that the Government should engage landlords on use of land by persons who opted to remain, and that activities should be undertaken to rehabilitate the environment.

In June, the ICF endorsed the findings and recommendations of the assessment team with the provisos that transportation should be provided for genuine IDPs. There would be no cash grant and in order to ensure against inflation of the 13,000 number there would be no new registration. Only persons with a WFP token would be verified.

As lead agency for protection and camp management, UNHCR undertook to implement these recommendations, collaborating with WFP on return assistance to eligible IDPs. There will be close collaboration with UNICEF and WHO as cluster lead agencies for water and sanitation, education and health. Similarly, relevant line ministries and local authorities will also be involved by way of ensuring that the Government make provision for taking over the running of the facilities.

### Emergency Shelter and Non Food Items Cluster

With close to 90% of registered IDPs having received assistance to leave camps as the cluster approach came into effect, it was considered prudent not to invest in shelter in IDP camps. The focus of the emergency shelter cluster was thus placed in areas of return where humanitarian considerations dictated that vulnerable persons (elderly, single parent families, chronically ill, physically or mentally disabled, etc) should benefit from targeted assistance, since homes were destroyed during the civil war alongside community infrastructure and farmland.

The Norwegian Refugee Council and Peace Winds Japan are providing shelter for vulnerable groups in Lofa and Bomi Counties; similar assistance is provided in other counties on a smaller scale. The agencies work with village chiefs to ascertain the vulnerability and living conditions of the identified families. They distribute kits in accordance with family size and assist with construction if warranted by the family's specific vulnerability. This type of reintegration support is consistent with that provided for vulnerable groups among returning refugees.

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Camp Management Cluster**

Lead agency: UNHCR

- In August, verification of claims by persons alleging to be IDPs in need of assistance was conducted in 32 former IDP sites, during which 5,480 claims were validated. Another 7,687 claims could not be validated and await a policy decision by the ICF.
- Transportation of validated persons to their districts of origin is scheduled to begin in October. No cash grants will be provided, and reintegration packages will be distributed upon arrival at the drop-off point.
- EFA a specialist environment NGO has begun rehabilitation of former IDP sites, with priority being given to backfilling of pit latrines and garbage pits and safe disposal of non-degradable and toxic materials.



**IDP return and resettlement sub cluster**

Lead agency: UNHCR

Between January and April, 49,257 IDPs still remaining in camps received assistance to return home. By 25 August 2006, 307,984 (95.7%) of the IDPs had collected second food rations from WFP in areas of return.

ASSISTED REGISTERED IDPS BY COUNTY OF RETURN	
Bomi	90,347
Bong	43,227
Gbarpolu	20,002
Grand Bassa	8,062
Grand Cape Mount	20,216
Grand Gedeh	201
Grand Kru	188
Lofa	120,452
Margibi	1,600
Maryland	1,079
Montserrado	4,466
Nimba	3,959
River Cess	3,975
River Gee	169
Sinoe	3,799
Unknown <sup>1/</sup>	1,998
<b>Total<sup>2/</sup></b>	<b>321,745</b>

<sup>1/</sup> Individuals who were registered with WFP but did not indicate their county or district of origin.

<sup>2/</sup> This total includes 11,435 Liberian refugees who returned spontaneously (by their own means) in late 2003 and had to be accommodated in Perry Town and Seighbeh IDP camps until their counties of origin had been declared safe for return.

*Tumutu camp before and after the departure of IDPs. Selection and establishment of camps took place in crisis conditions, often with persons settling spontaneously. Environmental conditions deteriorated during the life of the camp and in the decommissioning phase. In some places pockets of inhabited shelters were left surrounded by debris from demolished structures and the stench of abandoned wells, toilets and bathhouses.*

[Photos: UNMIL IDP Unit]

**Protection cluster**

Lead agency: UNHCR

- Since January, four new County PCGs have been established, bringing to a total of ten the number of County level groups that now function in Liberia. County PCGs are encouraged to adapt the TOR to suit local conditions. The latest group to do this was the Sinoe PCG in July 2006. Grand Bassa is in the process of developing its own. Meanwhile, PCGs in seven locations (covering 11 Counties), have established working groups for the review and referral of cases.
- In February, the national PCG endorsed an updated common Protection Monitoring Form. More than 480 monitors were trained to use the form which was further developed by the CPN for the reporting of child rights violations. NACROG has undertaken to disseminate it to all child protection agencies for the monitoring of cases.
- The PCG has held *ad hoc* discussions at national level to address specific subjects such as:
  - common protection monitoring form;
  - human rights in the rubber plantations;
  - paralegal assistance;
  - support to the national police, in particular the women and child protection section;
  - evaluation of the IDP programme.

**Child protection sub cluster**

Lead agency: UNICEF

- The MGD coordinates the national CPN which comprises three sub-groups dealing with separated children, reporting and monitoring and support to the TRC. At national level, the CPN has begun work with the TRC. The TRC has been trained on how to work with children involved in its process. CPN members received briefings from the TRC on its working methods.
- The objectives of the national work plan for child protection network 2006 include:
  - enhancement of community-based structures for the reintegration of war-affected children
  - protection of children from SEA and services for those affected
  - protection of children in the TRC process
  - protection from violence in the family
  - protection through monitoring and reporting on child rights violations.
- At County level, UNICEF has emphasized that lead child protection agencies should, where necessary, revitalize the coordination of child protection issues, and that MGD County Coordinators should be supported by CPAs to lead the process.
- A database on child rights violations has been established and is jointly managed by UNICEF and the MGD.

**OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS****Child Protection**

- Coordination of what appear to be two parallel reporting and referral systems (NRC/UNHCR and NACROG/UNICEF) for cases involving children should be prioritized.
- Links between Child Welfare Committees and NRC monitors should be further explored and developed in 2006/2007.
- PCGs should encourage and support the Ministry of Gender to play a more active role in leading coordination of child protection activities.
- County level child protection meetings need more information from the national group regarding priorities and strategies. Guidance is also sometimes lacking on issues that are reported by several of the County level groups, issues including the TRC, orphanages, juvenile justice, child labor and traditional harmful practices.

- NACROG actively disseminates the monitoring form, collects reports and conducts follow-up or referral of cases.
  - Protection monitors identified 129 cases of child protection between January and June. In Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, Bomi, and Maryland, child protection groups continue to receive reports from monitors and child protection agencies for onward referral. In Grand Bassa, NRC monitors provided information on child labor in the LAC rubber plantation to be used by the PCG in its advocacy.
  - Border monitoring has been increased in areas such as Lofa, Nimba and Grand Gedeh to identify cases of spontaneous cross-border movement of children. Child Welfare Committees have been trained in these locations to conduct monitoring.
  - In 2005, UNICEF supported the MGD and Ministry of Health to conduct an assessment of orphanages in Liberia. County PCGs and child protection groups have since continued to monitor conditions and make recommendations to the government. In July 2006, UNICEF funded HALT International to conduct research into the laws and practices of Liberia in relation to the running of orphanages, the outcome of which will further assist the child protection groups to coordinate advocacy and other assistance.
  - In July UNICEF funded the American Bar Association for Africa to review the juvenile justice system in Liberia. A number of recommendations were submitted to the government in August and will form the basis for further PCG interventions. To effectively coordinate these efforts, a multi-disciplinary task force is being proposed.
  - UNICEF is funding Don Bosco Homes to run a 'transit home' for children who are defendants in criminal cases. Similar proposals have been considered at County level for *ad hoc* support to transit homes such as Sustainable Development Promoters in Bong County.
  - County child protection groups and PCGs continue to monitor cases of juvenile detention and to advocate for detention conditions that meet international standards.
  - Representation of LNP, UN Police and Corrections at PCG meetings has led to the identification of basic items for supply by PCG members.
  - IRC has conducted training of LNP officers in Lofa, Bong, Grand Gedeh and Sinoe along with NRC monitors and PCG members. Participants were instructed on the national legal provisions related to police conduct in protecting women and children.
- SGBV Sub Cluster**  
Lead agency: UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR
- The National Inter-Agency Task Force on SGBV is chaired by the MGD and supported by UNFPA. A four day national conference was held in March 2006 to develop the plan of action, followed by three workshops to identify gaps and possible solutions to SGBV in Liberia. The final draft is under review by a number of agencies, including MGD, UNFPA and UNHCR.
  - The focus of the five-year plan is on the development of policies to address legal, medical, psycho-social and security response, community-based approaches and cross-cutting issues such as working with the media. Following the adoption of the national plan of action, further assessments will be conducted to review necessary interventions with regard to infrastructure, logistics and training support.
  - MGD and UNFPA have consolidated information on who is doing what and where in SGBV. This has been collected from agencies participating in the national SGBV Task Force. Similar exercises have been attempted by some County SGBV groups.
  - Collaboration between County SGBV groups and PCGs has resulted improved prevention and response mechanisms.

- Guidelines for the running and use of 'safe houses' for survivors of SGBV were agreed and adopted by the SGBV task force in June. Two safe houses now operate in Monrovia with support from IRC and UNICEF. ARC operates one in Gbarnga. A review of the guidelines is scheduled for early 2007.
- In February, IRC supported the MGD and Lofa SGBV group to develop guidelines on a 'referral pathway'. The Maryland SGBV group began to develop Standard Operating Procedures. Referral procedures are under discussion in Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu and Bomi. UNHCR and NRC work with the government and NGOs to refer SGBV cases identified during monitoring.
- SGBV groups organized joint trainings on response in three Districts of Bong County and in one District of Margibi County between December 2005 and May 2006, bringing together medical, psycho-social, legal and security actors. The objectives included improving the links between the different sectors, and training on ways in which agencies and institutions could amend working practices to provide better protection to survivors of SGBV. An initiative to improve the police response is being taken forward by the national PCG.
- SGBV Task Force members are conducting training programmes to improve response. These initiatives have assisted institutions and agencies to understand their roles and responsibilities and have strengthened interaction and more effective response to SGBV cases:
  - UNICEF training to LNP academy on SGBV;
  - CCF, IRC: training of LNP on SGBV and on WCPS
  - ARC, IRC: training of medical personnel. (including general counseling skills)
- SGBV Task Force members have continued to train and to support peer educators or counselors located in communities, for example ARC, IRC, SC-UK, CCF.
- SGBV groups in Lofa and Bong have implemented joint awareness campaigns on SGBV and SEA. Nimba plans a sensitization campaign to address the perceived increase in prostitution among returnee women. The SGBV group in Gbarpolu has begun advocacy towards increasing income generating activities for women.

### **Sexual exploitation and abuse**

- The In-Country Network on SEA ask for the PCG to explore ways assist to strengthen coordination of activities in line with the Secretary General's Special Bulletin on SEA. UNHCR assisted the PCGs to collect information on UN/INGO SEA focal points in seven Counties. The PCGs shall assist the UN Country Team in its roll-out of training.
- In July, UNHCR organized training for 20 monitors on identification and reporting of SEA cases.
- In Lofa, Grand Gedeh and Maryland, interagency awareness campaigns on SEA are being implemented in communities through the PCG/SGBV task force. These initiatives have been in conjunction with the MGD and have been supported by UNMIL.

## **OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Sexual Gender-Based Violence**

In carrying forward the national plan of action, the establishment SGBV Task Force Secretariat is essential to:

- widen dissemination of the national plan of action and other documents produced by the national Task Force to stakeholders outside the SGBV Task Force.
- strengthen interaction among national and County-level SGBV Task Force.
- build capacity of MGD County Coordinators
- incorporate of County-level mapping into the national mapping

In March the IASC country team decided to place the rule of law sub cluster under the early recovery cluster, which is led by UNDP. Focal points for the rule of law sub cluster are UNMIL Legal and Judicial Support Section (LJSS), the Rule of Law Task Force and UNHCR representing the protection cluster. Throughout the country national institutions dealing with law and order commonly lack qualified personnel and appropriate facilities such as buildings and logistical and communications resources, including office equipment and supplies, all of which contribute to delaying the delivery of justice .

### Rule of Law Sub Cluster

Lead agency: UNDP, UNMIL/LJSS, Rule of Law Task Force, Protection Cluster

- At central level UNDP, has with support from UNMIL, initiated activities of the rule of law sub-cluster. The group has developed terms of reference and has begun collecting data on projects.
- UNDP is helping to build the capacity of institutions such as the National Judiciary, Ministry of Justice and the Police through the provision of logistical and technical support.
- The LJSS has developed a matrix showing data on Quick Impact Projects that UNMIL Corrections and UN Police have implemented, which PCGs can utilize to identify institutions that require support.
- PCGs in nine Counties have conducted regular inter-agency monitoring of prisons, courts and police stations, which assists the development of advocacy strategies.
- In Counties where UNDP is not present, PCGs have taken the lead to coordinate rule of law monitoring, advocacy and other interventions such as training or rehabilitation work.
- Members of the national PCG have been active in organizing *ad hoc* meetings to discuss such as support to the Women and Child Protection Section of the LNP, and legal assistance programmes.
- The national PCG has, with significant support from CCF, IRC, UNICEF, UNPOL and UNHCR, begun negotiations with the national police to organize the interim deployment of mentors of the police Women and Child Protection Section to a number of areas outside Monrovia. Six meetings were held in July and August to review the support package.

*Police station in Zorzor, Lofa County. The magistrate's court is currently held in a private building which the owner wishes to repossess. Crimes such as assault are on the increase and the capacity of the magistrate and police to respond is very limited . UNPOL assists in some instances by providing stationery and transportation.*

*[Photo: Beldjelti/UNHCR]*





*The detention centre in Zorzor, Lofa County, over-grown with vegetation. Presently there is no cell for holding those who are charged with crimes.*

*[Photo: Beldjelti/UNHCR]*

- Members of the national PCG have been involved in developing a strategy to support legal assistance/paralegal services in Liberia to strengthen performance of courts and lawyers when it comes to prosecution. A wider range of actors involved in providing these services have been brought together under the auspices of the PCG and early recovery sub-cluster.
- At County level efforts to advocate for improvements in rule of law include:
  - Interaction with local authorities on lengthy pre-trial detention and detention of juveniles (Bong, Lofa, Nimba)
  - Requests to the Ministry of Justice to speed up deployment of County Attorney (Lofa)
  - Negotiation with the LNP to improve response to SGBV cases (Grand Gedeh)
  - Request for LNP mobile patrols (Grand Cape Mount)
  - Request to County authorities to address illegal taxation at check points (Nimba)
  - Request for safe place for female prisoners to be detained (Grand Gedeh)
  - Identification of agencies with basic items like mats and blankets for the prison (Bomi)
- County PCGs have been raising awareness in communities about correct legal process and formal legal systems, including public information campaigns on mob violence (Grand Gedeh); workshops on human rights, SGBV, mob violence etc. (Bong); development of briefing papers on various aspects of the law, including property issues

(Grand Gedeh). training of national police, NRC monitors and PCG members on Liberian criminal procedure and criminal law (Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Sinoe, Bong)

### **Land, property, housing rights sub cluster**

Lead agency: UNHCR, UNMIL Civil Affairs

- In some Counties, property committees were formed in 2004 by Superintendents, with the support of UNMIL Civil Affairs and UNHCR. The restructuring of the PCG led to the revitalizing of property groups in Lofa, Bong and Grand Gedeh. In Lofa, together with LRRRC, the PCG is to support District committees to mediate property disputes.
- In Bomi, the PCG plans to develop a monitoring form and work plan for the review of property concerns.
- In Grand Gedeh, individual cases have been actively reviewed by a sub-group of the PCG. The PCG has been advocating with the Land Commissioner to improve efforts to resolve property questions.
- The camp closure assessment report recommended that the Government should, through the LRRRC, take up with landowners concerns of persons who remained in former IDP sites. There had been official agreement for use or return of land and in some locations there is potential for tensions to develop.



## CONCLUSION

The cluster approach has not been without its challenges. UN agencies that traditionally implement long term national development programmes frequently found it difficult to widen their focus to include immediate-term issues and expand their field presence in a short space of time to meet expectations associated with their roles in the clusters.

The cluster approach itself is designed to respond to camp-like situations. Yet the Liberia experience has demonstrated that an IDP situation cannot be resolved as a one-time event. Rather, it is a process that requires continual review of the evolving situation and a great deal of adaptability to respond appropriately to emerging issues. The responsibility conferred upon cluster lead agencies entails the maintenance of preparedness capacity to respond

to an eventual internal displacement situation. This would require the development of emergency response procedures, including identifying human and material resources that can be mobilized at short notice.

Finally, the Liberian experience with the cluster approach could also serve as a useful study of:

- added value of the cluster approach in *ending* displacement and ensuring that return is sustainable;
- developing and testing a ‘phase-out’ strategy for the cluster approach, including guidance on duration, benchmarks and impact indicators;
- links between the humanitarian community’s cluster approach and national structures for coordination of interventions.



*Homecoming* [Photo: S. Brownell/UNHCR]



In any operation, the promotion of return comes only after minimum conditions are met and we are able to verify that people will be safe following their repatriation. But in extending this option we routinely ignore the elephant in the room...  
**returnees cannot live on hope alone.**

*Mr. António Guterres  
 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
 in his opening statement at the 57th Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, Geneva, 2 October 2006*