



## LIBERIA CELEBRATES THE RESILIENCE OF REFUGEES AND THEIR INTEGRATION

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*Cover photo: World Refugee Day celebration in Bahn Refugee Camp (Nimba County). UNHCR Liberia*



## Message from UN Resident Coordinator, Yacoub El Hillo

Liberia held its third democratic elections since the civil conflict which witnessed a peaceful transfer of power from one democratically elected President to another in 74 years. The elections ushered in President George M. Weah as Head of State and of the 54th Legislature, and a new government. This demonstrated the country's political maturity to the rest of the world.

On the 30th March 2018, United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) ended its mandate in Liberia after over 14 years of peacekeeping. During that period, some 202 personnel lost their lives while on duty to bring peace to Liberia, and with great regret we share our sympathy with their families, friends and loved ones. Their sacrifices and the effort of the United Nations have transformed the Liberia significantly from a peacekeeping nation to a country on the path to peacebuilding and sustainable development, and this is something that the pages of history will never forget.

The Liberia Moment held on the 23rd March 2018 brought together H.E. President George M. Weah, UN Deputy Secretary General Amina J. Mohammed, Ambassador Olof Skoog, Hon. Speaker of the National Legislature Bhofal Chambers, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General Farid Zarif, Government

Ministers, UN System in Liberia, Development Partners, ECOWAS, African Union, the World Bank and Civil Society among others.

It was an opportunity for the government, United Nations and development partners to recognise the existential peacebuilding priorities and developmental challenges facing Liberia, and to affirm their commitment and continued engagement in addressing them. It will also be an opportunity for the government to build the trust of citizens by reassuring them of commitment to, focus on and ambition for sustainable and inclusive development for Liberia in collaboration with partners under the existing bi and multi-lateral frameworks.

Lastly, UNMIL's mandate has ended and would be leaving Liberia but there are seventeen UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes that will continue to support the government and its people in peacebuilding, achieving the Pro-poor agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in moving the country forward.

I want to reassure you that the UN is not leaving with UNMIL but will remain and continue to support the Government of Liberia through the UN Country Team.

Yacoub El Hillo  
**Assistant Secretary General  
UN Resident Coordinator**



## Message from the Chair of the UN Communications Group

The UN Focus newsletter aims to keep you updated on the work of the United Nations and the impact of its work on the lives of the people in Liberia.

This edition contains articles on World Refugee Day, the first post-war graduation of 300 children from community-based pre-primary classes, business skills training, the handover of material to the Ministry

of Health to help respond to a scabies outbreak and a training on technical vocational skills curriculum development, amongst others.

As always, please feel free to send us comments and suggestions. The contact details are on the last page.

We hope you enjoy reading it.

Suleiman Braimoh, PhD.  
**Chair, UN Communications Group  
UNICEF Representative in Liberia**



Children take part in an early childhood development class in Liberia. Photo: UNICEF Liberia

## Three hundred children graduate from Liberia's first formal community-based pre-primary programme

*The children will begin primary school in September 2018*

### B.AUGUSTINE KULLIE AND RUKSHAN RATNAM

Liberia is celebrating the graduation of 300 children from the country's first formal community-based early childhood development (ECD) initiative. The 300 children between the ages of five and six will begin primary school in September 2018.

The community-based ECD programme is managed by the Ministry of Education and implemented by BRAC with funding from UNICEF. This programme aims to provide opportunities for children in some of Liberia's most deprived communities in view to access early childhood

development services, and be more prepared for primary school. At present, almost 1,000 children between the ages of three and six years are enrolled in community-based ECD services that are being provided in 30 communities in Bong, Grand Bassa and Grand Gedeh counties.

In the ECD programme, children take part in structured learning, which involves developmentally appropriate activities such as jumping, playing and taking turns (sharing toys and material) and storytelling when they are first enrolled. They later engage in recitation, reading, writing and numeracy as they progress through the programme.



Children take part in an early childhood development class in Liberia. Photo: UNICEF Liberia

UNICEF also supported the government to expand services in existing primary schools through the training of 300 pre-primary teachers on how to implement the ECD curriculum and play-based methodologies, as well as provided learning material to 100,000 children to support quality ECD programmes in government-run schools in the three counties.

“I see the benefit of ECD programmes in my own community. My own daughter is now more interactive, sings songs, plays with other children and is keen on learning” says Marmie G, who is one of eleven caregivers in the community based programme in Grand Gedeh County.

According to the Education Management Information System (EMIS 2015/2016), only 35% of all 3 to 5 year-old children in Liberia have access to early learning opportunities/pre-primary education at the right age, especially in remote, hard-to-reach rural areas.

“Not being enrolled in pre-primary education at the right age leads to children not starting primary school at the appropriate age. In the long-term, this results in grade repetition, increased drop-outs, low completion of primary education, low transition to secondary education and poor learning outcomes,” says Bernard Batidzirai, UNICEF’s Chief of Education in Liberia.

Overage enrolment is a significant challenge at all levels of the education system. The EMIS of 2015/2016 indicates that approximately 40% of primary school students are three years older than the appropriate age for their grade.

“We are working with the Ministry of Education to raise awareness across Liberia on the need for children to be enrolled in ECD programmes, as well as secure funding to expand services to reach children in other counties where the need is great,” adds Batidzirai.

## UNDP helping to bridge the gaps in sustaining small businesses

**M**ewaseh Behyee was among over 200 entrepreneurs who benefitted from the UNDP Business Opportunities Support Service Project (BOSS) training in 2017. He owns and operates the Menwo Soap Production Centre in the city of Ganta in Nimba County.

Behyee says that prior to the training, he lacked basic accounting and managerial skills to properly run his business. According to him, the UNDP/BOSS training exercise has added value to the daily running of the soap factory. “The UNDP training helped me a lot. I now know how to manage a business and to keep a very good record system,” Behyee says.

The UNDP/BOSS training was conducted for small business owners in four counties – Nimba, Bong, Grand Bassa and Margibi, providing business development skills to help them improve the management of their enterprises.

Behyee is excited with the knowledge acquired from the training and is proud to report that profits have also improved.

“A good record system helps a business to grow and it maximizes profits,” he says. The company sells soap both on a wholesale and retail scale. Each week they earn about US\$500 by selling over 2,000 bars of soap to customers.

UNDP/BOSS is also helping Behyee to buy an automated stamping machine, which will reduce the time spent on manual branding.

BOSS is a UNDP-supported project in partnership with the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Commerce. It was established to enhance decentralization and support micro, small and medium enterprises policy implementation in Liberia through the establishment of Business Support Service Centres at the county level.



*Top: Menwaseh Behyee with his wife Agnes and the other two members of the family who are involved in the production of the soap; Bottom-right: finished product; Bottom-left: stages of the soap production process. Photo: UNDP Liberia*

The project is key to the implementation of the small business empowerment act and the micro small and medium enterprise (SMEs) development in Liberia and helps strengthen the capacities of youth, women and agri-producing enterprises.



*Bars of soap produced by the Menwo Production Center.  
Photo: UNDP Liberia*

Behyee is applying the knowledge by mentoring others interested in business. “At least five members of the community have acquired soap making training from my center. They are now taking care of their families and sending their children to school,” Behyee says.

He went further to mention that he’s now in a better position to register his business, alleviating the fear he had in the past of doing so.

“At first, I was afraid to register my business. I had thought that when my business is registered, the government would collect too much from me. But, now I know that registration of my business will protect my business and gain the trust of partners working with me,” he says.

## UPCOMING INTERNATIONAL DAYS

### JULY

**7 JULY (FIRST SATURDAY IN JULY)**

**International Day of Cooperatives  
(A/RES/47/90)**

**11 JULY**

**World Population Day (UNDP decision  
89/46 15, A/RES/45/216)**

**15 JULY**

**World Youth Skills Day (A/RES/69/145)**

**18 JULY**

**Nelson Mandela International Day  
(A/RES/64/13)**

**28 JULY**

**World Hepatitis Day [WHO]**

**30 JULY**

**International Day of Friendship  
(A/RES/65/275)**

**30 JULY**

**World Day against Trafficking in Persons  
(A/RES/68/192)**

### AUGUST

**9 AUGUST**

**International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples  
(A/RES/49/214)**

**12 AUGUST**

**International Youth Day (A/RES/54/120)**

**19 AUGUST**

**World Humanitarian Day (A/RES/63/139)**

**21 AUGUST**

**International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to  
the Victims of Terrorism (A/RES/72/165)**

**23 AUGUST**

**International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave  
Trade and Its Abolition [UNESCO]  
(29 C/Resolution 40)**

**29 AUGUST**

**International Day against Nuclear Tests  
(A/RES/64/35)**

**30 AUGUST**

**International Day of the Victims of Enforced  
Disappearances (A/RES/65/209)**

# UNHCR continues leading the local Integration of refugees in Liberia



*Refugee children dance in celebration of World Refugee Day in Bahn Refugee Camp (Nimba County). Photo: UNHCR Liberia*

On 20 June 2018, Liberia celebrated the resilience of refugees and the generosity of the communities hosting them. UN Agencies and partners attended World Refugee Day celebrations in the three remaining refugee camps: Bahn Camp (Nimba); PTP Camp (Grand Gedeh); Little Wlebo Camp (Maryland), as well as in Paynesville (Monrovia).

The President of Liberia, George M. Weah, proclaimed the day to be observed as a Working Holiday. “This year celebration of World Refugee Day will serve as a platform to promote solidarity with refugees [...] and enable UNHCR to disseminate information on durable solutions, notably voluntary repatriation and local integration”, established the proclamation.

“Refugees in Liberia enjoy one of the most privileged protection environments in

Africa, as the Government of Liberia’s goodwill is overwhelming. I urge refugees to take this opportunity to locally integrate while the corridor is open and resources are available”, states Madam Fatima Mohammed, UNHCR Representative in Liberia.

## What is local integration of Ivorian refugees?

Some 9,500 Ivorian refugees live in Liberia, constituting the vast majority of refugees in this country.

As soon as Ivorian refugees want to return to Cote d’Ivoire in safety and dignity, UNHCR supports them to voluntary repatriate. Since 2012, more than 64,000 Ivorian refugees have returned home.



*Students in the public school Bahn High Extension School (Bahn Refugee Camp, Nimba County), with uniforms distributed by UNHCR. Photo: UNHCR Liberia*

However, some refugees cannot return because they fear persecution, while others simply wish to remain in Liberia.

Due to the favourable protection environment availed to refugees in Liberia, local integration is viewed as the best option aside from voluntary repatriation.

Local integration applies to refugees recognized by the Government of Liberia and registered on UNHCR database; and provides them with the opportunity to live in the same conditions as Liberians.

### How is local integration implemented?

Local integration in Liberia is an ongoing process, which includes some of the following phases:

- » Integration of refugee services in the national structures: education, health, sanitation, and social protection.

- » Ivorian refugees and Liberians will use all public facilities in the same conditions.

- » The schools in the three remaining refugee camps have been turned to the government and are now public schools attended by Ivorians and Liberians.



*Delphine Touadego, on the front, fled violence in Cote d'Ivoire. Now she brings Ivorian and Liberian women together through attieke. Photo: UNHCR Liberia*

- » A similar process is being finalised for health, sanitation and social protection structures.

- » Refugees and Liberians will live together in settlement villages under the authority of a Town Chief, appointed by the government.

- » Refugees and the host communities will receive support to build durable shelters.

- » Refugees, such as Delphine Touadego, already have many livelihood skills, which they share with their host communities. “When we enter into local integration, we become one: Liberian and Ivorian. We become one family”, says Delphine. In addition, assistance will be provided in view to enable them to take care of themselves and their families.

- » There is a legal process, which is needed for those opting to fully integrate, i.e. resident permit, naturalization.



Right - Left: WHO Representative Dr. Alex Gasasira Handing Over Key Of The Ambulance And Bb Lotions To The Hon. Minister Of Health Dr. Wilhelmina Jallah. Photo: Peter Glee/Freelance Photographer

## Liberia can achieve Universal Health Coverage-Minister of Health



Ambulance donated by WHO to the Ministry of Health in Monrovia. Photo: Peter Glee/Freelance photographer

**H**on Minister of Health Dr Wilhelmina Jallah reaffirmed Liberia's capacity to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC), where all communities will have access to quality health services.

Making reference to the experience of the devastating 2014-2015 Ebola Virus Disease outbreak, Dr. Jallah indicated "if we Liberians want to reach UHC, we can do it as a country. We need to take responsibility and demonstrate strong ownership of our health system, from the community level, frontline primary health care facilities right up to specialized tertiary hospitals. This will be complemented by the contributions our partners are making to improve our health care delivery system".

Dr. Jallah made these remarks while receiving a donation worth USD55, 000 from the World Health Organization (WHO). The donation included a state of the art ambulance to as well as medical supplies to respond to the scabies outbreak that has affected 10 counties in 2018.

Dr. Jallah applauded WHO and other partners for their technical, financial and logistical support to Ministry of Health. She confirmed that the donation will be used for the intended purpose. For the medication to treat scabies, that is locally called “be serious” because of the long time it took people to be treated, the Minister, called upon the public to do their part to ensure that their homes and surrounding are clean.

WHO Representative to Liberia, Dr. Alex Gasasira commended the Ministry of Health,



*Ambulance and BB lotions donated by WHO to the Ministry of Health in Monrovia Photo: Peter Glee/ Freelance photographer*

the National Public Health Institute of Liberia, partners and stakeholders for the gains that have been made in increasing access to essential health services. Over the last ten years, there has been an appreciable increase in the number of pregnant women attending antenatal clinics during pregnancy as well as women delivering in health facilities rather than at home. As a result the proportion of women whose deliveries are supported by skilled birth attendant has also increased. Dr Gasasira also applauded the enhanced capacity for disease surveillance that has been developed in Liberia particularly since the end of the devastating outbreak.

Despite the progress registered, Liberia is yet to achieve national, regional or global health targets. It is in this regard that a joint United Nations Project, involving UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO, funded by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund, is supporting the efforts of the Liberia Government to strengthen sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn, child and adolescent health in Montserrado County. Under this project, WHO is responsible for supporting the Ministry of Health to provide essential logistical support to three beneficiary health clinics-Koon Town Clinic, Nyenhn Health Center and the Bensonville Hospital.

In addition to the ambulance, WHO donated 10,000 bottles of Benzyl Benzoate Lotion (25%) to augment the containment of outbreak of scabies in ten counties.



*Hon. Minister of Health, Dr. Jallah inspecting the donated ambulance Photo: Peter Glee/Freelance photographer*

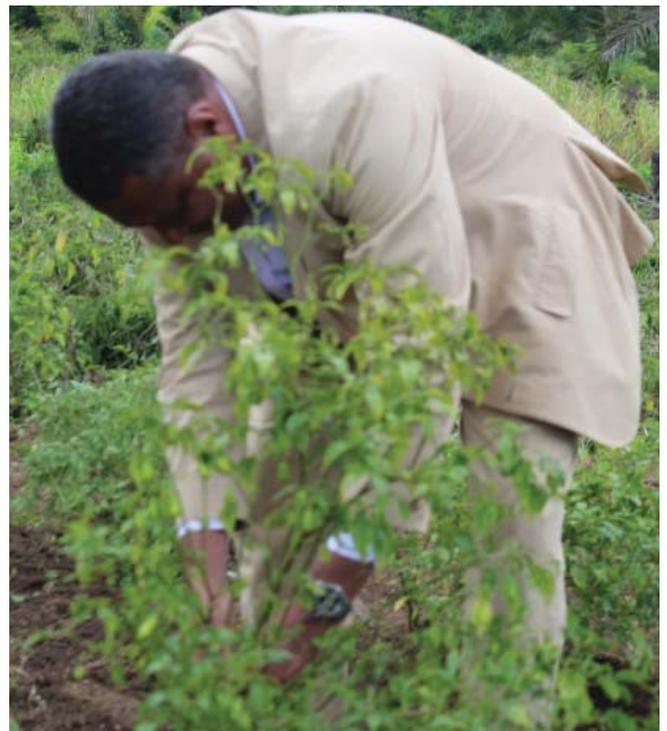
## “The Future of Liberia lies in Agriculture”, UN Resident Coordinator tells partners and farmers



*UN Resident Coordinator Yacoub El Hillo and Female Farmer plant new rice Photo: UN RCO*

United Nations Resident Coordinator Mr Yacoub El Hillo on Tuesday, 29th May 2018 paid a short monitoring visit to the REAP Urban Food-Hub an Innovation Agribusiness initiative in collaboration with FABRAR Liberia in Bentol City, Montserrado County. The essence of the visit was to monitor achievement of the project since its implementation through UNMIL Quips Funding, interact with farmers and visit farmlands where activities are ongoing.

Making a short remark to farmers and partners, Mr. El Hillo explained that Liberia can be developed through agriculture and be the breadbasket of Africa. “The future of Liberia lies in Agriculture. This country has a very good soil and climate to produce so many things and could be the breadbasket of Africa once we collectively invest in Agriculture,” the UN Resident Coordinator explained.



*UN Resident Coordinator Yacoub El Hillo harvesting pepper. Photo: UN RCO*



*Packages of different kinds of rice produced by the project for the market Photo: UN RCO*

“I am impressed with the project and not only that but the produce and commitment of the farmers and partners as they go about these activities to earn a living. We can do better, we can achieve more once we invest our time, energy and resource in agriculture.” Mr. El Hillo said speaking to farmers and partners.

The project is a joint initiative between REAP Urban Food-Hub and FABRAR Liberia – an agri-food processing business- to produce rice, cassava, vegetables, pepper and other food items and sell them to empower farmers and the partners. The project started in late 2017 and was supported by United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) through its Quips funding.

Speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Assistant Minister for Communion Farming, Mr. Ayouba Fofana expressed special thanks to the farmers and partners and pledged government unbending support towards agriculture especially under the Pro-Poor Agenda. “The government remains committed to supporting agriculture as a mean of development, employment and improving livelihood for all Liberia. Under the administration of President George Weah

agriculture is a key pillar and we at the ministry of Internal Affairs particularly Communion Farming Section is working with farmers in achieving more” Min. Ayouba Fofana explained.

Meanwhile, the UN Resident Coordination Mr. Yacoub El Hillo, Assistant Min. Ayouba Fofana, former Paynesville City Mayor Yvette Chesson and entourage travelled to Brewerville to inspect the farm, crops and interact with farmers.



*Produce of pepper on sale. Photo: UN RCO*

## Government of Liberia and UNESCO train 150 educators and support development of technical and vocational education curriculum



Participants of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training. Photo: UNESCO

The Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), in collaboration with UNESCO, organized a ten-day capacity building training for 150 TVET trainers and instructors in pedagogy and curriculum development skills.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the workshop, the then Minister of Youth and Sports and Head of the Inter-Minister Task Force (IMTF) on TVET, Saah Charles N'tow stressed the importance of TVET for youth in Liberia, saying there was a need to adequately prepare the youths by constantly training the skills providers. He called on state actors and partners to invest in the TVET sector in order to address the challenge of job provision for young people.

Based on feedback from participants at the workshop, UNESCO supported a second workshop organized by the IMTF to introduce stakeholders to the processes, procedures and guidelines in relation to the design of a nationwide TVET Curriculum Handbook for the teaching and training of TVET courses in Liberia.

Close to 50 participants from the IMTF on TVET, development partners, TVET institutions, youth organizations and the Liberia Chamber of Commerce took part in the workshop.

The current Minister of Youth and Sports and Chair of the IMTF on TVET, D. Zeogar Wilson, said “the Liberian Government attaches importance to education through the TVET sector. The future of the country rests in the hands of the young people.” He also stressed the “significance for government to place emphasis on the TVET sector as the sector is cardinal to developing the skills of the youth”.

***“The future of the country rests in the hands of the young people.”***

D. Zeogar Wilson



Naomi Dahn, one of the women participating in WFP business initiative, at her stall. Photo: WFP/John Monibah

## WFP, partners supporting rural women experience a new renaissance in small scale business enterprises

A small town of over 1,000 households, Worhn in Margibi County, is seemingly experiencing a new renaissance in small scale business activities. In late June 2018, visitors were told moving accounts of how several small scale enterprising women including young mothers are being positively engaged in thriving commercial undertakings.

WFP and partners took bold steps: to introduce the Community Grain Reserves (CGR) to fight against hunger, and bolster the reserves with the infusion of much-needed cash through the village savings and loan (VSLA) scheme.

“My name is Evon Flomo, Chairlady of the group “Women are Able” in this town. I am also part of the Community Grain Reserves and Village Savings and Loan Association.”

The Community Grain Reserve, is an innovative WFP-supported “food banks” where residents can borrow rice “on loan” during tight hunger peaks and pay back during harvest time to safe guard against seasonal shocks.

Evon said the Community Grain Reserves and Village Savings and Loan Associations were gradually transforming Worhn. “We women borrowed rice last year and are now paying the loan back and we took shares in group Village Savings and Loan Association and used the money for business, hospital and school fees for our children” said Mary James, 35, leader of the “Money is Light” group agreed. “In the past, we did not do business. But now it’s different with some members as young as 18 and 19 years doing well.”

In Duwein, Grand Bassa County, east of Worhn, women are also becoming small scale entrepreneurs. “I don’t have boyfriend, no child and no husband. I am looking after my business,” said Betty Jimmy, 23. I am selling meat, chicken parts, and sausages. It’s a small business but I am happy.”

There are 23 WFP-enabled CGRs in 15 Counties supported by the Governments of Sweden and Norway, the United Nations Human

Security Trust Fund and other multilateral donors. In Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties alone, eight (8) groups comprising 200 rural women have been trained in the operations and management of VSLA schemes.

Funded under the Rural Women Economic Empowerment (RWEE) project, the effort is implemented by the Government of Liberia through the Ministries of Agriculture and Gender Children and Social Protection in collaboration with UNWOMEN, WFP and FAO. Launched in 2015, the joint programme focuses on addressing different dimensions of rural women’s economic empowerment: asset building and wealth creation, positive change in social norms, political and social institution, and rural women agencies.

*“We women borrowed rice and are now paying the loan back. We took shares in group Village Savings and Loan Association and used the money for business, hospital and school fees for our children”*



Beneficiaries in front of the Community Grain Reserve in Duween, Grand Bassa County. Photo: WFP, John Monibah



The United Nations in Liberia is represented by the following Agencies, Funds, and Programmes:

**AFDB, FAO, ILO, IMF, IOM, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNDSS, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOPS, UNWOMEN, WFP, WHO and World Bank.**

**UN FOCUS Liberia**

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**Contact:** Albert T. Dayyeah, Resident Coordinator's Office Email: [albert.dayyeah@one.un.org](mailto:albert.dayyeah@one.un.org)  
 Ana Biurrun Ruiz, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) [biurrun@unhcr.org](mailto:biurrun@unhcr.org)



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