

Liberia

Liberia made a fresh start in 2006 with the inauguration of a president who represents, for many, a clear break from the country's violent past. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first elected female president in Africa, quickly demonstrated a commitment to change. A well-crafted strategic partnership between the government, the UN, and other international actors successfully launched Liberia on the "consolidation phase" of the peace process, following two years of transition. While the internal security situation remained relatively stable, important strides were made in governance—including economic governance—and tentative steps were taken in the justice sector. On the other hand, security sector reform proceeded slowly, and crime, including reported incidents of rape, was on the rise. The regional security situation remained fragile, with continuing instability in Côte d'Ivoire being the major source of concern. As the year came to a close, the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was poised to help a proactive government consolidate Liberia's hard-earned peace.

Background

UNMIL was deployed to oversee implementation of a comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) signed on 18 August 2003 by the Liberian government, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), Liberian political parties, and civil society. The CPA brought an end to nearly fourteen years of civil war, broken only by two years of relative peace between the 1997 elections that brought Charles Taylor to

power, and 1999, when violence erupted again.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) brokered peace talks in June 2003 between the Taylor government and the two main rebel groups. Taylor was indicted for war crimes by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, abruptly ending the negotiations. A cease-fire, agreed to on 17 June 2003, failed to prevent heavy fighting in the capital, Monrovia. Pressure for international intervention mounted amid rising concerns over the humanitarian situation and the intensifying war. With Taylor in asylum in Nigeria in August, an interim regime took charge, followed by the installation of a transitional government in October 2003.

The conflict had serious consequences for both the country and the subregion. An estimated 250,000 people died in Liberia during its fourteen years of violence. Almost half the population was internally displaced, while over 300,000 fled to neighboring countries. Despite Liberia's wealth in mineral deposits, timber, and rubber, decades of graft and mismanagement left over 80 percent of the population below the poverty line. At the war's end, unemployment was nearly 85 percent, illiteracy was high, and economic opportunities were scarce.

The subregion has faced more than a decade of violence, with linkages between the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire. Charles Taylor supported the opposition rebels in Sierra Leone, while Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire allegedly backed the two Liberian rebel groups. Toward the end of 2003, Côte d'Ivoire remained divided, creating a

source of insecurity along the border with Liberia. Although Sierra Leone's civil war had ended in 2002, concerns remained as the country prepared for what observers view as crucial presidential and parliamentary elections in 2007. Concerns also persisted over the stability of Guinea, especially given the lack of clear succession plans after the departure of the country's ailing president.

UNMIL: Mandate and Functions

The ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL), authorized by the UN Security Council on 1 August 2003, preceded UNMIL by two months. UNMIL, operating under Chapter VII, was given a mandate to oversee the cease-fire agreement; develop and implement a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and repatriation (DDRR) program; provide security at key locations; protect UN staff and Liberian civilians under imminent threat; provide humanitarian and human rights assistance; support security sector reform; assist in extending state authority throughout the country; and support the implementation of the peace process, including assistance to the 2005 national elections. In 2006, UNMIL shifted away from tasks that had been completed, such as the disarmament and demobilization of factional forces, toward the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants, security sector reform, judicial reform, the establishment of safeguards for human rights, and the consolidation of state authority. The only additional mandate was the authority to arrest former president Charles Taylor should he return to Liberia, and to transfer him to Sierra Leone for prosecution before the Special Court (Resolution 1638, of November 2005).

In early 2006, an interdepartmental assessment mission recommended that UNMIL's mandate be extended for a two-year "consolidation phase" dedicated to helping the newly elected government establish its authority and launch a program for national reconstruction and development. The drawdown of UNMIL was to be based on a set of benchmarks that



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UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

• Authorization and start date	19 September 2003 (UNSC Res. 1509)
• SRSG	Alan Doss (United Kingdom)
• Force commander	Lieutenant-General Chikadibia Isaac Obiakor (Nigeria)
• Police commissioner	Mohammed Ahmed Alhassan (Ghana)
• Budget	\$714.9 million (1 July 2006–30 June 2007)
• Strength as of 30 September 2006	Troops: 14,570 Military observers: 200 Police: 1,076 International civilian staff: 516 Local civilian staff: 839 UN volunteers: 251

For detailed mission information see p. 314.

the UN identified in September 2006, which align with the four main pillars of the government's strategy: security, economic revitalization, basic services and infrastructure, and the rule of law and good governance. The Security Council endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendations, including "the

phased, gradual consolidation, drawdown and withdrawal of UNMIL's troop contingent, as the situation permits and without compromising the security of Liberia" (Resolution 1712, of September 2006). The approach, developed in close consultation with the government and a broad cross-section of national and international stakeholders, signaled the UN's commitment to remain engaged for a substantial though not an indefinite period. Responsibility for security would be progressively handed over to the Liberian government, while the UN and others would help to build its capacity for effective governance and economic recovery.

UNMIL: Key Developments and Challenges

Security

Through a combination of robust military patrols and operations in the border areas, as well as joint patrolling with the national police, UNMIL's presence brought significant improvements in the security environment in 2006. The fragile internal security situation at the start of the year worsened in March with the arrest of Charles Taylor. Taylor was indicted by the Special Court in 2003 for his alleged support to the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone. Under a deal involving ECOWAS, the African Union, the United States, and others, he was granted asylum in Nigeria on condition that he not meddle in the internal affairs of Liberia. On coming to power, President Johnson-Sirleaf initially stated that the transfer of Taylor to the Special Court was not a priority for her government, as it had to focus on managing a battered country. Due to international pressure, especially from the United States, on 17 March 2006 the Liberian government made a formal request to Nigeria's authorities that they hand Taylor over. On 28 March, Nigeria announced that Taylor had disappeared from the presidential mansion in Calabar. He was apprehended on 29 March in northeastern

Nigeria as he attempted to cross into Cameroon. Taylor was delivered to Liberian authorities in Monrovia, who handed him over to UNMIL, and on that same day he was flown to Freetown and placed in the custody of the Special Court.

His appearance at the Special Court on 3 April 2006 made Taylor the first former African head of state to appear before an international tribunal for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Concerned that his presence would threaten security in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1688 (2006), approving his transfer to The Hague for trial by the Special Court, using International Criminal Court facilities. The transfer occurred when the United Kingdom offered to allow him to serve his prison sentence in the UK, if he were to be convicted. Taylor's trial is set to commence in April 2007.

In order to address security concerns raised by the arrest of the former Liberian leader, UNMIL engaged in robust patrolling in Monrovia, deployed a quick reaction force to border areas, and increased its troop presence in Taylor's former strongholds. It also redeployed some rapid reaction elements to boost the small contingent of UNMIL troops that were providing security at the Special Court. Ultimately, Taylor's transfer to The Hague removed a significant long-term security threat to the subregion.

Other security concerns in 2006 were a result of disgruntled former combatants and rising crime. On 26 July, during the country's independence-day celebrations, a mysterious fire broke out at the Executive Mansion, where the president was hosting a luncheon for several heads of state from the region. After the government's initial dismissal of key members of her cabinet and security officials, an investigation undertaken by South African forensic experts with the assistance of UNMIL later concluded that the fire had been caused by an electrical fault. In August, some 500 ex-combatants who had illegally occupied the Guthrie rubber plantation were



(AP Photo/Pewee Fiomoku)

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf greets a crowd, 17 January 2006.

evicted in a joint operation involving armed Liberian police and UNMIL soldiers.

Although the UN Secretary-General reported in September that no significant threatening military activity was observed along the borders with Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea, the possible movement of armed groups across the border with Côte d'Ivoire, and the recruitment of former Liberian combatants, remained a concern. UNMIL increased its presence in the border areas, and conducted concurrent patrols with the UN Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), as well as with Sierra Leonean security agencies.

An Elected Government: Moving Forward

The new government was sworn in on 16 January 2006, marking the end of the two-year transitional period. UNMIL played a crucial role in overseeing the national elections, and in resolving tensions over the results of the run-off presidential election. The installment of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's administration marked a dramatic change in governance style. The new president has

placed qualified personnel in key positions and is tackling the sensitive issue of corruption. The relationship between the government and UNMIL, which was previously strained under the transitional government, has become a more productive and equal partnership.

In the posttransitional period, UNMIL's core role is to assist the new government in extending and consolidating its authority. Johnson-Sirleaf unveiled a 150-day plan in April, which served to jumpstart reforms and recovery by targeting the four main pillars identified above: peace and security, the economy, infrastructure and basic services, and governance and the rule of law. The government claimed to have reached over half of the plan's targets by late June. The underlying pillars also serve to guide long-term planning by the government, including the development of an interim poverty reduction strategy paper to be completed by the end of 2006 with assistance from the UN.

Other achievements of the government included establishing the Liberian Reconstruction and Development Committee, launching

the Liberia Emergency Employment Program, the return of all internally displaced persons, and drafting an anticorruption policy. The government appointed fifteen county superintendents in April 2006, an important step in the extension of state authority. Ministries began functioning again, with strong individuals in leadership positions. However, the middle and lower ranks of the civil service lacked qualification, training, and experience, inhibiting the capacity of the government to implement policies. Although UNMIL support teams facilitated the return of government officials to the counties, the lack of accommodation, facilities, and basic necessities led many to return to Monrovia. The UN served as the driving force for recovery, but many are looking to the new administration to now take the lead.

Judicial reform continues, but at a very slow pace. UNMIL spearheaded efforts to develop a rule-of-law task force and law-reform commission, and provided technical advice on writing and enacting legislation. It also assisted in rebuilding infrastructure to restore the formal judicial system. However, it was difficult to keep officials in the counties. UNMIL has provided training and advice for justices of the peace, magistrates, court clerks, and county judicial officers. UN staff posted in the counties monitored the judicial process and advised the national government on needed reforms. In a pilot project aimed at reducing the large backlog of legal cases, UNMIL hired a dozen national prosecution consultants and eighteen national defense consultants. UNMIL also assisted the government in developing a five-year strategy to reform the Ministry of Justice, and is in the early stages of developing a national strategy for reform of the entire judicial sector. The Independent National Commission on Human Rights was expected to begin functioning by the end of the year. Due to a lack of access to formal courts, much of the population continued to rely on traditional law, raising questions about how these two systems can be reconciled.

Economic Governance and Recovery

After a rocky start, the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP)—the core feature of which is cosigning authority for international officials in key ministries—made substantial progress in 2006. Many international experts were recruited to focus on improving management and building national capacity. Government revenue rose due to better fiscal management and governance. Other ministries not involved in GEMAP indicated interest in similar programs. Importantly, the elected government demonstrated a commitment to the process. Although it is too early for a definitive evaluation, GEMAP appears to be on track. This was a positive sign for a government heavily indebted, at nearly \$4 billion, and contributed to demonstrating fiscal responsibility in order to obtain debt relief and targeted budget support, and attract donor and foreign investment.

The government made an important step in drafting and debating its first national budget. Although the budget is small (approximately \$120–130 million), the process demonstrated good governance practices and an empowered national legislature. The budget focused on education, health, and the judicial system. The government remained largely dependent on international contributions for reconstruction efforts.

Progress was also made toward lifting sanctions on timber and diamonds, which could stimulate economic growth if under government control. The government worked to meet Kimberly Process requirements, but illegal diamond mining continued. UNMIL assisted in monitoring and mapping these activities. The UN Security Council temporarily lifted the ban on timber in June 2006, with Resolution 1689, allowing countries to import timber under continued monitoring, while tying the permanent lifting of the sanctions to the passing of appropriate forestry legislation. UNMIL assisted in drafting that legislation and manned checkpoints in Monrovia to monitor

Box 3.5.1 GEMAP

In September 2005 the Liberian transitional government and nine international partners, including the UN, World Bank, European Commission, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) adopted the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP). In May 2006 the Best Practices Section of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Fragile States Group of the World Bank conducted a review of this innovative program, with a view toward drawing lessons learned.

GEMAP is a response to mismanagement of public finances in postconflict Liberia and the threat it represented to the peace process there. Conceived and initiated by international donors, it was based on a shared diagnosis of Liberia's problems and an analysis of options on how to deal with those problems. GEMAP represents a robust intervention in Liberia's economic governance and, as such, was controversial when initiated. Its

key features are the provision of international experts with cosignature authority and management contracts in selected ministries and state-owned enterprises; authoritative oversight mechanisms; and linkages to the peace implementation process and to UN Security Council sanctions.

The principal findings of the UN/World Bank review are as follows:

- Robust economic interventions are highly political and should be approached as such.
- Empirical data can be a useful way of building a united international approach to postconflict economic governance.
- Careful analysis should be given to the motivations of national authorities in the crafting of incentives and threats, including economic sanctions on individuals.
- An inclusive stance with stakeholders highlights the role of civil society, both in building national constituencies of

support and in securing regional and international backing.

- Communication strategies should emphasize the program's goal of restoring sovereign authority, not undermining it.
- A basic level of security is important in any postconflict transition process.
- The initiation and planning of a robust intervention should address implementation of the program in order to enable timely operationalization.

The authors of the study do not make a straightforward recommendation that GEMAP ought to be seen as a model for elsewhere, but they do suggest that it highlights the significance of economic governance in postconflict transitions and offers some insights on how to address the matter.

Source: Renata Dwan and Laura Bailey, "Liberia's Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP)," UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and World Bank, May 2006, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/lessons>.

the movement of timber. On 20 October, the Council issued a statement indicating that there was no basis for reinstating the sanctions on timber, in view of the fact that the government had met the condition of passing forestry reform legislation.

UNMIL is a member of the task force to help the government reestablish control over rubber plantations. In May 2006 the task force called for repossession, which began with the Guthrie plantation, noted above, where an interim management team was put in place. Reclamation of the plantation helped to boost efforts by the new government to regain control of the country's vast natural wealth. Meanwhile, restoration of infrastruc-

ture and public services proceeded slowly. Access to electricity and clean water in Monrovia was limited. Discussions began on how to rehabilitate the country's road network. Under an innovative program, the World Bank was planning to provide \$68 million to support a pilot project for UNMIL troops to reconstruct vital infrastructure. If successful, this project could serve as a model for other peacekeeping missions.

Security Sector Reform

Security sector reform proceeded more slowly than expected due to a lack of funding and the government transition. UNMIL is primarily responsible for the restructuring and

Box 3.5.2 HIV/AIDS and UN Peacekeeping

In February 2006, the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping commended efforts to tackle the challenge of HIV/AIDS in peace operations, but emphasized “the need to raise awareness among United Nations peacekeeping personnel.” That month, the issue’s importance was highlighted in the final report of a 2005 survey of HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitude, and practice among 667 uniformed personnel* in the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

Preliminary analysis of the survey (reported in last Review) suggested that three-quarters of those interviewed had a “comprehensive knowledge” of HIV. But closer investigation indicated that only 51 percent actually had this level of knowledge. There were wide disparities, ranging from 56 to 100 percent, in reported levels of predeployment training among the different contingents, military observers, and police officers; of those who had been deployed for at least a month, 88 percent had received awareness training in the mission area.

HIV testing has always been a controversial issue for peacekeeping. Eighty percent of those interviewed had undergone an HIV test specifically as part of their predeployment preparation, though differences were noted on whether it was mandatory or voluntary, and only around

half had received any counseling; 84 percent expressed an interest in having an HIV test in the mission area. Nearly half knew at least one person who had died as a result of AIDS, but 88 percent considered themselves to be at low risk or no risk of contracting HIV.

One-hundred-twenty respondents reported having had sex while deployed, of whom one in five admitted to having exchanged money, gifts, or services for sex. The actual figures for sexual activity are probably higher as investigations into sexual exploitation and abuse undoubtedly influenced responses. Nearly all knew where to get condoms, but of those that reported having had sex in Liberia, around a fifth did not use condoms consistently.

The deployment of peer educators within contingents and initiating peer education programs within UNMIL were key recommendations of the report. It also underscored the importance of voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) as a central element in behavior change and noted that peacekeepers do not operate in a vacuum so there is a need for outreach programs to the local community.

The UN has underlined that HIV/AIDS should not only be addressed in terms of mission personnel but should also be integrated into mandated mission

functions. In July 2005, the UN Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Unit in Khartoum agreed to an interim DDR program with commissions from north and south Sudan. This noted that “HIV/AIDS awareness is vital for the reintegration process” not least because it led local authorities to “focus on combatants and their families, rather than on combatants alone.”

In March 2006, a joint mission to Sudan by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNAIDS, and UN Population Fund identified a number of obstacles to addressing HIV/AIDS in the context of wider DDR efforts. These included a slow overall disbursement of funds, inadequate expertise in national commissions, and the limited capacities of local NGOs. However, a peer education kit had been translated into Arabic, and the mission emphasized the need to train peer educators and include condoms in transitional packs given to demobilizing individuals. While VCT services should be supported, the mission emphasized that the provision of treatment would have to be through a system of referrals, linking with the National AIDS Control Programme and longer-term initiatives.

*The survey included contingent personnel from Ghana; Ireland, Namibia; Nigeria; Philippines; Sweden; officers from the Bangladeshi and Pakistani contingents; the Nigerian formed police unit; military observers and UN police officers. Findings were analyzed for each specific group but are presented here in terms of statistically weighted overall findings.

Source: Roxanne Bazergan, “HIV/AIDS Knowledge, Attitude and Practice survey: UN uniformed peacekeepers in Liberia,” United Nations Peacekeeping Best Practices Section, 28 February 2006. The full report is available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/lessons/>.

reform of the Liberian National Police. As of 16 October 2006, 2,191 new officers had been trained, and nearly all former officers had been decommissioned. Deployment of officers into the fifteen counties (454 officers in total) remains difficult due to lack of facili-

ties and amenities. The police remain heavily dependent on UNMIL for transportation, communications, and logistics. Although the police are set to reach a strength of 3,500 by mid-2007, capacity to manage internal security demands remains uncertain, especially amid

reports of rising crime and vigilante groups. UNMIL has encouraged communities to act as monitors and report crimes rather than resort to vigilantism. Both UNMIL and the national police have increased their patrols in high-risk areas. An additional UN formed police unit deployed in September to help provide security and to assist with training the new police force.

Military restructuring is back on track after a long delay due to lack of finances for deactivating former soldiers. The deactivation process was completed in December 2005, and the recruitment process for the new military began in January 2006. In February, President Johnson-Sirleaf appointed the outgoing commander of an UNMIL military contingent, Nigerian general Luka Nyeh Yusuf, as commander of the new Armed Forces of Liberia, tasked with restructuring. DynCorps International, a private US firm, is primarily responsible for recruiting and training the new military, an effort funded by the US government. The first batch of 110 new recruits began training in mid-July. However, only 563 of over 7,000 applicants have qualified for training. UNMIL assisted with the vetting of applicants and a public information campaign, but is not directly involved in training the new military. The aim is to have the first battalion of a 2,000-strong military force operational by mid-2008.

Reintegration and Reconciliation

In the latter part of 2006, UNMIL redefined its strategy for reintegration using a more comprehensive and long-term approach. In mid-August, some 39,000 ex-combatants had yet to enroll in reintegration programs. Roughly half of those are expected to be absorbed through programs sponsored by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), while bilateral funding should be forthcoming for the remaining caseload. Concerns persist over high un-

employment, especially among ex-combatants, and related problems of crime, security, and lack of control over natural resources. Furthermore, reintegration assistance has been required for returning refugees and resettled IDPs.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), formally inaugurated in June 2006, has deployed nearly 200 statement-takers in the counties. The process of statement-taking began on 10 October. However, leadership and management problems exist, as well as internal divisions between commissioners. There has been no national public information campaign. Funding pledges from international partners exist, but international partners have been reluctant to disburse funds due to lack of progress, and remaining pledges are on hold until the commission proves it can function effectively.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges, Liberia has made progress, albeit in small steps. The establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the appointment of county governors, other efforts to strengthen and extend the reach of state institutions, ongoing reforms of the Armed Forces of Liberia, the Liberian National Police, and other institutions, were all significant achievements. While the TRC is designed to set the country on the path to reconciliation, the pursuit of justice through trials remains a possibility. High unemployment, especially among the country's youth, lack of viable programs for the rehabilitation and reintegration phase of the DDRR program, and the faltering peace process in Côte d'Ivoire all pose significant challenges to the country's future. Finally, the consolidation of peace will require equitable ethnic, regional, and gender representation in public and private institutions.