



United Nations Development Programme

Communications Office

# PRESS RELEASE

## New Report Recommends Increase in Agricultural Productivity

**Monrovia, Liberia- March 20, 2009:** The 2008 Millennium Development Goal Report for Liberia issued today has attributed the poverty level in the country to low agricultural production and productivity, limited employment opportunities, limited access to health care and other social and production services as well as the non existence or weak safety nets in the country. The report says the prolonged intermittent conflict has undoubtedly disrupted agricultural production and undermined food security and contributed to the increasing trend in poverty.

To reverse the increase in poverty level, the report recommends increase in agricultural production and productivity through improved access to inputs, irrigation, storage and agricultural extension services including improvement in the road infrastructure to facilitate the marketing and distribution of agricultural outputs. The report recommends improvement in access to education, coupled with awareness campaigns to ensure that families understand the special nutritional needs of young children.

The report acknowledged commitment by the government to address the poverty situation in the country. It said “the major development budget for poverty is targeted at health, education and infrastructure sectors but the recurrent expenditures targeted at restoring the ordinary function of public administration, including wage expenditure, are constraining the investments in the economic and social services.

On the effort to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary schools, the report highlights the challenge of entrenched cultural and religious practices and values such as early marriage and the desire of some families to use child labor for domestic chores as well as the high incidence of teenage pregnancies resulting in higher dropout rates of girls from school as a fundamental impediment that should be overcome by the government.

The report observes that an important initiative of the United Nations Country Team in Liberia is support to “a national girl’s education policy to increase enrolment and retention in public schools”. It says the ratio of literate women to men in Liberia is estimated to have increased from 51 percent in 1990 to 67 percent in 2000. “With this trend, it is unlikely that gender parity will be achieved in this area by 2015”.

On the fight against HIV/AIDS and other diseases, the report named the limited awareness on the mode of transmission of the disease and the weak data collection system as a major challenge. It says the creation of a safety net for households affected by AIDS and the alignment of Liberia’s

AIDS response to UNAIDS creates a supportive environment for addressing the acute inadequacies.



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