Voluntary Repatriation of Liberian Refugees

Since the first Liberian civil war (1989-1996), Ghana has hosted tens of thousands of Liberian refugees at Budumburam refugee camp, located 44 km west of Accra. Smaller numbers of Liberian refugees fled to Krisan refugee camp, located in south-western Ghana near the country’s border with Côte d’Ivoire. The second civil war in 1999 brought more Liberian refugees to the camps and their numbers further increased following civil unrest in neighbouring Côte d’Ivoire in 2002. At the height of the Liberian conflict in the 1990's, Budumburam was home to 38,000 Liberian refugees, the majority of whom have now been repatriated or resettled to a third country through programmes funded by the US Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). The UNHCR established and now oversees refugee camps in Ghana and has initiated various repatriation programmes since 2004.

Within the framework of the 2012 voluntary repatriation operation, IOM provided fitness-to-travel assessments, assistance with pre-departure arrangements such as weighing and loading of luggage, ground transportation from Budumburam refugee camp to Accra, airport assistance including immigration formalities and check-in and boarding procedures, the provision of food and beverages for the duration of the movement, air transportation from Ghana to Liberia, inflight assistance, arrival assistance in Monrovia, onward transportation to final destinations across Liberia and overnight accommodation if necessary.

From April onwards, IOM in coordination with UNHCR facilitated the repatriation of 2,843 Liberian refugees. The majority of movements were organised utilising United Nations Mission to Liberia (UNMIL) operated aircraft which saved the project a considerable amount of money since these flights were offered free of charge by UNMIL. However, a few return movements were organised with commercial flights.

IOM Ghana’s operation team coordinated all aspects of
refugee movements (camp preparation, transportation, flight and arrival) with local partners and authorities in Ghana and Liberia to ensure a smooth and safe return for refugees.

On 14 December 2012, IOM assisted the final group of former Liberian refugees to return to Liberia. It marked the end of a successful operation in which a total of 2,843 Liberian nationals returned home. IOM remains committed to assisting other Liberian refugees in Ghana who were unable to return due to medical or other personal reasons.

**Summary of MHD Activities for Liberian Refugee Return Operations**

Within the framework of the Voluntary Repatriation of Liberian Refugees in Ghana project, IOM Ghana’s Migration Health Division (MHD) partnered with the St. Gregory Catholic Hospital at the Budumburam refugee camp to conduct “fit-to-travel” pre-departure medical screening (PDMS) and to administer the yellow fever vaccination to all refugees who requested return assistance to Liberia. The PDMS process ensures that migrants are medically fit to travel, identifies any illness requiring treatment or medical escort, and informs clients of any significant medical condition which requires follow up after arriving home.

IOM MHD trained the staff of the Hospital on standard PDMS procedures and provided technical support throughout the process, including several written guidelines and reference documents. Potential migrants were examined and vaccinated at the St. Gregory Catholic Hospital. Fit to travel certificates were issued by IOM to those who were cleared by medical staff to travel.

Treatment and referrals were provided for one child with severe malnutrition and pneumonia – this was the only case of a return cancelled on medical grounds.

Between May and December 2012, a total of 3,236 refugees were examined at a total cost of GHC 52,694. Details are provided in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>NO.OF PERSONS EXAMINED</th>
<th>COST PER PERSON (GHC)</th>
<th>TOTAL (GHC)</th>
<th>REMARKS</th>
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<tr>
<td>MAY</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>5835.00</td>
<td>Refund to UNHCR incl. yellow fever vaccination</td>
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<tr>
<td>JUN</td>
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<td>15.00</td>
<td>11550.00</td>
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<td>JUL</td>
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<td>17.00</td>
<td>9622.00</td>
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<td>17.00</td>
<td>9027.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCT</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>6392.00</td>
<td>Including yellow fever vaccination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOV</td>
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<td>17.00</td>
<td>935.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>1360.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3236</td>
<td></td>
<td>52694.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FLOW CHART

VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION OF LIBERAN REFUGEES FROM GHANA

UNHCR
- Information campaign
- Registration
- Referral for medical examination

Budumburam Refugee Medical Clinic
- Pre-departure Medical Screening

Fit to travel (with or without medical escort)
- Issue fit to travel certificate (one/family)
- Vaccinate against Yellow Fever (issue one card/person)

Unfit to travel
- Travel deferred (e.g. advanced pregnancy)
- Refer for treatment and/or investigation
- Issue certificate and tick “unfit to travel”
- No yellow fever vaccination
- Inform IOM Migration Health Department

UNHCR
- Confirm fit to travel
- Update register as appropriate and ensure the signing of the Voluntary Repatriation Forms (VRFs)
- Books returnees on UNMIL flight
- Preliminary manifest to IOM
- Provision of cash grant at airport

IOM (ACCRA)
- Exit clearance
- Final registration and headcount in camp
- Weighing & loading luggage
- Inform migrants of departure procedures
- Road transportation (camp/Accra)
- Airport formalities and boarding
- Provision of meal at the airport
- Distribution of final manifest

IOM (In-Flight Assistance)
- IOM flight escorts
- Information collection re final destination
- In-flight assistance
- Inform migrants of arrival procedures

IOM (LIBERIA)
- Reception upon arrival
- Meal and accommodations
- Transport to bus station
- Provision of bus fare or tickets to final destinations

Re-assessment

Fit to travel

UNHCR
- Confirm fit to travel
- Update register as appropriate and ensure the signing of the Voluntary Repatriation Forms (VRFs)
- Books returnees on UNMIL flight
- Preliminary manifest to IOM
- Provision of cash grant at airport

IOM (ACCRA)
- Exit clearance
- Final registration and headcount in camp
- Weighing & loading luggage
- Inform migrants of departure procedures
- Road transportation (camp/Accra)
- Airport formalities and boarding
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IOM (In-Flight Assistance)
- IOM flight escorts
- Information collection re final destination
- In-flight assistance
- Inform migrants of arrival procedures

IOM (LIBERIA)
- Reception upon arrival
- Meal and accommodations
- Transport to bus station
- Provision of bus fare or tickets to final destinations

Flow Chart for Voluntary Repatriation of Liberan Refugees from Ghana

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