



Moustapha Soumaré at the launch of the report

Yet Another Milestone

For a country once branded as a failed state, Liberia's slow but steady progress towards normalcy cannot boast of giant strides but only small steps. For the first time in more than 15 years, Liberia this year features in the global Human Development Index (HDI) listing. Due to the intermittent civil war, the country has been for a long time beyond the pale of

any assessment on the progress of human development measured by life expectancy at birth, per capita income, and adult literacy and enrollment ratio in education, the benchmarks for the listing.

According to the 2009 global Human Development Report (HDR) launched in Liberia recently by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with the Government of

Liberia, the country ranks 169 out of 182 countries. The progress reflects a per capita income of US\$362, adult literacy rate of 55.5 per cent and a life expectancy of 57.9 years.

Liberia's ranking has improved from 176 in 2007/2008 to 169 in 2009. The HDI has also increased from 0.364 to 0.442 during the same period. These achievements reflect improvement in the well-being of the population. They are results of increases in the GDP per capita (which has increased from US\$335 to US\$362), adult literacy rate (from 54.4 percent to 55.5 percent) and life expectancy (from 45.1 years to 57.9 years).

Liberia now ranks above several West African countries previously ranked higher in the 2008 HDR. Guinea, which previously ranked 167, is now 170; Guinea Bissau is down to 173 from 171; Burkina Faso, which ranked 173, now ranks 177; and Mali has plummeted from 168 to 178.

Speaking at the launch of the Human Development Report in Monrovia, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Recovery and Governance who is also UN Resident Coordinator as well as UNDP Resident Representative in Liberia Moustapha Soumaré said the inclusion of Liberia in this year's HDI clearly signifies the progress that the country is making in rebuilding its data systems, their growing credibility and the overall recovery and reconstruction.

Touching on this year's HDR theme: "Overcoming Barriers – Human Mobility and Human Development," Soumaré underscored the critical role that national and local policies play in enabling better human development outcomes both for those who choose to migrate in order to improve their circumstances and those forced to relocate due to conflict, environmental degradation or other reasons.

Officially launching the Report on behalf of the Government of Liberia, Acting Planning and Economic Affairs Minister Sebastian Muah hailed Liberia's inclusion in the report for the first time in 15 years. He, however, noted that at 169 out of 182 countries, Liberia is among countries with low human development and instead of getting disillusioned by this, the Government will, instead seek to tack-



Minister Sebastian Muah at the launch

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le the challenges and the hurdles, and stay focused on making further progress in building and strengthening national systems while ensuring that the national strategy for the development of statistics is fully implemented as the foundation for evidence based public policy.

“Our past experiences in Liberia provide extremes and our present realities provide hope. The impact of the conflict will never be forgotten economically and

historically. However, we must always take stock to set the baselines for the measurement of progress,” Muah said.

Since 1990, annual Human Development Reports published by the UNDP have examined challenges that face humanity including poverty, gender, democracy, human rights, cultural liberty, globalization, water scarcity and climate change. This year’s report focuses on migration in the context of demographic

changes and trends in both growth and inequality. Migration, both within and beyond borders, has become an increasingly prominent theme in domestic and international debates.

In his statement during the launch, Soumaré made reference to Liberia’s own national Human Development Report published in 2006 under the theme: “Mobilizing Capacity for Reconstruction and Development”. He noted that this report, the first to be published in the post-war era and the second ever for Liberia, not only won a global award for excellence in analysis in a post-conflict context, but has also laid the foundation for advancing the national capacity development dialogue which has resulted in the formulation of a 10-year national capacity development strategy now in its advanced stage spearheaded by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs.

He noted that the third National Human Development Report under the theme: “Promoting Human Development through Shared Growth: A Focus on Agriculture and Infrastructure” is being prepared and is expected to be launched in early 2010. “We believe these reports, both national and global, serve to enrich the analytical wealth and policy dialogue on critical issues that affect the country as it makes progress in its recovery and reconstruction efforts,” Soumaré noted, adding that the UN family is committed to supporting this dialogue in the interest of advancing human development in Liberia in partnership with the government and the people of Liberia.

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Comparative Review: Liberia HDI ranking from 176 in 2008 to 169 in 2009

	LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (YEAR)	ADULT LITERACY RATE (% AGE 15 AND ABOVE)	COMBINED PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND TERTIARY GROSS ENROLLMENT RATIO IN EDUCATION	GDP/CAPITA (PPP US\$)	RANKED
2008*	45.1		54.4	335	176 OF 179 COUNTRIES
2009**	57.9		55.5	362	169 OF 182 COUNTRIES

*2008 calculations based on 2006 data

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