

4 February 2015

LIBERIA: Country Profile



Summary Indicators

Indicator	Value	Year
Population number (last census)	3,476,608	2008
Population number (projection)	4,455,969	2015
Population growth rate %	4.04	2012
Population density	37.6	2012
Urban composition %	48.9	2013
Average household size	5.1	2008
Net migration rate (per 1,000)	-0.9	2013
Age distribution (% under 15)	43.2	2014
Life expectancy at birth (years)	60.6	2013
<5 mortality per 1,000 live births	71	2013
Maternal mortality per 100,000 live births	640	2013
Malnutrition prevalence	20.4% of under-5s underweight, 39.4% chronic and 7.8% acute	2013
HDI ranking and value	175 (0.412)	2013
Corruption perceptions index ranking (value)	94 (37)	2014
People below the poverty line (%)	56	2010
Hunger index ranking (value)	50 (16.8)	2014
World Risk Index ranking (value)	57 (7.90)	2014
Gender Inequality Index ranking (value)	(0.655)	2013
Literacy rate %	42.9	2012

Sources: Geohive, WHO 2014, UNDP 2014, UNDP 2013, UN Data, Transparency international 2014, CIA Factbook, WHO 2007, LDHS 2013.

Liberia is a West African country bordered by Sierra Leone to the west, Guinea to the north and Ivory Coast to the east. It has a land mass of 96,320km² and a North Atlantic coastline of 579km, characterised by mangrove swamps and lagoons. Liberia's interior is predominantly grassy plateaus, which support limited agriculture and forest. Monrovia is the capital, where more than a third of the population live. Liberia is divided into 15 counties, which are subdivided into districts. There are a total of 136 administrative, 88 health and 90 education districts (see maps). Each district is divided into chiefdoms (UN Data; Transparency international 2014; CIA Factbook; WHO 2007; LDHS 2013).

Society and Communities

There is a stark rural and urban divide in Liberia. Monrovia is the centre of most political, economic and social activity. It has higher standards of education, health, security and infrastructure. This divide has been historically important and continues to affect how Liberia develops.

Ethnic or tribal groups: There are 16 major ethnic groups in Liberia. English is the official language, but is spoken by only 20% of the population. Over 20 indigenous languages are commonly used. The ethnic groups include.

- Kpelle, 20% of the population, mainly from central and western Liberia in Lofa, Bong, Bomi, Margibi, Montserrado, and Bassa counties.
- Bassa, 16%, mainly from Grand Bassa and Rivercess counties.
- Dan (Gio), 8%, predominantly from Nimba County.
- Kru (Klau) of Kru County, 7%, and there are also communities in Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.
- 12 other ethnic groups comprise the remaining 49% of the population (Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center 02/2006).

In addition there are Americo-Liberians, descendants of American and Caribbean slaves, who are often referred to as 'Congos' or 'Congo people'. They formed the elite of society for much of Liberian history (Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center 02/2006). There are approximately 4,000 Lebanese in Liberia, who reportedly own and operate a significant proportion of the economy (Economist 11/05/2011). People of Lebanese descent, and all other people of non-African descent, are not permitted to hold Liberian citizenship even if born in Liberia (The Advocates for Human Rights 2008).

Religion: Estimates on the religious demography of Liberia vary. In 2008, the records state that the population was 85.6% Christian and 12.2% Muslim. Other

studies suggest that Christians may only comprise 40%, Muslims 20% and principally indigenous faith 40% (Berkley Centre 2013). This may be because beliefs have merged with traditional religious practices, leading to a level of dual adherence (Journal of Region, Conflict and Peace 2012). Religion was not a motivating factor in the civil war, and faiths largely coexist.

Secret societies: Secret societies hold an important spiritual and societal role in Liberian, and are associated with leadership. The two most widely known indigenous secret societies are the Sande (for women) and Poro (for men). They serve as institutions to acculturate youth and run so called 'bush schools'. In rural areas, approximately 72% of women belong to the Sande Society, compared to 39% in urban areas (BMZ 2012). These groups conduct traditional burial practices when one of their members dies (The Advocates for Human Rights 2008). Poro and Sande members also practice Christianity. Islam prohibits participation in these societies, but has its own secret groups (The Advocates for Human Rights 2008).

Gender equality: During the civil war, there were a significant number of female combatants, with some estimates exceeding 20%. Women were frequently the victims of rape and abuse by the armed factions (ILO 2005). The 2004 'Women's Act' gave women the right to inherit their husband's land and property, but only if widowed and her son(s) approved (IBIS 18/04/2012). 13% married women and 6% of married men are in polygynous unions. The proportion of women in polygynous unions is highest in Lofa (31%) and lowest in Montserrado (7%) (LDHS 2013).

Education: Primary and secondary education is compulsory from the ages of 6-13 (UNICEF 09/2012). The most recent data for 2012 indicated that the net attendance ratio for primary school is 31.5% and 28.4% for men and women respectively. This drops to 14.4% and 14.1% at secondary school (UNICEF). Tuition is free, but other costs amount to per child approximately USD 200 per child, per semester (PI 01/2015). 33% of Liberian women and 13% of men age 15-49 have no education. 36% of women and 58% of men attended secondary or higher education. Women and men in urban areas are much more likely to achieve higher levels of education (LDHS 2013). 63% of men and 32% of women aged 15-24 are literate (UNICEF 2015).

Child protection: In 2011, 78% of children aged 7-14 were employed in agriculture and 3.4% in manufacturing (World Bank). In 2008, 11% of girls married by age 15 and 38% by age 18. 20% of girls experience sex before age 15, one in seven against their will (UNICEF 09/2012). The median age at first birth for women age 25-49 is 18.9 years. Women living in the south central region have their first birth more than one year later (19.3) than women living in the south eastern region (18.2) (LDHS 2013).

Historical Background

Pre-war: Modern Liberian history began in the 1820s, when freed African-American slaves were settled in the region. In 1847 the independent government of Liberia was founded, along the coast. This coastal enclave gradually enlarged its control on the mainland, while economic and political powers were monopolised by American-Liberians. In the 1920s the development of rubber plantations was accompanied by forced labour for indigenous workers, which mainly benefitted the urban elites. In the 1940s, extraction of iron ore further fuelled this dynamic, although working conditions were not as harsh as on the rubber plantations. Economic difficulties in the 1980s led to a proposed increase in the price of the rice, the main staple crop. This was seen as an attempt to extract more wealth from the poor majority by the elite, increasing frustrations and the perceived dominance by American-Liberians. This provided a favourable context for a military coup in 1986, led by indigenous officers. The assassination of the overthrown president opened a sequence of political assassinations.

First and second civil war (1989–1997 & 1999–2003): The root causes of unrest were the systematic exclusion of large parts of the population from power and the monopolisation of resources by elite groups. This trend began with the dominance of American-Liberians over the indigenous populations, but the extractive and exclusive character of governance was carried over into the indigenous regimes of the 1980s and civil war period. In 1989, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor, launched an invasion from Ivory Coast, starting 14 years of civil war. Over this period, all sides used coercive power to exact revenge on groups perceived to be responsible for their subjection. They then enriched themselves by extracting wealth, either through the relatively available and tradable mineral resources such as gold and diamonds, or through intimidation and extortion of the population. Despite various ceasefire agreements, and a two year peace between 1997-1999 when Taylor was elected President, fighting commenced again. In 2003, international pressure grew and, following the arrival of United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), and the Nigerian-led ECOWAS mission in Liberia (ECOMIL), Taylor stepped down. In the same year, the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed, which made provisions for a transitional government to be established, with a mandate lasting until 2006, with elections to take place in 2005.

Violence against civilians: Casualty estimates from both civil wars range from 150,000 to 500,000. The majority are believed to be civilians. The violence was mainly carried out by security forces from all factions, but also by civilians against other civilians in the form of a variety of opportunist and so called 'revenge' attacks,

for perceived injustices. Beatings, killings, gang rape, destruction of property, abductions, and the use of child soldiers were widely reported.

Role of ethnicity: Attacks on ethnic groups followed similar patterns. All ethnicities suffered human rights abuses, but those closely linked to the main factions, such as the Krahn, Gio, Mano, and Mandingo, were more often targeted by rivals and more likely to benefit from favouritism by their allies. Ethnic groups are not fixed entities in Liberia and, whilst it was seen as an indication of allegiance in the civil war, the results of the 2005 and 2011 elections support the notion that ethnicity or tribalism are not the primary factors in deciding an individual's loyalty (OECD, 2008; *The Advocates for Human Rights*, 2008; BTI 2012; UN, 2015).

IDPs: Up to 23,000 (1990-2004 civil war; post-election violence in March and April 2011; unclear how many have found durable solutions) (CIA Factbook 2013).

Governance

Legal system: The legal system is a mix of Anglo-American inspired common law and customary law. The common law is administered through subordinate courts, judicial courts, and special criminal courts presided over by associate justices, headed by the chief justice and appointed by the president and Senate. The Supreme Court handles constitutional matters (CIA factbook). The system has been reformed following the civil wars, but the benefit has only been felt in Monrovia. Less than a quarter of the population is within five kilometres of a police station or a court, while more than half is 30 kilometres or more. A survey in 2008 stated that only 4% of criminal cases and 3% civil cases in rural areas were reported to formal courts. In these communities, issues are resolved through customary law. Chiefs, elders or spiritual leaders resolve disputes based on widely accepted cultural paradigms which are often at odds with the common law (World Bank 01/11/2012; Carter Centre 19/03/2012).

Centralisation: Governance is based on a high level of centralisation, with most economic, social and political life based in Monrovia. The presidency controls administrative and operational finances of these localities and has the authority to remove chiefs and to appoint officials of sub-national units, like superintendents. Consequently central government is over-burdened and unable to deliver services to large proportions of the population, particularly in rural areas. Despite attempts to address these issues by civil society and the government, primarily through the Governance Commission, change in the rural localities has been minimal. There is considerable resistance among conservative politicians who claim it will lead to secession (International Journal – Stability of Security & Development 2014).

Local governance: Counties and districts are presided over by superintends, who act as a 'president' of that county or district. They have no functional relationship with service delivery ministries, like Health and Education, and are directly controlled by central government. The districts are divided among approximately 250 senior chiefs, who have gradually become agents of the state. They are nominally elected by groups of less senior chiefs, and control communal plantation revenues, whilst also receiving funds directly from the central government. They remain politically conservative, as reform would threaten their control over informal local taxes and support from the central government. (Beekman, Bulte and Nillesen 2011). During the civil wars they were frequently associated with armed factions and localised corruption. They do not share the same level of authority as chiefs do in other West African nations, such as Ghana, Nigeria or Ivory Coast. Their standing remains relatively higher in Liberia's northern and northwestern counties (World Bank 2010).

Security forces: 60% of the police force was removed in a vetting process immediately after the second civil war. Senior state security positions were still distributed among former rebel and government faction leaders. They are reported to still be practising extortion, similar to that conducted during the civil war, and have been criticised as ineffectual. The burden of peacekeeping fell on UNMIL. The state has largely ignored commercial and community-based policing, particularly in rural areas. Instead, gangs of youth patrol and defend their localities. Professional bodies, like markets stall owners and taxi drivers, employ their own policing methods and personnel. Police are seen as a last resort, and rarely leave main road when patrolling more remote regions, though there is a functional relationship between most police and chiefs (Baker 2007). The Liberian police force currently number approximately 5,000 (IRIN 2014).

Military system: The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) were rebuilt after the civil wars, as in Sierra Leone. The size was severely reduced, amidst concerns that they would be too entangled in the various factions that fought in the war. It now numbers 2,000 men and women, trained with financial and practical support of the USA (Al Jazerra 04/03/2014). It has been praised as a well reformed national institution. There are concerns that Liberia could not afford the maintenance of such a well-armed or well-trained force, without US backing.

Corruption: The corrupt abuse of aid and natural resources has been seen as an important factor in both the continuation of conflict and the establishment of peace (HPG 04/2007). There has been progress in terms of controlling corruption, according to Transparency International, since incumbent President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf took office in 2006. Petty bribery remains widespread, 75% of Liberians reporting paying a bribe in the last year, (HRW 2013). Police and revenue collection are perceived to be the most corrupt, with respectively 61% and 52% of Liberians believing that all or

most of police and tax officials are involved in corruption (Transparency International 05/03/2012). There continues to be a high level of corruption and clientelism in the government.

Political Stakeholders and Background

Elections: Neither the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) nor the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) could translate their dominance during the civil war into political power in the post war government. The results have led observers to believe that Liberian elections have been less dominated by ethnic or tribal interests than in neighboring states. The result was a patchwork of party victories in the Senate and House of Representatives across the 15 counties, which did not even follow the nodes of popularity of the presidential candidates (Journal of Modern African Studies 2006). The 2005 elections saw the Unity Party (UP) win with 59.4% of votes. The 2011 elections saw another victory for the UP with 43.9% of the vote, as the opposition withdrew after the first round of voting, where they gained 32.7% of the vote. They cited alleged election and ballot fraud. These accusations were never proven. Since the end of the civil wars, the turnout for contested elections has ranged from between 60-75% of registered voters (BTI 2014, National Elections Commission 2011, National Elections Commission 2005).

Government – UP is the party of incumbent President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. It was founded in Grand Bassa in 1985 and first ran against Samuel Doe in the 1985 elections. In 2005, Sirleaf became Africa's first democratically elected female head of state. She is currently serving her second term. UP has only a minority in both houses and depends on support from various other parties to challenge the opposition coalition. The majority of UP support is based in the northeastern and central region, particularly Lofa, Gbarpolu, Margibi, and Bomi (Conciliation resources; BTI 2012; National Elections Commission 2015).

Main Opposition – The Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) was formed by ex-footballer George Weah for the 2005 presidential elections, where they lost a second round 'run-off' vote. It received support from ex-combatants and youths, who protested violently and clashed with police following UP's victory in the 2011 election. They are most strongly supported in Grand Gedeh, and have a high level of support in Monrovia and Montserrado county (Conciliation Resources; BTI 2012; National Elections Commission 2015).

Economy

Liberia has a low income and relies heavily on foreign assistance, receiving USD 571 million a year as of 2012. Civil war and government mismanagement destroyed much of Liberia's economy. The country achieved high growth during 2010-2013, due to favorable world prices for its commodities, with 8.1% growth in 2013 and 6.8% predicted for 2015. There is still a huge infrastructure deficit and considerable governance, institutional, and capacity constraints (African Development Bank 06/2013; African Development Bank 2014; Global Humanitarian Assistance 2014).

Budget: In 2013, government revenues were estimated at USD 465 million, comprising 23.5% of GDP. Expenditure was estimated at USD 521 million, leaving a budget deficit totalling 2.9% of GDP (CIA factbook).

Currency: The Liberian Dollar (LRD) current conversion rate is approximately USD 1.00 to LRD 92.50. The conversion rate in January 2014, prior the Ebola outbreak was approximately USD 1.00 to LRD 85.00. (Currency Converter 15/01/2015).

Unemployment: Reported levels of unemployment vary greatly. There was an estimated 80-85% unemployment rate between the end of the civil war and 2010. In 2010, new figures suggested that that youth unemployment was 4.5% and total unemployment was at 3.7% (ILO 2010). It is estimated that 78% of the labour force is engaged in 'vulnerable employment', without an assured salary (African Development Bank 04/2012). Under-employment is extremely high at over 60% (WFP 10/2010).

Key industries: Mining (iron ore), rubber processing, palm oil processing, timber, diamonds (CIA factbook).

Main export products: Rubber, timber, iron, diamonds, cocoa, coffee (CIA factbook).

Main partners (exports): China 24%, US 15.3%, Spain 11%, Algeria 6.5%, Thailand 4.5%, Malaysia 4.1%, France 4% (CIA factbook 2012).

Main partners (imports): South Korea 26.7%, China 24.4%, Singapore 23.2%, Japan 16.1% (CIA factbook 2012).

Main import products: Fuels, chemicals, machinery, transportation equipment, manufactured goods; foodstuffs (CIA factbook 2012).

Gross National Income per capita: USD 224 in 2012 (UNDP 2014).

Inflation was 7.6% in 2013 compared to 11.9% in Guinea and 10.3% in Sierra Leone (World Bank).

Remittances: The total amount of remittances for 2013 is estimated at USD 383 million, (IOM) which constitutes 19.7% of the Liberian GDP (World Bank). This is particularly high, compared to total remittances of the USD 61 million in Sierra Leone in 2013 (IOM).

Extractive sectors: Liberia is rich in natural resources, notably iron ore, diamonds, gold, timber and rubber. During the 14 years of war its contributions to GDP declined from 25% to 7% by 2011. It employed 2% of the labour force the same year. Oil exploration is underway after the discovery of significant quantities in February 2012 (African Development Bank 06/2013).

Services comprised 44% of GDP in 2011, led by trade and hotels, government services, real estate, transport, communication, and construction (African Development Bank 06/2013).

Agriculture is the dominant contributor to export trade and earnings and a source of livelihood for a greater number of people than any other sector. The sector is dominated by traditional subsistence farming systems (FAO 07/2012). As the contributions from extractive industries like mining has increased, the share of agriculture in GDP has been steadily falling, from 58% to 39% between 2009 and 2012. The annual growth of the agriculture sector has also fallen from 14% to 4% as the quick recovery following the end of the civil war has slowed. The agricultural sector suffers from low productivity, as technology has stagnated for decades (OECD 2008; FAO/WFP 05/01/2015). Rice is the main staple food grown, with cassava the second. Rubber, cocoa, palm oil and coffee make are important cash crops, accounting for 34% of the agricultural GDP in 2008 (FAO 2012).

Food imports: Liberia is more reliant on external supplies than Guinea and Sierra Leone, requiring up to 80% to satisfy domestic consumption requirements (FAO/WFP, 05/01/2015). Demand for livestock products greatly outstrips domestic supply. In 2009, some 11 million metric tons of meat valued at about USD 4.3 million were mainly imported from Guinea, Ivory Coast and Mali (FAO 07/2012).

Labour force per occupation: As of 2010, 48.9% of the labour force is employed in agriculture, 9.2% in industry, and 42% in services. 81.7% of the population is self-employed (World Bank).

Infrastructure

The Logistic cluster has produced a map detailing key infrastructure networks (LogCluster, 18/09/2014).

Airports: Two international airports, Spriggs Payne and Monrovia Roberts. Monrovia Roberts is the main airport, an hour outside the capital and has paved runways. There are 27 unpaved airstrips (CIA factbook; LogCluster, 14/08/2014).

Roadway: 10,600km of road, 657km of which are paved. The country has two main highways: the north-south highway, from Monrovia via Kakata to Nimba, and the west-east highway from the Sierra Leone border at Bo Waterside to Buchanan. Most

roads are inaccessible during the rainy season (May-October), particularly in Nimba, Lofa, Sinoe, Baporlu and Maryland counties. Less than a quarter are classified as all-weather roads. There is also a lack of proper bridges for water crossings (CIA factbook; LogCluster, 18/09/2014).

Railway: There are currently 429km of railway. There are two separate systems, with two lines from Monrovia and one line from Buchanan. They are owned and operated by private mining companies (LogCluster, 14/08/2014).

Ports: Three main ports, located in Monrovia, Buchanan and Greenville (LogCluster, 18/09/2014).

Electricity: In 2010, 4.1% of Liberians had access to electricity, 1% in rural areas compared to 7.5% in urban areas (World Bank 2010).

Mobile phone network: There is mobile coverage in every county, but in remote areas it is limited, particularly in the mountainous region in the northwest (PI 26/01/2015). Fixed-line service is extremely limited. Telephone coverage has been extended to a number of other towns and rural areas by four mobile-cellular network operators (CIA factbook).

Poverty

Liberia has one of the highest poverty rates in the world, ranking 174th of 187 countries in the 2012 Human Development index, despite substantial progress since 2003. Levels have decreased nationwide from 64% in 2007 to 56% in 2010, and poverty remains lowest in Monrovia (43%). Like Sierra Leone, (ACAPS 17/12/2014) the most dramatic change were in rural areas, 67.7% to 56.9%, compared to a slight increase in urban areas from 55.1% to 55.5% (World Bank 01/11/2012; African Development Bank 06/2013)

GDP per capita in the same time period increased from USD 160 to USD 271, an increase of 59%, compared to a sub-Saharan African average increase of 80% (World Bank 01/11/2012).

Correlation to other variables: The decline of poverty levels has been linked to the decline in average household (HH) size in rural areas, from 6.2 in 1984 to 5.0 in 2010. This was caused by declining fertility rates, from 6.9 in 1984 to 5.2 in 2010, and linked to women pursuing secondary and tertiary education and a higher rate of contraceptive use (African Development Bank 04/2012; World Bank 01/11/2012).

Low access to services is a main driver of poverty. 55% of the population cannot access an all season road within 5 km, and 27% cannot access one within 30km (African Development Bank 06/2013). Consequently, 64% of citizens are poor and lack

access to basic services including education and health facilities. This is limiting the impact of national economic growth on rural communities (WFP 10/2010).

Liberia has a history of natural resource-driven growth, characterised by low levels of employment and high levels of poverty. This 'growth without development', (World Bank 01/11/2012) is driven primarily by foreign direct investment (FDI) and the export of primary commodities, which also makes the economy vulnerable to external shocks.

Food security: In 2010 41% of Liberians were food insecure, and 13% were severely food insecure. Liberians rely heavily on markets for their basic food needs (WFP 10/2010), where rural HHs purchase 74% of their food and urban 94% (USAID 10/2014). Communities cite access to markets as the main food security concern, particularly in Lofa, Margibi, Maryland, River Kru, River Gee and Rivercess. They are most vulnerable during the rainy season (May-October) (WFP 10/2010). 30% of children in Monrovia are said to be suffering from chronic malnutrition, although 50% of the population in the metropolitan region of Monrovia have a plot of their own or tend a small kitchen garden (UN 2014). 58% of the population use wood for cooking (Cleancookstoves 2014).

Livelihoods: HHs spend 53% of their total income on food (50% in urban areas, 56% in rural areas). Overall, 48.5% of HHs list crop production as one of their four main income generating activities, followed by petty trading (34.7%), regular salaried employment (23%), palm oil production (13%), cash crop production (12.8%), unskilled/casual labour (12%) and internal support (10%). The proportion of rural HHs dependent on food crop production for their livelihood has more than doubled from 15% in 2006 to 33% in 2010. External social support, mainly in the form of remittances, is significantly higher in urban areas at 6.7% compared to 1% in rural areas (WFP 10/2010).

Health

For more information, please see our Briefing Note of the impact of the Ebola outbreak on Health

Health system: The Ministry of Health has a high degree of central control. It is responsible for policy, staffing, regulation, coordinating health activities, supervising the secondary level of health services, as well as financing health care services. The country health teams are responsible for operational planning, management of resources, supervision and implementation of health activities and primary services at the county level. Secondary level services were extended after the war to the reconstruction of a number of hospitals. JFK hospital in Monrovia was Liberia's only and remains the main referral hospital and provider of tertiary health care. The

majority of counties contain one referral hospital, as well as health centres and local clinics (WHO, CDC 2014).

Health expenditures: In 2012 total expenditure on health was 15.5% of GDP (WHO 2012). The most recent reports from 2006 indicate that there were 0.1 doctors and 2.7 nurses and midwives per 10,000 of the population, well below the regional average of 2.6 doctors and 12 nurses and midwives (WHO 2006). In 2012, the average HH spent 30.2% of total expenditure on private health and external support contributed 34.6% of health funding (World Bank).

Maternal health: 61% of births are delivered by a health care professional, with 56% taking place in a hospital facility. 25% of women in Monrovia received prenatal care from a doctor, compared to 15% for both rural and other urban areas.

Traditional health care: The traditional sector was the only reliable source of health care during the civil war. Recent improvements to the formal health care system have reduced reliance on this sector, but it remains an important source of care, particularly during birth (Kruk. Et al 2011). 35% of births are attended by traditional midwives. Grand Cape Mount has the highest percentage of deliveries by traditional birth attendants at 55% and Montserrado the lowest with 16%. In 2013, 2% of women received prenatal care from a traditional midwife or other unskilled provider, as compared with 17% of women in 2007 (LDHS 2013). Traditional healers are generally more accessible than formal health facilities. A survey by Oxford University in Nimba county demonstrated that 36% of people were within an hour's walk of a clinic, whilst 86% had a traditional healer in their village (Svoronos, Jallah Macauley and Kruk 2014)

Health information: The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MHSW) is responsible for collecting and producing reports on health in Liberia, (MHSW 2015). Radio is the most commonly accessed and widely available source of information. Community stations and UNMIL run public service programming targeting health issues (Audiencescapes).

Vaccination: In 2013, 55% of children aged 12-23 months were fully vaccinated. In 2014, 48% received all basic vaccinations by age 12 months. 60% of children in urban areas received all recommend vaccinations compared with 49% in rural areas. In the same year, the north western region saw the highest rate of 68% fully vaccinated, and the south eastern region had the lowest with 38%. Rivercess was the lowest performing county, with 33% coverage of basic vaccines. Coverage for measles and yellow fever vaccines was 74% and 73% nationwide, respectively. (LDHS 2013).

Female genital mutilation: 58% of women (aged 15-58 years) were estimated to have undergone genital mutilation, which is usually conducted through Sande secret

societies as part of a traditional ceremony or rite of passage into adolescence (UNICEF 09/2012). It is most commonly practised in the north, northwest, and central regions (BMZ 2012).

Malaria: 27,793 instances of malaria were reported per 100,000 Liberians in 2012. 33% of all deaths and 41% of deaths among children under 5 are attributable to malaria. It is the leading cause of death for children under 5. Malaria prevalence is highest in Grand Bassa (48.8%), Margibi (42.7%), and Grand Cape Mount (42.1%) (LDHS 2013, WHO 2012, WHO 2010).

HIV: HIV prevalence among adults aged 15-49 rose from 1.5% in 2007 to 1.9% in 2013. The HIV prevalence rate among women of the age group is 2% and among men its 1.7%. HIV prevalence is higher in urban areas than rural areas at 2.6% and 0.8% respectively. 75% of both men and women claim to use condoms. There were 30,000 people living with HIV in 2013.

Measles: The last reported measles outbreak was in early 2011. Nimba county was the worst affected. The outbreak was exacerbated by 32,000 refugees who fled political violence in Ivory Coast in December 2010, and whose immunization status was not known (UNICEF 02/2011). UNICEF, in partnership with the MHSW, conducted a mass vaccination campaign (UNICEF 01/02/2011).

Lassa fever: In West Africa, Lassa fever is endemic, with between 100,000 and 300,000 Lassa virus (LASV) infections and approximately 5,000 deaths annually in the region. These figures are flawed due to poor surveillance. In some areas of Liberia, it is known that 10-16% of people admitted to hospitals every year have Lassa fever, and one study found as many as 18% of the populations are infected (CDC 2014, Journal of Emerging Infectious Disease 2010).

Nutrition: In 2013, 32% of children under 5 were chronically malnourished, 6% acutely malnourished and 15% underweight. 66% of women and 80% of men have a body mass index (BMI) in the normal range. River Gee County has the highest prevalence of chronically malnourished (43%) and underweight (25%) children, while Bomi, Grand Bassa, and Rivercess have the highest prevalence of acute malnutrition (9%) (LDHS 2013).

WASH

Water supply: In 2013, 73% of HHs have access to an improved source of drinking water; 85.8% in urban areas and 56.6% in rural areas (LDHS 2013). 50.1% of improved water points are functional throughout the dry season. The counties with the highest

coverage are Montserrado (98%) and Bomi (95%), and Rivercess (47%) and Bong (54%) the lowest (Liberia Waterpoint Atlas 2011). Over 80% of all rural water points in Liberia use the Afridev handpump (WSP 2011). In urban areas, 64% of people get their water from a protected well, and 14.5% from a piped system (GoL 2013). A third of water points built since 2004 are non-functional in 2011 (WSP 2011).

Water pollution: 90% of deaths linked to diarrhoea are directly attributed to poor water, sanitation and hygiene (WSP 2013). In 2012, E. coli was present in 58% of Monrovia's water due to public defecation (Local Media 24/08/2013). Mining has been linked to river pollution (GoL 2013), as has the rubber industry (IRIN 2009). In 2005, Liberia had one of Africa's highest amounts of renewable water, over 71,000 m³/inhabitant/year. It is estimated that agriculture used 57% of withdrawn water, followed by municipalities at 28% and industry at 15% (Aquastat 2005).

Sanitation: In 2013, 45% of HHs with no toilet facilities, a decrease from 55% in 2007, 24% in urban areas and 73% in rural areas (LDHS 2013).

Solid waste management is limited to Monrovia and is run by the Monrovia City Corporation (GoL 2013). In 2007, 55% of the capitals solid waste was not being collected, the remainder was being discarded in the wetlands, rivers and streams around Monrovia (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 2009, Innis 2015). Little information is available on rural or other urban settings.

Media and Communication

Ownership: Ownership of a television is rare and is mainly restricted to Monrovia. 49% of urban HHs own a TV compared to 10% in rural areas, making a national total of 14% in 2013 (Audiencescapes). 59% of HHs own a radio, rising to 67% in urban areas, and decreasing to 49% in rural areas. Mobile phone ownership has increased from 29% in 2007 to 65% in 2013, with 82% and 42% ownership in rural and urban settings respectively.

TV: There are 3 private TV stations, with satellite TV service available (CIA factbook). In 2008, 62% of the urban population had access to television on a weekly basis. In rural areas, the number drops to 22% (Audiencescapes).

Internet Utilisation: 4.6% of Liberians can access the internet as of 2013 through seven internet providers (CIA factbook, World Bank).

Radio: In 2007 there were one state-owned radio station and 15 independent radio stations broadcasting in Monrovia. 25 local stations operated across the rest of Liberia, with two international broadcasters available (CIA factbook). UNMIL Radio is the most popular radio network on a national scale, and is the only domestic station

with a national presence. There is over 90% access to radio across every region (Audiencescapes).

Newsprint: 44% of people living in urban areas read newspapers on a weekly basis, compared to 22% in rural communities. Radio use is common with 94% urban and 91% of rural (Audiencescapes). The top three papers in are the Daily Observer, the New Democrat and the Inquirer (Liberia Media Centre 2008).

Journalists and media outlets are subject to attack during elections, but press freedom is considered of a higher standard than in other West African nations. In 2010, Liberia enacted West Africa's first freedom of information law, but its implementation has been extremely slow. In 2012, President Sirleaf endorsed the Declaration of Table Mountain, which calls on African governments to abolish criminal defamation laws, but in 2013 no such abolition had taken place. The compensation provided for defamation cases is often excessive, leading journalists to self-censor. A 2008 bill, that would establish an independent broadcast regulator with safeguards against government intervention, has yet to be passed (Freedom House 2013).

Foreign Relations

UN: UNMIL replaced the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and took over peacekeeping responsibilities from ECOMIL in 2003, and continues to operate in Liberia. It is mandated to assist the Government of Liberia in the consolidation of peace and stability and in the protection of civilians. It comprises military, police and civilian personnel. It is being scaled down, following a UNSC resolution. It had around 9,000 personnel in 2013 (UNMIL 2015, Congressional Research Service 2010)

ECOWAS: ECOWAS played an important role during both of Liberia's civil wars, brokering the peace agreements and providing peacekeepers throughout the conflict (The Advocates for Human Rights 2008). Their armed intervention was named ECOMIL and was led by the Nigerians. They entered Monrovia in 2003, following the rebel siege, and helped implement the ceasefire in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. It was soon replaced and absorbed by UNMIL (Congressional Research Service 2010)

Regional relations: Former President Taylor provided a great deal of support to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) during the Sierra Leone civil war. He provided arms and allowed them to use Liberia as a logistical base for the operations across the border in Sierra Leone and Guinea. Guinea supported rebel groups, launching raids on Liberia from its territory. Guinea also increased support to LURD in the lead up to their siege of Monrovia in 2003, which was followed by the

peace settlement in Accra and the exiling of Taylor (Conciliation Resources). The border between Liberia and Sierra Leone was officially reopened in 2007 and a non-aggression pact was signed in the same year (US Department of State 2015, AFP 07/06/2007). During both the Liberian and Ivorian civil wars (2002-07 and 2010-11), there were cross border attacks by various armed groups. Refugees sought asylum across the border. According to UNHCR, as of January 2015, there were 52,790 Ivorian refugees in Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Maryland, River Gee and Montserrado, and several hundred Sierra Leoneans (Global Humanitarian Assistance 2012). In April 2013, bilateral negotiations between the governments of Liberia and Ivory Coast, facilitated by the UN, led to a peace agreement and the opening of the Liberian borders. By June 2013, a voluntary repatriation programme was under way and 555 people were due to be repatriated (Conciliation Resources 06/2013, UNHCR 2015).

US: The US has long been involved in Liberian affairs, since its independence. The two nations had a fractured relationship during the civil war, though it allegedly provided support for National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), which was led by Taylor. Since 2003, it has been a major donor, active in a variety of sectors, (US Department of State 2015). It has been particularly involved in the training and rehabilitation of Liberia's security forces, where it provided USD 300 million worth of assistance (Al Jazeera 04/03/2014). The USA provided 23% (USD 272 million) of all humanitarian assistance to the country between 2003-2012 (Global Humanitarian Assistance 2012).

Humanitarian and Development Stakeholders

Liberia received a great deal of humanitarian assistance and attention in the immediate aftermath of the civil war. Assistance peaked at USD 186 million in 2004, when it was the eighth largest recipient in the world. The initial focus by the humanitarian and development community was peacebuilding, Security Sector Reform (SSR), and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), and ensuring the transition to free elections in 2005. For a decade since the civil war, the majority of development efforts have been aimed at tackling the high rate of poverty in Liberia, through institution building, infrastructure development, education, and health, as well as efforts to tackle endemic food insecurity.

Most of the development projects in Liberia are financed by the United States, World Bank, United Nations, European Union and China. Concerns have been raised that the Liberian Government has become dependent on donor support to address its development needs, and UNMIL to ensure security. Liberia is still considered a fragile state, and there are doubts that the state has the ability to operate without international support. This has led to a focus in recent years on developing state

governance and basic service delivery (Poverty Reduction Strategy 04/2008, ECHO 2013, IBIS 04/2012, Global Humanitarian Assistance 2012).

Perceptions: There was a high level of mistrust between the Government, international actors, and the local population in years following the civil war. There are frequent complaints about mismanagement of funds, and that it was difficult to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate costs. This corruption however, has also entered the aid and development system, with local staff members accused by the communities they work in of encouraging the same clientelism within their own projects as exists in the government (HPG 04/2007). The relationship between these communities and the government has improved recently, along with a growing sense of civic pride (PI 01/2015).

IDPs: Up to 23,000 (civil war from 1990-2004; post-election violence in March and April 2011; unclear how many have found durable solutions) (CIA Factbook 2013).

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Seasonal and Critical Events Calendar

Key seasonal data	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Average rainfall precipitation 1990-2009 (mm)	22.8	49.7	90.3	152.6	238.8	333.5	315.4	332.6	377.4	271.8	115.7	46
Average temperature 1990-2009 (Celsius)	25.4	26.2	26.9	26.6	26.3	25.5	24.3	24.2	24.9	25.4	25.8	25.4
School year												
Rainy season					Main rainy season							
Lean season						Lean season						
Critical events	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Elections (presidential & parliamentary)								2011		2005 / 2011		
Floods						2010	2008 / 2014	2007				
Measles*	2011											
Lassa fever*									2013			
Yellow fever*		2004		2008	2009			2001 / 2000				
Chickenpox*			2012									
Cholera						2003			2002			
	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec

* Epidemics: month of the start of the outbreak

Timeline of Major Events

1847

Liberia becomes an independent Republic.

1989

Charles Taylor leads the NPFL invasion of Nimba County from the Ivory Coast.

1990

Doe is killed by an independent NPFL group. ECOWAS begins peacekeeping operations in Monrovia.

1995

A peace agreement is signed by the temporary Liberian government and rebel groups.

1999

Liberia accused of supporting RUF rebels in Sierra Leone. LURD launches an invasion from Guinea.

2005

The first post-war elections are held. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of the Unity Party is elected president.

2008

Liberia conducts its first census since 1984.

2010

Creditor countries pardon \$1.2bn worth of debt owed by Liberia.

2014

Liberia announces emergency measures to combat outbreak of Ebola virus.

1926

The Government of Liberia grants land to the Firestone rubber company.

1980

Samuel Doe seizes power in a military coup. President Tolbert is executed. The constitution is suspended.

1991

An Interim Government of National Unity is established, sponsored by ECOWAS. Taylor establishes a rival government.

1997

Taylor wins the presidency with 75 per cent of the vote.

2003

ECOWAS deploys peacekeepers to Monrovia. Taylor is indicted for war crimes in Sierra Leone and resigns. The Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement is signed. UNMIL peacekeeping mandate begins.

2006

The Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission is setup to investigate human rights abuses committed between 1979 and 2003.

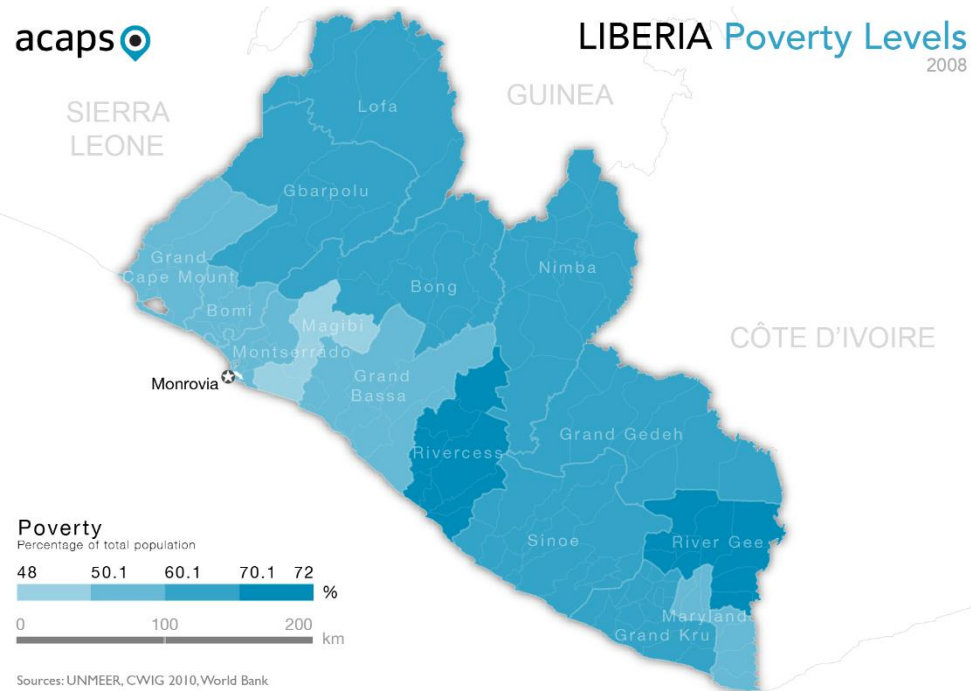
2009

UN Security Council votes to extend mandate into 2010 due to 2011 elections.

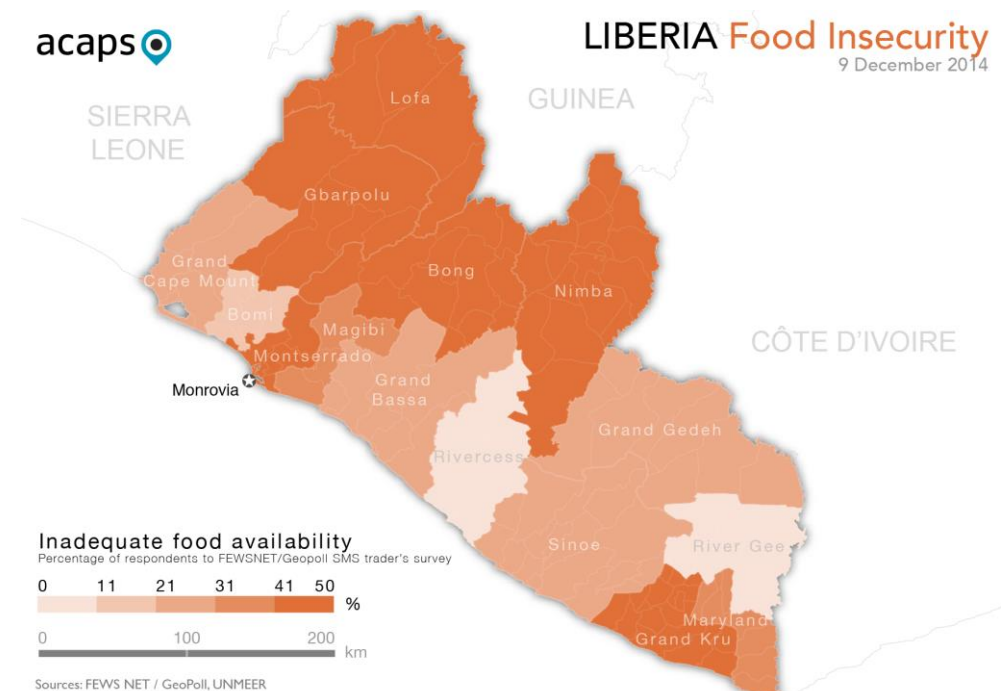
2011

President Sirleaf is re-elected. Her main rival boycotts the second round.

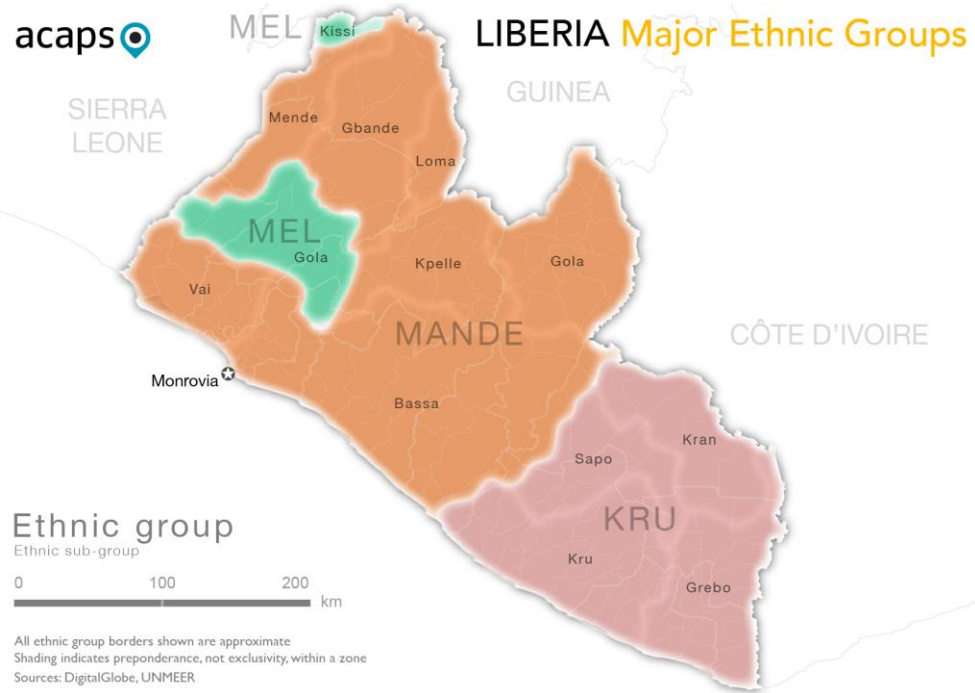
Levels of Poverty by Districts in 2008



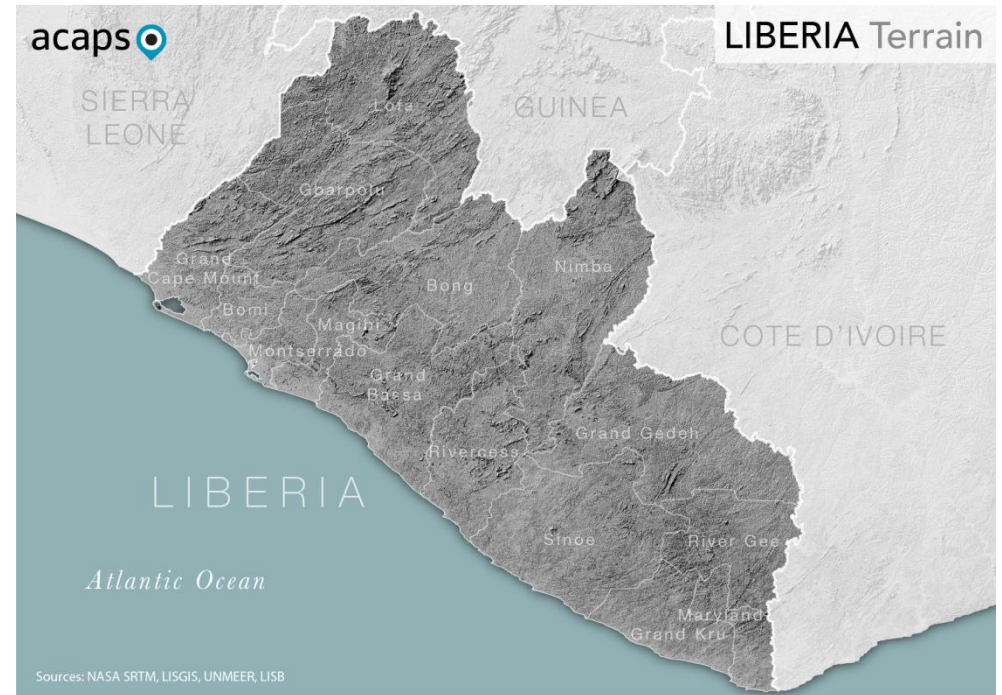
Prevalence of Food Insecurity by Districts 2011



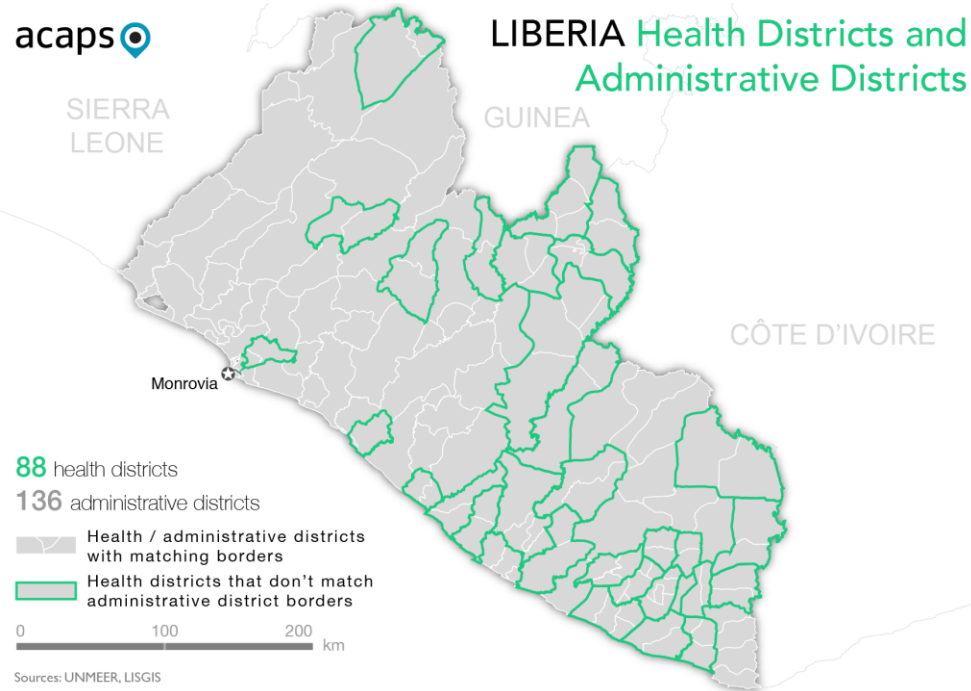
Ethnic Groups



Terrain



Health Districts and Administrative Districts



Education Districts and Administrative Districts

