

OXFAM IN LIBERIA

- Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world
- In Liberia Oxfam focuses on public health, livelihoods and gender



THE SITUATION

Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking last on Human Development Indicators. Significant divides exist between rural and urban areas and men and women. Despite important progress, women remain disproportionately affected by poverty in all its dimensions, and gender-based violence remains a serious problem. The Government has focused on improving basic education and health, including ensuring social protection for the poorest and most vulnerable people. With a relatively stable political environ-

ment, Liberia's strong post-war economic recovery continued in 2008; but the global financial crisis in 2008 and 2009 created substantial challenges for Liberia's fledgling economy. However, Liberia's medium-to-long-term prospects are good and the Government recognises that a stable macroeconomic environment will be critical to rapid, inclusive and sustainable growth.

IN NUMBERS*

30,000
total people helped



Photo: Anwen Kidd

HOW OXFAM IS HELPING

Oxfam is working with other international and local NGOs, local partners, community based groups, private sector organisations, and the Liberian Government (which recently pledged its full-hearted commitment to reducing poverty in the nation).

Left: Mary Kuto and Ben Daw Weah collect water from a new pump in Vai Town, Monrovia. Before a pump was built here residents had to spend several hours a day walking to collect water.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The public health situation in Liberia is improving. Though the effects of the war are still felt, particularly in urban slums and rural communities, there has been a noticeable improvement in reducing waterborne diseases that have claimed many lives in the past. Access to basic services like water and sanitation is still low, the Government and its international partners are working to improve the situation. Lots of work has been done to rebuild infrastructure, reorganise community social systems, and improve national institutional systems that affect public health services.

Liberia has experienced consistent cholera outbreaks in the past, with isolated cases reported in some communities, but this has improved. We work with partners to improve the leadership, co-ordination and

monitoring of water, sanitation and hygiene promotion activities, and to improve people's ability to deal with public health emergencies.

Oxfam is the lead agency of the "WASH Consortium" in Liberia, funded by DFID, ECHO and Irish Aid. The Consortium (comprised of Oxfam, Tearfund, Concern Universal, Solidarités and Action Contre La Faim) supports the Government to meet its water, sanitation and hygiene targets.

We've helped reduce instances of disease by facilitating poor people's better access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene initiatives. Now communities are taking charge of their own hygiene and exhibiting good hygiene practices. With our support the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has become more proactive, responsive and effective in its planning and

monitoring in delivering environmental health work. The County Health Teams in eight counties are in place with necessary staff to deliver hygiene promotion activities. Through the support and mentorship of our programme staff in the counties, they're planning, co-ordinating and implementing hygiene promotion activities, as well as harmonising the activities of all stakeholders in the water, sanitation and hygiene sectors. Oxfam's work has been critical in establishing the only public national water laboratory, to ensure water supplied to people is safe.



Photo: Anwen Kidd

Oxfam is supporting the construction of wells and water pumps to help ensure communities have access to safe water supplies

INCREASING VULNERABLE FAMILIES' INCOMES

With Oxfam and its partners' support, more than 1,800 poor farmers have been allocated plots of land and are cultivating rice. We built rice mill centres and warehouse facilities, constructed concrete dams to facilitate year-round farming; and built bridges for farmers to have access to markets. We're also supporting two women

co-operatives, with 150 members benefiting from agriculture and skills development. More than 50 of these women now have access to farmland that Oxfam purchased for them and to construct a farmhouse. These women's incomes have increased by more than 10% in 14 months. We're supporting another 100 of these

women in tailoring, beekeeping, weaving and designing household materials. Since we supplied sewing machines to 30 women, they've set up small enterprises that are generating income for them and their families.



Oxfam supported camp committee members clean up a campsite in Maryland county sheltering refugees from the Ivory Coast.

SUPPORTING REFUGEES FROM THE IVORY COAST

Approximately 65,000 refugees fled to Liberia because of the Ivory Coast crisis. Oxfam and its partners helped hundreds of displaced people with water, sanitation and hygiene support in four camps in Grand Gedeh and Maryland counties. Because people fled at the beginning of the farming season, many host communities' (communities that hosted the refugees) seed stocks were depleted. Oxfam provided seeds and tools for farmers in host communities and for refugees who were interested in farming. To protect these seeds and tools, we provided cash grants to more than 1,000 households in the host communities and to about 2,470 households in the refugee camps.

GENDER AND PROTECTION

Oxfam's Raising Her Voice projects seeks to amplify the voices of poor and marginalised women in governance, and to promote the African Union Protocol on Women's Rights. This project focuses on networking, lobbying and advocating with poor women activists. We campaign and work with public institutions and decision making forums, including traditional structures, to empower civil society organisations to support poor women's rights. We're seeking to expand our gender and protection work to focus on women's and girls' empowerment through advocacy and campaigns, capacity building and research.

