



ECONOMIC GROWTH, AGRICULTURE, AND TRADE

Liberia's Women to Share in Postwar Aid



Sahana Dharmapuri, USAID

These female ex-combatants, who came out of the bush a few weeks before the USAID team arrived in Monrovia, ended up in an interim care center run by Samaritan's Purse, an NGO. They are slated to stay for nine months, and receive healthcare, food, education, and vocational skills training. The center is not USAID-funded.

USAID wants to ensure that \$200 million in U.S. assistance for Liberia's reconstruction includes benefits for women and avoids problems encountered in other demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration programs.

A new assessment by the Office of Women in Development (WID) is concerned that USAID-funded programs in Liberia reach women and children who were abducted and forced into the conflict as fighters, porters, or "bush wives."

Commissioned by USAID/Liberia, the assessment team first visited two-year-old reintegration programs in Sierra Leone to find lessons learned and new approaches to reintegrating women and children into society.

Liberia's 15 years of war have destroyed much of the country's economy and infrastructure. A quarter of a million people died, thousands fled the country, and nearly half the population—some 1.3 million people—were displaced. Many were forced into the conflict against their wills.

The assessment team looked at the capacity of communities and NGOs in Liberia to take in ex-combatants. Ideally, they would stay four to six weeks in interim care centers, get medical care and counseling, and prepare to return home. Once home, the goal is to enroll them in vocational training or other educational programs.

The team paid particular attention to accelerated education programs—after-school or weekend programs that teach reading, writing, and arithmetic to teenagers and adults who missed crucial years of schooling.

Since enrollment in reintegration pro-

grams typically requires ex-combatants to give up their weapons, women are often left out because they are not necessarily armed, said Sahana Dharmapuri, women's legal rights advisor and gender specialist at WID.

In Sierra Leone, for instance, only about 4,000 women were among the 76,000 beneficiaries of national government disarmament and reintegration programs. To address women's needs, other programs were started.

In Liberia, the assessment team found that a significant number of former child and women combatants suffer from drug addiction, have little or no education, and have been sexually abused and tortured. Their families and communities are reluctant to take them back, and some are unwilling to return home.

As USAID/Liberia prepares to roll out ex-combatant programs, it will keep the findings of the assessment team in mind, said USAID/Liberia Coordinator Lowell Lynch.

"We need to get things up and running, just as soon as the money is available," Lynch said.

At a U.N. conference February 5-6, more than \$500 million was pledged, including the \$200 million in U.S. aid.

Administrator Natsios told the donors' conference that an immediate developmental goal is "addressing the effects of rampant violence against women and taking steps to ensure that women are equal partners in the new Liberia." ★

www.usaid.gov Keyword: WID

WID Fellow Sahana Dharmapuri contributed to this article.

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

Fritz's Logistics Savvy Improves Relief Delivery

When natural disasters and war leave people in urgent need of food, medicine, and shelter, relief agencies around the world scramble to gather up supplies of corn, biscuits, blankets, and plastic sheeting.

Now aid groups are being helped by Lynn C. Fritz, who is applying his skills to delivering humanitarian relief, after decades spent building up the ability of his global logistics firm to deliver and track freight and packages.

After Fritz sold his company to UPS in 2001, he created the Fritz Institute to strengthen the infrastructure of public and private humanitarian organizations. It is funded to USAID through the Global Development Alliance.

"The Fritz Institute brings cutting-edge practices, resources, and the ability to convene stakeholders."
CRIS MUYUNDA, USAID/ZAMBIA

The institute brings CEOs and chief logistics officers from Fortune 500 companies to improve relief operations in natural disasters.

Fritz Institute sent teams to Zambia twice in the last six months to explore ways to improve the country's humanitarian relief infrastructure. Team members met with the USAID mission, the NGO community, and President Levy Mwanawasa, and also brought together NGO and business leaders.

The private sector was seen to be playing an important role in coping with emergencies, including bringing in food through commercial markets, while NGOs were seen as more effective in delivering food

rations or relief.

At the invitation of the USAID mission, the Fritz Institute sent its chief logistics officer to Ethiopia in early February to help improve the way relief has been supplied during that country's enduring food emergency.

The institute and the mission also agreed to develop ways to improve deliveries of medicines and other health supplies to rural clinics.

The Fritz Institute has supported research and curriculum development relating to complex emergencies at Georgetown, Oxford, and other universities. It has also funded case studies on humanitarian response at business schools and the development of a midcareer training program for NGO logistics professionals.

Private sector experts sent by the institute are evaluating and exploring alternatives to the logistics system of the Agency's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance.

The institute's chief technology officer is also working with USAID to develop a website that tracks the Agency's stock of food and other emergency relief commodities.

The institute has created a sophisticated web-based system with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to track commodities for the World Food Program, Red Cross, and other relief groups.

The new system could reduce response times and save lives. After a hurricane or another emergency, the Fritz Institute's system—Humanitarian Logistics Software—allows an organization to issue an appeal and take in donations, either cash or in-kind, and manage the flow of funds and commodities down to the ground level. ★

www.fritzinstitute.org



Wally Lee, Fritz Institute

The Fritz Institute is concerned with improving relief logistics. It has been reviewing processes and activities of several humanitarian organizations in southern Africa. The photograph shows villagers measuring and distributing monthly rations—50 lbs of maize and one scoop of beans—to each family.