

Statement for the Record by Roger P. Winter Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance

U.S. Government Assistance to the People of Liberia

**Before the Committee on International Relations
Subcommittee on Africa
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The people of Liberia have suffered greatly over the past decade. Civil war has led to the deaths of an estimated 200,000 or more people, mostly innocent civilians. This conflict has left many Liberians without food and water, vulnerable to disease, and in great need of assistance.

The U.S. Government has stepped forward to help. We have contributed to date \$35.5 million in humanitarian assistance to meet the emergency needs of Liberians.

In response to the current crisis, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) has provided \$22.5 million to save lives and alleviate suffering in Liberia. The U.S. Government is responding to proposals by nongovernmental organizations and to the activities identified by the United Nations (UN) as most urgent and appropriate. The United States leads the way internationally in responding to this crisis, contributing nearly one-third of the total amount requested by the UN.

On July 20, USAID deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to the region. The eight-member DART includes technical experts on food, health, water and sanitation, abuse prevention and protection for internally displaced persons (IDPs), and refugees. The team's purpose is to make sure that the U.S. identifies and meets the critical needs of Liberians. The DART accomplishes this through a variety of activities, including assessing the humanitarian situation; coordinating with relevant parties in the region, including the U.S. military and the UN; providing technical assistance to the humanitarian response; identifying appropriate U.S. Government humanitarian activities; and providing timely information to decision makers in Washington.

In response to needs identified by the DART, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has provided nearly \$6 million to international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies for programs targeting health, water, sanitation, emergency nutrition, shelter, coordination and logistical support of humanitarian

assistance, and protection on behalf of internally displaced persons and war-affected populations. Over 81,000 children have now been vaccinated against measles, with more to be treated soon. Thousands of families who fled their homes in haste have received basic household supplies to help them cook and clean. Each day, more and more Liberians are served by OFDA assistance programs.

The military and economic disruptions created by this crisis have also resulted in extensive hunger across Liberia. USAID is providing generous food aid to feed those in need. USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP) is providing 24,480 metric tons (MT) of P.L. 480 Title II emergency food assistance, valued at \$16.7 million, to Liberia. The agricultural commodities include a combination of cereals, pulses, vegetable oil, and corn soya blend (CSB) for therapeutic and supplementary feeding. USAID emergency food assistance is provided to internally displaced persons, refugees and other vulnerable populations through direct distribution, food for work programs, maternal and child health programs, and supplementary and therapeutic feeding programs. USAID's food assistance program in Liberia is implemented through the World Food Program.

In addition to sustaining lives over the short run, USAID is implementing programs aimed at fostering a peaceful, thriving Liberia over the long run. Reinvigorating social services and cultivating safer communities are two of our primary aims. In conjunction with its main mandate of delivering primary health services to communities, the USAID Africa Bureau's NGO partner, Africare, has assisted local NGOs in providing ambulance services to various IDP settlements in the Monrovia area. Through its existing network of clinics and hospitals established prior to the current crisis, Africare will be able to re-start the delivery of sustainable primary health services to communities in Bong and Nimba Counties, outside Monrovia. USAID's Africa Bureau is working to strengthen the capacity of its local partners and prepare public information messages related to health, reconciliation and peace building. USAID's Community Peace-Building and Development project has been working in 100 villages and will expand over the next two years to target 300 communities. A key feature of the project will be the reintegration of ex-combatants into their home communities. Creating livable communities is the first step in rebuilding a vibrant society.

USAID has helped sponsor important public information campaigns. USAID assistance brought together a team of Liberian producers and radio personalities to produce a twice weekly radio program for ECOMIL, which was broadcast on several Liberian radio stations. This programming provided key information to Liberians concerning the deployment of peacekeepers and distribution of humanitarian relief. This project has been a unique example of interagency cooperation, with U.S. military information specialists, State Department staff, and USAID technical experts working together early in a humanitarian crisis to produce a public information campaign serving the purposes of all three agencies.

As is the case in many modern emergencies, the most limiting factor in the provision of humanitarian aid in Liberia continues to be security. Through the organizations it funds,

USAID will expand assistance to include newly accessible populations as security improves.

As this situation evolves, USAID will continue to assess, identify and meet emerging needs in Liberia. Our DART team is working with relief agencies and local authorities to ensure that the right aid is reaching the right people at the right time. The U.S. Government is committed to assisting our Liberian friends in their time of need.