



## History of USAID in Liberia



US development assistance to Liberia began in 1952 and continued to grow under the Mutual Security Act from 1953-1961 providing a total of \$167 million in today's dollars in aid.

Since its creation by the US Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, USAID has been working in Liberia on rural and urban development, health and education.

This US Government aid presence over 57 years (nearly six decades) in Liberia went uninterrupted except for a few years during turbulence in the 1990s and 2003

### USAID IN LIBERIA DURING ITS CIVIL WARS

The USAID program in Liberia responded to the emergency conditions of the civil war erupting in 1989, with the goal of seeking peace and stability and the installation of a democratic government. Initially, under the general coordination of United Nations (UN) agencies [[www.un.org](http://www.un.org)], USAID mainly concentrated on providing humanitarian relief to displaced populations and vulnerable groups. USAID developed a strategy for establishing a community-based reintegration program using funding from USAID's Office of Food for Peace, Office of Disaster Assistance, Office of Transition Initiatives, the Global Health Bureau, and the Africa Bureau. The program provided grants to international nongovernmental organizations and UN agencies to establish eight area reintegration and development centers to facilitate community revitalization and re-assimilation.

In September 1998, a violent conflict between government forces and an opposition group led to a six-month evacuation of American USAID personnel. There were incursions by dissidents in Lofa County in April and August 1999, resulting in the loss of vehicles, equipment and 1,200 tons of food aid, and the complete withdrawal of donors and NGOs from the county. The persistent

insecurity in Lofa County forced USAID and other donors to suspend any non-humanitarian assistance.

During the Charles Taylor regime, USAID resources were directed solely to supporting civil society organizations, particularly for primary health care, agriculture, and peace-building. In 1999, USAID was the largest contributor to Liberia's highly successful Polio Eradication Program, which vaccinated 528,000 children throughout the country. Unfortunately, work in rural areas was drastically curtailed in April 2003, when the warring factions began their serious campaign to oust Charles Taylor. Thus, the USAID program was inactive for much of 2003. As the fighting neared Monrovia, most of the international community evacuated, including USAID-financed NGOs. During this period, Monrovia experienced a serious humanitarian crisis, as thousands of people took control of housing and business compounds, schools, hospitals, and public buildings to seek refuge from the violence.

### USAID IN POST-CONFLICT LIBERIA

With the advent of peace in late 2003, USAID sought to support the comprehensive peace agreement with the objective to transition from emergency assistance to reintegration/recovery and democratization programs. In early 2004, Congress provided \$200 million in International Disaster and Famine Assistance funding, which enabled the U.S. to take a leadership role in the reconstruction of Liberia. Specific accomplishments which have supported Liberia's reconstruction include:

- Demobilization of 14,000 former Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), recruiting, vetting and training over 2,000 soldiers for the new AFL.
- Reestablishment of electricity services and streetlights to portions of Monrovia under the Emergency Power Program (EPP)—a GOL and multi-donor effort.
- Successful staffing and implementation of Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP) resulting in improved financial management systems and increased captured revenue.
- Overall economic and social reintegration support provided to an estimated 25,000 ex-combatants and war-affected persons, with psycho-social counseling and reconciliation resources and activities conducted in over 792 communities in eight counties.
- Consolidation of Liberia's new democracy by supporting the development of Liberia's Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and the organization and policy-level discussions of the Liberia Reconstruction and Development Committee (LRDC).
- Successful implementation of the Accelerated Learning Program where over one thousand trainers were trained to provide basic education instruction.
- Repatriation of remaining Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the return of 40,000 refugees from neighboring countries.
- Rehabilitation of administrative buildings, roads, schools, bridges, and health centers.

## USAID IN PRESENT DAY LIBERIA

U.S. assistance has evolved through distinct phases since the end of the war. In the immediate post-conflict period (FY04-05) USAID focused efforts and resources on reintegrating ex-combatants into society, on facilitating the return of internally displaced persons and refugees and on providing basic social services through NGOs. In the “transitional period” (FY06-08), USAID focused on helping the Liberian government rebuild itself and demonstrate progress to the Liberian people in key areas (security, justice, health, education, governance, infrastructure, economic activity, agriculture) so that the newly found peace could take root. In 2008, Liberia developed its Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and enacted reforms putting it on track for HIPC Completion Point in 2010. In 2009, USAID shifted its emphasis to sustainable development. USAID programs concentrate on establishing a stable democracy, changing the culture of impunity, systematic corruption and poor governance, closing severe gaps in access to quality education and health care, expanding economic opportunity through agricultural enterprise and natural resources management, and helping to rebuild essential infrastructure and sources of renewable energy.

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