



(Clockwise rotation from the upper left) A newborn refugee child and her mother with a proof of birth registration in PTP refugee camp; A refugee children checking out the candidates for the leadership elections in PTP refugee camp; International Women's Day Celebration in Bahn Refugee Camp; Senior Protection Officer addressing Ivorian refugees in PTP refugee camp

PROTECTION SITUATION REPORT

Covering the period: March 01-31 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

After nearly nine months of suspension of voluntary repatriation for Ivorian refugees due to the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak, the governments of Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and UNHCR agreed to resume the voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees as of 6 April 2015 during a fourth meeting of Tripartite Commission in Abidjan on 12 and 13 March 2015. UNHCR Liberia aims to repatriate 15,000 Ivorian refugees by the end of the year 2015. International Women's day was celebrated in all refugee camps under the global theme: "**Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity: Picture it!**" and the national theme: "**Women Rising Beyond Ebola**". Refugee leadership elections were held in PTP and Little Wlebo refugee camps on 7 and 28 March 2015 respectively, both of which have resulted in installation of new leaderships by peaceful and democratic means. The Supreme Court of Liberia has remanded the mercenary case involving seven (7) Ivorian refugees to Criminal Court B for retrial. The seven (7) refugees were arrested in 2013 for allegedly having engaged in mercenary activities in Côte d'Ivoire.

UNHCR Protection Staff had a two-day Retreat on 3 and 4 March 2015. The Retreat sought to facilitate the sharing of good practices, achievements and challenges to enhance protection of and assistance to the UNHCR's persons of concern and brought together 25 UNHCR Protection Staff, 3 LRRRC officials and 9 UNHCR's partner staff across the Liberia operation. Liberia's countdown toward eradication of EVD since the week of 1 March 2015 stopped by a newly confirmed case on 20 March 2015. The case has resulted in the death of the individual on 27 March 2015. There has been no new confirmed case since the week of 29 March 2015.

1. Persons of Concern

Liberia is currently hosting 40,057 persons of concern to UNHCR, including refugees, asylum-seekers and other persons of concern. The Ivorian refugee population stood at 38,121 – an increase of 215, mainly due to reactivation of individuals in Little Wlebo refugee camp whose cases were inactivated in December 2014 for no-show during the distribution of food and non-food throughout the EVD outbreak. They showed up during the January 2015 food distribution and were screened by a Joint Task Force to establish their continued presence in the refugee camp prior to the reactivation. The breakdown of the Ivorian population per locations is as below:

	Location	Population	Total	Percentage
Refugee camps	Bahn (Nimba)	5,314	29,358	77%
	PTP (Grand Gedeh)	15,292		
	Little Wlebo (Maryland)	8,752		
Communities	Nimba	435	8,763	23%
	Grand Gedeh	4,736		
	Maryland	1,521		
	River Gee	1,786		
	Monrovia	285		
Total			38,121	

2. Registration

Refugee ID card distribution in PTP refugee camp: Registration staff in Sub-Office Zwedru sorted out over 3,673 refugee ID cards received from Branch Office Monrovia and commenced distribution in the PTP refugee camp.

3. Refugee Status Determination (RSD)

There were no asylum claims adjudicated by the eligibility committee in this month.

4. Access to Asylum/Border Monitoring

Land conflict in Bloléquin, western Côte d'Ivoire: UNHCR Côte d'Ivoire reported that clashes between Baoule and Burkinabe over land-tenure in the classified forest of Goindébé (Bloléquin) resulted in one death and the internal displacement of 151 individuals in 33 households. UNHCR field office Guiglo organized an evaluation mission to assess the needs of the internally displaced population and to meet with them, as well with the local authorities and humanitarian actors to determine the best course of action to follow. There has been no report on cross-border displacement to Liberia in relation to the incident.

Movement of former Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire demanding resettlement: On Tuesday March 24 2015, UNHCR Field Office Harper together with the County Coordinator of LRRRC conducted a joint border monitoring and follow-up mission to Duokudi border where some twenty (20) alleged Liberian former refugees including women and children were reported to be stranded at the Ivorian side of the border. In a follow-up with UNHCR Field Office Tabou, it was confirmed that this group was part of a bigger group of over 42 Liberian

former refugees who had staged a sit-in demonstration in front of the UNHCR Field Office Tabou for a couple of weeks demanding resettlement to a third country. After series of attempts to engage the group in discussions and counseling sessions by the Protection unit of the Field Office, the group became violent and the security forces were called to restore order and ensure safety of staff. The group then departed Tabou and headed to Abidjan to continue with the demonstration. However, they were intercepted by the Ivorian security forces in San Pedro and were brought to the Duokudi-Prolo border, apparently with the aim of deporting them to Liberia. The group is reported to be still on the Ivorian soil at the border. The County Officials were informed and LRRRC and UNHCR continue monitoring of the situation.

5. Protection Highlights (Achievements and Challenges)

Fourth meeting of the Tripartite Commission in Abidjan: UNHCR and the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia held fourth meeting of the Tripartite Commission and discussed in concrete terms the health and security conditions toward resumption of voluntary repatriation. The parties also reviewed the implementation status of practical issues discussed at the third meeting of the Technical Working Group on 27 and 28 March 2014 in Abidjan. The parties agreed to engage health ministries and WHO in the process to define operational procedures to control and monitor the health status of the returnees. In view of the recent security incidents in the South-Western Côte d'Ivoire, the parties also took note of the security related recommendations by the third quadripartite meeting of the Governments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and Operation of the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI); the reinforcement of cooperation for peace and security consolidation through regular cross-border meetings, confidence building measures, and sharing of information between the security agencies of both countries. The third quadripartite meeting also agreed that the Second Session of the Joint Council of Chiefs and Elders Meeting would take place in May 2015 in the Western Ivorian city of Guiglo, which would further boost interest in return among Ivorian refugee population in Liberia.

Supreme Court's remanding of the mercenary cases involving seven (7) Ivorian refugees: The Supreme Court of Liberia has remanded the case involving seven (7) Ivorian refugees to Criminal Court B for retrial. The seven (7) refugees were arrested in 2013 for allegedly engaging in mercenary activities. There is no possibility that the retrial will be conducted in this term of court as this term ends in April 2015. Meanwhile, two (2) refugees released have been on bail in Monrovia. Their return to Grand Gedeh to join their families is pending clearance from the police. The two (2) refugees have been detained without charge and have never been sent to a court.

Ivorian refugees refouled returned to Little Wlebo refugee camp: One of the individuals who were arrested, refouled and detained in Côte d'Ivoire in February 2014 has returned back to Liberia on 15 March 2015 to seek continued international protection. He was released from prison in Abidjan on 24 December 2015 but had to stay in Tabou due to medical problem.

6. Protection monitoring

a) Monitoring of detention centers

UNHCR Field Office Harper Protection Unit along with LRRRC continued the Joint Monitoring of the Harper Central Prison Center, Fish Town Central Prison as well as all police holding cells in Maryland and River Gee Counties. There still remain three male refugees who have been incarcerated at the Harper Prison for Theft of Property (2) and Statutory Rape (1). While two (2) inmates who were found guilty of committing theft of property have been serving their prison terms, the person who allegedly committed statutory rape has been pending trial at the Fourth Judicial Circuit Court of Maryland County since July 2014.

On March 17, 2015, officers of the Liberia National Police (LNP) assigned in the Little Wlebo refugee camp arrested a Liberian man in the Little Wlebo refugee camp who escaped from Harper Central prison after a reported jailbreak. The escapee was incarcerated at the Harper Central Prison after being accused of raping a refugee woman in 2012. The escapee has since been handed over to the Harper Central Prison authorities.

b) Protection of refugee children

The child protection team of SEARCH reunified a 15 year-old Ivorian separated child with her biological parents in Block L in the Little Wlebo refugee camp. The separated child initially fled to Liberia during the height of the Ivorian civil conflict without her biological parents and has been placed in a foster family. Her biological parents were identified through tracing efforts and they were happily reunited in the camp.

c) Prevention of and response to SGBV

International Women's Day: The International Women's Day was celebrated in all refugee camps. In Bahn refugee camp, indoor program was held in the Women's Center in the camp on Monday, March 9, 2015 and a total of 107, including 11 male refugees participated in the programme. During her speech, the refugee chairlady lamented that there have been limited number of female representation in the camp leadership structure, which has led to their poor participation in the decision-making process in the camp. She encouraged women to participate in any upcoming elections in the camp to improve their participation in decisions affecting their lives. Other speakers encouraged women to support education of their girl child and to sensitize the population on the negative effect and consequence of SGBV.



International Women's Day Celebration in Little Wlebo Refugee Camp

48 female participants from 12 blocks (four per block) were selected to create awareness on Ebola prevention and response, empowerment, the importance of women and girls Education and the risk of not reporting SGBV cases to responsible partners during the outdoor activity in their block. These messages were also printed on poster sheets, banner and T-shirts.

At the end of the program, the 48 vulnerable women received 6 soaps and 25 pieces of cooking cube as a gift. The soaps distributed were purchased from the refugee women trained by ADRA in the Livelihood Program in 2014 as a means of empowering women and encouraging them to produce more soap.

In Little Wlebo refugee camp, the official celebration was held on Monday 9 March 2015 with participation of the refugee population, service providers and local government authorities. In the keynote speech delivered by Ms. Condeh Jarbo-Keita, Maryland County Gender Coordinator of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, she challenged the refugee women to rise for their rights and to make use of opportunities and training that are available in the camp. She urged the refugee women to “Make it happen” for anything they believe in. On the national theme, “Women Rising beyond Ebola”, the Gender County Coordinator noted that women have played a huge role in the fight against the spread of the deadly Ebola Virus and they should continue to ensure that the county including the camp remained above Ebola.

In PTP refugee camp, the official celebration was held on 10 March 2015.

A safe house for SGBV survivors in Nimba County: In Nimba County, there were challenges in finding a suitable safe house, notwithstanding one has been found in Bahn Town. The fencing of the house was completed on March 17, 2015. Refugee contractors were hired to construct the fence. The safe house will be ready to receive survivors from April 1, 2015 after the completion of all necessary arrangements.

SGBV refresher training on SGBV for SGBV partners in PTP refugee camp: On 25 March 2015, the Save the Children held a refresher training for UNHCR partners providing SGBV services to refugees in the camp. Topics discussed were the SGBV referral pathway and its significance, roles and responsibilities of relevant SGBV actors, identification of the present referral pathway in the camp and strategies for improving the system. 21 participants from LRRRC, UNHCR, Care, AHA SCI and ADRA attended the training.

7. Durable solutions

Voluntary Repatriation of Ivorian refugees: In response to the decision by both Ivorian and Liberian governments to resume voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees residing in Liberia as of 6 April 2015, all field offices commenced preparation toward this end; preparation of volrep pre-manifests, assessment of hygiene and health facilities at border crossing points and the roads' condition. In Nimba County, the team in Saclepea, with the help of Ivorian refugees verified spellings of the names to correct them prior to the volrep. The health partner AHA carried out preparations for yellow fever vaccination for individuals who have signed up for volrep.

In Grand Gedeh, Sub-Office Zwedru Field Protection Team conducted meetings to inform Ivorian refugees of resumption of voluntary repatriation in both refugee camp and communities.

8. Access to education

Class attendance dropped in ECCD in Bahn refugee camp: In Bahn refugee camp, class attendance among the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) pupils was observed to be dropping. According to the school administration, the decline in class attendance among the ECCD is due to the lack of school feeding. Class attendance in primary was 738 (366 male, 372 female) during this month. Meanwhile, the students who had been regularly absent were being identified so as to reach their parents to encourage their children to go to school.

A day care center in Little Wlebo Secondary School: As some of the female students in the secondary school are teenage mothers, it became necessary to open a day care center adjacent to the secondary school to enable them keep their children within close proximity during school hours. The Fin Church Aid (FCA) has already recruited and train caretakers, but the day care center is yet to be constructed. There are currently 10 teenage mothers who would benefit from the day care center once it becomes operational.

Adult literacy program in Little Wlebo refugee camp: In response to the need and wishes of some of the adult refugee women and girls to learn how to read and write, the Field office Harper has requested the education partners (SEARCH and FCA) to meet with the refugee population and develop a self-help adult literacy programme for the refugees. UNHCR has been closely working with SEARCH, FCA and ADRA toward this end. Volunteers for the adult literacy programme have been identified.

Code of Conduct Training for teachers in Little Wlebo refugee camp: On Monday, 23 March 2015, SEARCH conducted a refresher training on Code of Conduct and Security for 46 teachers from the primary schools and ECCD in the Little Wlebo Refugee Camp.

9. Shelter

In Bahn refugee camp, a total of 164 shelters were repaired with sticks and tarpaulin during this month. This brings up 412 shelters repaired since the resumption of repairs in February 2015.

10. Livelihood/Self-reliance

Soap making beneficiaries of 2014 cohort in Bahn refugee camp received cash LD\$ 112,500.00, equivalent to 1,323.5USD (1USD equivalent to 85.00 LD) from the sale of 75 cartoons of soap they made during the training. The amount was divided among three groups comprised of mostly women. The sale was conducted by ADRA senior management in Monrovia.

11. Community Participation:

In PTP refugee camp, the refugee leadership elections took place on 7 March 2015. The process was supervised by the Government Refugees Agency, LRRRC. Other partners served as committee's members and UNHCR served as an observer. The elections were conducted among the blocks leaders for the positions of Central Chairman, Co-Chairman, General Secretary, Financial Secretary, and Treasurer. Elections were conducted on secret ballots except two positions (Treasurer and Co-Chairman) which were conducted on white ballots. Installation of the new refugee leadership for PTP camp is expected for Monday, 6 April 2015.

In Little Wlebo refugee camp, the elections took place on 28 March 2015 after about two weeks of campaign for the elections. Out of the 3,398 eligible voters, a total of 1,570 voters or 46.2% casted their votes in the election. Out of six (6) positions, female candidates were elected for two positions, including the president position.



Refugee washing their hands at the entrance of the waiting area for election



Refugees taking temperature checkup before passing to the polling center

**Compilation of protection reports from:
SO Zwedru/FO Saclepea and Harper/BO Monrovia
UNHCR Liberia**