



Background

The Government and people of Liberia have made considerable progress in consolidating peace and starting the country on the road to sustainable recovery since the ending of 14 years of civil conflict in 2006. Despite this, many Liberians remain vulnerable and face acute humanitarian needs on a daily basis. In order to address these needs, the Government is leading efforts to formulate a national Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The country is in a transitional period from emergency to longer-term development and support is needed to assist the most vulnerable households during this time. Extreme poverty and high levels of unemployment were the main contributors to the protracted and violent conflict in Liberia.

Steps are therefore needed to ensure that vulnerabilities are not exacerbated at a time when the nation remains fragile. In 2008, the United Nations (UN) and its partners, recognizing the need to mobilize funding for this transitional period, are focusing advocacy and resource mobilization efforts on the most critical areas and have developed a few projects of the highest priority.

The strategic priorities for humanitarian action in 2008 are:

- provision of basic social services for the vulnerable, especially in underserved areas;
- support for poor communities to become more secure, productive and sustainable; and
- strengthening the capacity of civil society and local authorities to address urgent humanitarian needs of the vulnerable.

Challenges facing food security and livelihoods

Agricultural production, particularly rice and cassava farming, is a key livelihood activity for the people of Liberia. However, during the 14 years of conflict, there was extensive damage to physical infrastructure in the country. Farms were abandoned as hundreds of thousands of people fled their homes and access roads fell into disrepair. Further, the scarcity of staple food commodities has influenced rapid food cost increases. In particular, the price of rice has nearly doubled in the past two months, posing a potentially serious threat to peace and order if not addressed.

The agriculture sector remains characterized by underinvestment, poor productivity, lack of extension services and significant post-harvest losses. Maintaining the quality and quantity of unprocessed products has been identified as a clear priority for the food security sector. The 2006 Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey noted that approximately half the rural and semi-rural households in Liberia are either food insecure or are extremely vulnerable to food insecurity.



Women attend training in post-harvest processing

In 2007, the country saw an improved harvest for the first time in many years as a result of the combined efforts of the Government, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. Although farmers in Liberia have long relied on the importation of seeds and planting materials, the satisfactory rice harvest and production of local seeds, in particular, have eliminated the need for seed imports for the 2008 season.

However, the increased harvest has highlighted the need to address the significant post-harvest losses, through

developing appropriate storage facilities, improving post-harvest technology and ensuring better marketing of agricultural products. In addition, there is a need to reduce the considerable losses caused by pest damage. In 2006 and 2007, the integrated production and pest management (IPPM) programme was developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture and piloted with limited resources. Additional support is thus required in 2008 to extend the IPPM programme. FAO is also supporting Government initiatives in securing emergency supplies to mitigate the scarcity and rapid price increases of staple food commodities.

FAO in Liberia

Since 2006, FAO has been working with other UN agencies to support the creation of a safe and secure environment for local communities and to facilitate the successful return and reintegration of displaced persons and ex-combatants in Liberia.

Under the 2008 Critical Humanitarian Gaps Appeal for Liberia, the priorities for the food security sector are:

- protecting crops against pre-harvest losses and mitigating post-harvest losses; and
- responding to disease outbreaks among small ruminants and poultry and preventing rabies in domestic animals.

As part of the 2008 Critical Humanitarian Gaps in Liberia Appeal, FAO is seeking **USD 4 975 000**.



FAO's COMPONENT OF THE 2008 CRITICAL HUMANITARIAN GAPS IN LIBERIA APPEAL

Project title: Emergency support for addressing outbreaks of Newcastle disease, *peste des petits ruminants* (PPR) and rabies in Liberia

Objectives: Control Newcastle disease in rural poultry, PPR in sheep and goats and rabies in dogs and cats

Beneficiaries: 10 000 households

Implementing Partners: Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and Samaritan's Purse

Project Duration: 12 months

Funds Requested: US\$300 000

Livestock (particularly sheep, goats and poultry) are important assets for rural households in Liberia. During the conflict, veterinary services were extensively damaged, with laboratories and field stations looted and vandalized and veterinarians either killed or displaced. Despite some improvement in veterinary service provision since 2006, PPR and Newcastle disease continue to affect livestock populations and a rabies outbreak in 2007 claimed ten human lives.

The project "**Emergency support for addressing outbreaks of Newcastle disease, *peste des petits ruminants* (PPR) and rabies in Liberia**" will involve the procurement of veterinary equipment, as well as thermostable Newcastle, PPR and rabies vaccines; the training of farmers in administering thermostable Newcastle vaccine; the carrying out of PPR vaccinations in sheep and goats; and the vaccination of cats and dogs against rabies. This is expected to lead to healthier and productive livestock, increased income for rural livestock owners and the elimination of human deaths as a result of rabies.

Project title: Addressing emergency pest management problems and strengthening plant protection capacities

Objectives: Minimize losses of food crops as a result of pest attacks

Beneficiaries: 83 000 farming households

Implementing Partners: ADRA, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Samaritan's Purse, Concern Worldwide, TearFund and Association of Evangelicals of Liberia (AEL)

Project Duration: 12 months

Funds Requested: US\$1 875 000

Through the project "**Addressing emergency pest management problems and strengthening plant protection capacities**", FAO will work with MoA to extend the IPPM programme. Key activities in 2008 will include: (i) provision of practical, participatory field training for field technicians and MoA extension workers on improved pest control methods; (ii) procurement and distribution of key pest management inputs; (iii) field training of smallholder farmer groups in IPPM practices for food crops; (iv) awareness raising on the benefits of adopting integrated pest management practices in the context of good agricultural practices for crop production; and (v) up-scaling and follow up on farmers' adoption of IPPM practices for food production.

The project will continue the work initiated under the IPPM programme in 2006 and 2007, which was particularly successful in the context of limited funding. The expansion of the programme will lead to a significant improvement in food security, increased awareness on the benefits of adopting IPPM and strengthened technical capacities for field extensions workers.

Project title: Emergency support for enhanced food production and mitigation of post-harvest losses

Objectives: Enhancement of smallholder farmers' productive capacities and minimization of post-harvest losses

Beneficiaries: 100 000 households

Implementing Partners: ADRA, CRS, Samaritan's Purse, Concern Worldwide, Tearfund, AEL and Lutheran Development Services

Project Duration: 12 months

Funds Requested: US\$2 800 000

During the 2007 planting season, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund enabled FAO to address the severe shortage of seeds in Liberia and import 2 500 tonnes of rice seeds. This led to a significant increase in harvest in terms of area planted and yield per area for the first time in many years. However, the improved harvest emphasized the considerable post-harvest losses.

The proposed project "**Emergency support for enhanced food production and mitigation of post-harvest losses**" will seek to minimize pre- and post-harvest losses, increase the areas planted and yields of food crops (particularly rice and cassava) and increase farmers' income. Furthermore, the project will enhance value adding and employment creation along the food crop value chains. In order to achieve this, FAO will improve post-harvest technology through the procurement and distribution of agro-processing equipment, construct storage facilities and drying slabs, assist existing seed multiplication sites and provide capacity building activities for farmers' organizations.

For more information please contact:

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division
Viale Terme di Caracalla, Rome 00153, Italy
Email: relief-operations@fao.org
Website: www.fao.org/emergencies

Mr Mohamed Khaled,

Emergency Coordinator – FAO Liberia
P.O. Box 3582
1000 Monrovia, Liberia
Tel: (231) 6573 149/Fax: (231) 205407128
Email: Mohamed.Khaled@undp.org

