

# SASMA Portal 2010

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## ACCOUNT OF LIBERIA FROM 1989/1999 CIVIL WAR TILL 2008 - Moseray Momoh



SASMA - [Moseray Momoh](#)

### Overview of 1989/1999 Liberia Civil War:

In the late 1989, the First Liberian Civil War began. The harsh dictatorial atmosphere that gripped the country was due largely to [Samuel Doe's](#) rule. Americo-Liberian, [Charles Taylor](#), with the backing of neighboring countries such as [Burkina Faso](#) and [Ivory Coast](#), entered Nimba County with around 100 men. These fighters quickly gained control of much of the country, thanks to strong support from the local population who were disillusioned with their then government. By then, a new player also emerged: Yormie Prince Johnson (former ally of Taylor, now Senior Senator of present Government 2005 to 2011 in power, with administration head by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf) had formed his own army and had gained tremendous support from the Gio and Mano ethnic groups

In August 1990, the ECOMOG (the [Economic Community Monitoring Group](#)) under the Economic Community of West African States organized its own military task force to intervene in the crisis. The troops were largely from Nigeria, Guinea and Ghana. On his way out after a meeting, Doe, who was traveling only with his personal staff, was ambushed and captured by members of the Gio Tribe who were loyal to Prince Yormie Johnson. The soldiers took him to Johnson's headquarters in neighboring Caldwell, tortured and killed him, at the time president in power (Samuel K. Doe).

By then, Taylor was a prominent warlord and leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (Now indicted at the Special Court for Sierra Leone for violation and involvement in the Civil Conflict). After some prompting from Taylor that the anglophone Nigerians and Ghanaians were opposed to him, Senegalese troops were brought in with some financial support from the United States. But their service was short-lived, after a major confrontation with Taylor forces in [Vahun](#), County [Lofa](#) on 28 May 1992, six were killed when a crowd of NPFL supporters surrounded their vehicle and demanded to surrender the vehicle and weapons.

[Samuel Doe](#) with [Caspar Weinberger](#)  
On a 1982, visit to the United States

By September 1990, Doe's forces controlled only a small area just outside the capital, [Monrovia](#). After Doe's death, and as a condition for the end of the conflict, interim president, [Amos Sawyer](#), resigned in 1994, handing power to the Council of State. Taylor was elected as President in 1997, after leading a bloody insurgency backed by Libyan President, [Muammar al-Gaddafi](#). Taylor's brutal regime targeted several leading opposition and political activists. In 1998, the government sought to assassinate child rights activist Kimmie Weeks for a report he had published on its involvement in the training of child soldiers, which forced him into exile. Taylor's autocratic and dysfunctional government led to the Second Liberian Civil War in 1999.

The conflict intensified in mid-2003, and the fighting moved into Monrovia. An elite rapid response unit of the US Marines known as 'FAST' deployed to the US Embassy to ensure the security and interests of the US. The Marines used US Air Force HH-60 Pave Hawk to airlift non-combatants and foreign nationals to Dakar, Senegal. [HH-60 Pave Hawk](#). A hastily assembled force of United States Marine Corps helicopters During Joint Task Force Liberia in 2003 1000 Nigerian troops, the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL), were airlifted into Liberia on August 15, 2003 to prevent the rebels from overrunning the capital city and committing revenge-inspired war crimes. Meanwhile the US [Joint Task Force Liberia](#), commanded from [USS Iwo Jima \(LHD-7\)](#) was offshore, though only 100 of the 2,000 US Marines landed to meet with the ECOMIL force.

United States Marine Corps helicopters during Joint Task Force Liberia in 2003  
[Joint Task Force Liberia](#) in 2003

As the power of the government shrank, and with increasing international and US pressure for him to resign, President Taylor accepted an asylum offer from Nigeria, but vowed: "God willing, I will be back." Some of the ECOMIL troops were subsequently withdrawn and at least two battalions incorporated into the 15,000 strong United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) peacekeeping force. More than 200,000 people were estimated to have been killed in the Civil War.

## Post Civil War and Crisis:

After the exile of Taylor, [Gyude Bryant](#) was appointed Chairman of the transitional government in the late 2003. Because of failures of the Transitional Government in curbing corruption, Liberia signed onto GEMAP, a novel anti-corruption program. The primary task of the transitional government was to prepare for fair and peaceful democratic elections. With UNMIL troops safeguarding the peace, Liberia successfully conducted presidential elections on October 11, 2005. There were 23 candidates; an early favorite was [George Weah](#), internationally famous footballer, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador and member of the Kru ethnic group, expected to dominate the popular vote. No candidate took the required majority, prompting a run-off election between the top two candidates, Weah and [Ellen Johnson Sirleaf](#). The November 8, 2005 presidential runoff election was won decisively by Sirleaf, a Harvard-trained economist (US University). Both the general election and runoff were marked by peace and order, as thousands of Liberians waited in the Liberian heat to cast their ballots. Prior to her election as president, Sirleaf was jailed twice during the Doe's administration before escaping and going into exile. Upon taking office she became the first elected female head of state in Africa. During her administration, President Sirleaf established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address crimes committed during the later stages of Liberia's long Civil War. Elsewhere, the Special Court for Sierra Leone (a war crimes tribunal) charged former President, Charles Taylor, with crimes against humanity, violations of the Geneva Conventions and "other serious violations of international humanitarian law". The indictment was issued on March 29, 2006, and he was later extradited from Nigeria to Sierra Leone, but the trial by the Special Court is being held in The Hague, for security reasons.

## **Liberia Politics and Government:**

Liberia has a dual system of statutory law based on Anglo-American common law for the modern sector and customary unwritten law for the native sector for exclusively rural ethnic communities. Liberia's modern sector has three equal branches of government in the constitution, though, in practice, the executive branch headed by the President of Liberia is the strongest of the three. The other two branches are the legislative and judicial. Following the dissolution of the Republican Party in 1876, the True Whig Party dominated the Liberian government until the 1980 coup. Currently, no party has majority control of the legislature. The longest serving president in Liberian history was [William Tubman](#), serving from 1944 until his death in 1971. The shortest term was held by [James Skivring Smith](#), who controlled the government for two months. However, the political process from Liberia's founding in 1847, despite widespread corruption, was very stable until the end of the First Republic in 1980.

The Executive branch of the government is headed by the President. Other parts of the branch are the Cabinet and the Vice President. Presidents are elected to six-year terms and can serve up to two terms in office. The President is both the head of state and the head of the government, and resides at the Executive Mansion in Monrovia.

The Executive Mansion in Monrovia presidential sit

The Legislature of Liberia is a bicameral body with an upper chamber Senate and the lower chamber House of Representatives. Each county sends two senators to the legislature for a total of 30 senators, while the 64 seats in the House are distributed among the 15 counties based on the number of registered voters, with a minimum of at least two from each county. Senators serve nine-year terms (only six-year terms for junior senators elected in 2005) and members of the House six-year terms. Leadership consists of a Speaker in the House and a President Pro Tempore in the Senate. Liberia's Vice President serves as the President of the Senate. The legislature meets in the capital city, Monrovia. Liberia's highest judicial authority is the Supreme Court, headed by the Chief Justice. The five justice court holds sessions at the Temple of Justice on Capitol Hill in Monrovia. Members are nominated to the court by the President and are confirmed by the Senate and have lifetime tenure. Under the Supreme Court are 15 circuit courts, one in each county. Liberia's former minister of justice has been at the center of a legal scandal for what amounts to de facto withholding the Liberian law, preventing it from being reprinted and circulated.

### **Liberia Geography:**

Liberia is situated in West Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean to the country's southwest. The landscape is characterized by mostly flat to rolling coastal plains that contain mangroves and swamps, which rise to a rolling plateau and low mountains in the northeast. Tropical rainforests cover the hills, while elephant grass and semi-deciduous forests make up the dominant vegetation in the northern sections. The equatorial climate is hot year-round with heavy rainfall from May to October with a short interlude in mid-July to August. During the winter months of November to March dry dust-laden harmattan winds blow inland causing many problems for residents. Liberia's watershed tends to move in a southwestern pattern towards the Ocean as new rains move down the forested plateau off the inland mountain range of [Guinée Forestière](#), in [Gwinea](#). [Cape Mount](#), near the border with [Sierra Leone](#), receives the most precipitation in the nation. The country's main northwestern boundary is traversed by the Mano River while its southeast limits are bounded by the [Cavalla River](#). Liberia's three largest rivers are [St. Paul](#) exiting near [Monrowii](#), the river [St. John](#) at [Buchanan](#) and the [Cestos](#), all of which flow into the Atlantic. The Cavalla is the longest river in the nation at 515 kilometres (320 mi). The highest point, wholly within Liberia, is [Mount Wuteve](#) at 1,440 metres (4,724 ft) above sea level in the northwestern Liberia range of the West Africa Mountains and the Guinea Highlands. However, [Mount Nimba](#) near [Yekepa](#), is higher at 1,752 metres (5,748 ft) above sea level but is not wholly within Liberia as Nimba shares a border with Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) and is their tallest mountain as well.

### **Liberia Counties and Districts:**

Liberia is divided into 15 counties, which are subdivided into districts, and further subdivided into clans. The oldest counties are Grand Bassa and Montserrado, both founded in 1839 prior to Liberian independence. Gbarpolu is the newest county, created in 2001. Nimba is the largest of the counties in size at 11,551 square kilometres (4,460 sq mi), while Montserrado is the smallest at 1,909 square kilometres (737 sq mi). Montserrado is also the most populous county with 1,144,806 residents as of the 2008 census.

## Complete List of the Counties and Formations:

County	Capital	Population (2008)	Area	Created
<a href="#">Bomi</a>	<a href="#">Tubmanburg</a>	82 036	1 942 square kilometres (750 sq mi)	1984
<a href="#">Bong</a>	<a href="#">Gbarnga</a>	328 919	8 772 square kilometres (3 387 sq mi)	1964
<a href="#">Gbarpolu</a>	<a href="#">Bopulu</a>	83 758	9 689 square kilometres (3 741 sq mi)	2001
<a href="#">Grand Bassa</a>	<a href="#">Buchanan</a>	224 839	7 936 square kilometres (3 064 sq mi)	1839
<a href="#">Grand Cape Mount</a>	<a href="#">Robert sport</a>	129 055	5 162 square kilometres (1 993 sq mi)	1844
<a href="#">Grand Gedeh</a>	<a href="#">Zwedru</a>	126 146	10 484 square kilometres (4 048 sq mi)	1964
<a href="#">Grand Kru</a>	<a href="#">Barclayville</a>	57 106	3 895 square kilometres (1 504 sq mi)	1984
<a href="#">Lofa</a>	<a href="#">Voinjama</a>	270 114	9 982 square kilometres (3 854 sq mi)	1964
<a href="#">Margibi</a>	<a href="#">Kakata</a>	199 689	2 616 square kilometres (1 010 sq mi)	1985
<a href="#">Maryland</a>	<a href="#">Harper</a>	136 404	2 297 square kilometres (887 sq mi)	1857
<a href="#">Montserrado</a>	<a href="#">Bensonville</a>	1 144 806	1 909 square kilometres (737 sq mi)	1839
<a href="#">Nimba</a>	<a href="#">Sanniquellie</a>	468 088	11 551 square kilometres (4 460 sq mi)	1964
<a href="#">River Cess</a>	<a href="#">River Cess</a>	65 862	5 594 square kilometres (2 160 sq mi)	1985
<a href="#">River Gee</a>	<a href="#">Fish Town</a>	67 318	5 113 square kilometres (1 974 sq mi)	2000
<a href="#">Sinoe</a>	<a href="#">Greenville</a>	104 932	10 137 square kilometres (3 914 sq mi)	1843

## Liberia Economy:

Historically, the Liberian economy depended heavily on iron ore and rubber exports, foreign direct investment, and exports of other natural resources, such as timber. Agricultural products include livestock (goats, pigs, cattle) and rice, the staple food. Fish are raised on inland farms and caught along the coast. Other foods are imported to support the population. Electricity is provided by dams and oil-fired plants.

## Boy grinding sugar cane.

Foreign trade was primarily conducted for the benefit of the Americo-Liberian elite. The 1864 Ports of Entry Act severely restricted trade between foreigners and indigenous Liberians throughout most of Liberia's history. Little foreign direct investment benefited the 95% majority population, who were often subjected to forced labor on foreign concessions. Liberian law often did not protect indigenous Liberians from the extraction of rents and arbitrary taxation, and the majority survived on [subsistence farming](#) and low wage work on foreign concessions.

While official export figures for commodities declined during the 1990s Civil War as many investors fled, Liberia's wartime economy featured the exploitation of the region's diamond wealth. The country acted as a major trader in Liberian, Sierra Leonean and Angolan [blood diamonds](#), exporting over \$300 million in diamonds annually. This led to a [United Nations](#) ban on Liberian diamond exports, which was lifted on April 27, 2007.

Other commodity exports continued during the war, in part due to illicit agreements between Liberia's warlords and foreign concessionaires. Looting and war profiteering destroyed nearly the entire infrastructure of the country, such that the Monrovia, the Capital, was without running water and electricity (except for fuel-powered generators) by the time the first elected post-war government began to institute development and reforms in 2006.

Once the hostilities ended, some official exporting and legitimate business activity resumed. For instance, Liberia signed a new deal with steel giant [Mittal](#) for the export of iron ore in summer 2005. But, as of mid-2006 Liberia was still dependent on foreign aid, and had a debt of \$3.5 billion. As of 2003, Liberia had an estimated 85% unemployment rate, the second highest in the world behind only [Nauru](#).

The Liberia dollar currently trades against the US dollar at a ratio of 70:1. Liberia used the US dollar as its currency from 1943 until 1982. Its external debt (\$3.5 billion) is huge compared to its [GDP](#) (\$2.5 billion/year); it imports approximately \$4.839 billion in goods per year, while it exports only about \$910 million. [Inflation](#) is falling, but still significant (15% in 2003, 4.9% in the 3rd quarter of 2005); [interest rates](#) are high, with the average lending rate listed by the Central Bank of Liberia at 17.6% for 3rd quarter 2005 (although the average time deposit rate was only 0.4%, and CD rate only 4.4%, barely keeping pace with inflation).

It continues to suffer with poor economic performance due to a fragile security situation, the devastation wrought by its long war, its lack of infrastructure, and necessary human capital to help the country recover from the scourges of conflict and corruption. Liberia has one of the world's largest national registries of ships, due to its status as a "[flag of convenience](#)".

**Liberia** **Transportation** **sector:**  
**Transport in Liberia** is as follows:

### Railways

Total: 490 km (328 km single track)  
 Note: in 1989, Liberia had three rail systems owned and operated by foreign steel and financial interests in conjunction with the Liberian Government; one of these, the Lamco Railroad, closed in 1989 after iron ore production ceased; the other two were shut down by the Civil War; large sections of the rail lines have been dismantled; approximately 60 km of railroad track was exported for scrap (2001)  
 standard gauge: 345 km of 1,435 mm (4 ft 8 1/2 in) gauge  
 narrow gauge: 145 km of 1,067 mm (3 ft 6 in) gauge  
 There are two separate systems, with two lines from [Monrovia](#) and one line from [Buchanan](#).

### Railway links with adjacent countries

- [Sierra Leone](#) - no - [break-of-gauge](#) 1,067 mm (3 ft 6 in)
- [Guinea](#) - no - [break-of-gauge](#) - 1,435 mm (4 ft 8 1/2 in) & 1,067 mm (3 ft 6 in)
- [Côte d'Ivoire](#) - no - [break-of-gauge](#) 1,000 mm (3 ft 3 3/8 in)

### 2007

- Talks started with the [Mittal Steel](#) company to reopen the former Lamco iron mine and railway.

### 2006

- UPGRADE FOR BONG - 15 June 2006 - Negotiations for upgrading the 87 km Bong Mining Railway from [Monrovia](#) are at an advanced stage.
- [Ircon](#) (the [Indian Railway Construction Corporation](#)), the preferred bidder, hopes to sign a contract worth some \$US110 million before the end of June, according to managing director to rehabilitate the 250km line from [Buchanan](#).

## Existing Ports

- [Monrovia](#) (1m) - port and national capital - 1,067 mm (3 ft 6 in)
- [Brewerville](#)
- [Vonzuahn](#)
- [Tubmanburg](#) (145m)
- [Mano River](#)
- [Jenje](#) (157m) - railhead - 145km of 1,067 mm (3 ft 6 in)
  
- [Monrovia](#) (1m) - port and national capital - 1,435 mm (4 ft 8 1/2 in)
- [Careysburg](#) (107m)
- [Bong](#) (227m) - [railhead](#) and mine - 78km of 1,435 mm (4 ft 8 1/2 in)
- [Buchanan](#) (76m) - port on 1,435 mm (4 ft 8 1/2 in) gauge line
- [Mehla](#)
- [Yela](#) (266m)
- [Sanokwelle](#)
- [Sanniquellie](#) (760m)
- [Yekepa](#) (584m) - iron ore mine
- [Nimba, Liberia](#) - railhead ([Lamco](#)) and mine.

## Highways:

Total: 10,600 km (there is major deterioration on all highways due to heavy rains and lack of maintenance)

paved:		657		km
unpaved:	9,943	km	(1996	est.)

When construction and reconstruction of roads in Liberia is complete, [Trans-West African Coastal Highway](#) will cross the country, connecting it to [Freetown](#) ([Sierra Leone](#)), [Abidjan](#) ([Côte d'Ivoire](#)), and eventually to 11 other nations of [ECOWAS](#).

## Ports

and

## harbors:

- [Buchanan](#) - [railhead](#) of 1435mm gauge for civil war affected iron mine at [Nimba](#)
- [Greenville](#)
- [Harper](#)
- [Monrovia](#)

## Merchant marine

Total: 1,513 ships (1,000 GRT or over) totaling 51,912,244 GRT/79,297,046 metric tons deadweight (DWT)

Ships by type: barge carrier 3, bulk 313, cargo 89, chemical tanker 167, combination bulk 16, combination ore/oil 32, container 318, liquefied gas 99, multi-functional large-load carrier 4, passenger 23, petroleum tanker 302, refrigerated cargo 69, roll on/roll off 20, short-sea passenger 3, specialized tanker 13, vehicle carrier 42

Note: includes some foreign-owned ships registered here as a flag of convenience: Argentina 9, Australia 2, Austria 15, Belgium 9, Brazil 5, Canada 4, Cayman Islands 1, Chile 7, China 39, Croatia 11, Denmark 4, Ecuador 1, Estonia 1, Germany 437, Greece 154, Hong Kong 69, India 5, Indonesia 1, Israel 1, Italy 5, Japan 90, Latvia 20, Man, Isle of 5, Monaco 56, Netherlands 12, New Zealand 1, Nigeria 1, Norway 103, Pakistan 1, Portugal 5, Russia 66, Saudi Arabia 21, Singapore 20, Slovenia 1, South Africa 1, South Korea 10, Spain 2, Sweden 9, Switzerland 17, Taiwan 29, Turkey 3, Ukraine 4, United Arab Emirates 12, United Kingdom 39, United States 113, Uruguay 3, Vietnam 1 (2002 est.)

## Airports

47 (1999 est.)

### Airports - with paved runways

Total:				2
over	3,047		m:	1
1,524 to 2,437 m: 1 (2002)				

### Airports - with unpaved runways

Total:				45
1,524	to	2,437	m:	4
914	to	1,523	m:	7
under	914	m:	34	(2002)

## Liberia

## Demographics:

As of the 2008 national census, Liberia was home to 3,476,608 people. Of those, 1,118,241 lived in Montserrado County, the most populous county in the country and home to the capitol of Monrovia, with the Greater Monrovia district home to 970,824 people. Nimba County is the next most populous county with 462,026 residents. Prior to the 2008 census, the last census had been held in 1984, and it listed the population as 2,101,628. The population of Liberia was 1,016,443 in 1962 and increased to 1,503,368 in 1974. The population of over 3 million comprises 16 indigenous ethnic groups and various foreign

minorities. Indigenous peoples comprise about 95% of the population, the largest of which are the [Kpelle](#) in central and western Liberia. Americo-Liberians, who are descendants of African-American [settlers](#), make up 2.5%, and Congo people, descendants of repatriated [Congo](#) and Afro-[Caribbean](#) slaves who arrived in 1825, make up an estimated 2.5%. There also is a sizeable number of [Lebanese](#), [Indians](#), and other West African nationals who make up a significant part of Liberia's business community. A few whites (estimated at 18,000 in 1999; probably fewer now) reside in the country. As of 2006, Liberia has the highest [population growth rate](#) in the world (4.50% per annum). Similar to its neighbors, it has a large youth population, with half of the population under the age of 18.

Of the population, 40% hold [indigenous](#) beliefs, 40% are [Christians](#), and 20% are Muslims.

## Liberia

## Health:

Life expectancy at birth was at 44.7 in 2005. The fertility rate was at 6.8 per woman in the early 21st century. Expenditure on health was 22 US\$ (PPP) in 2004. The infant mortality rate was at 15.7 % in 2005. The [HIV/AIDS](#) prevalence is of several percent of the adult population.

## Liberia

## Culture:

Liberia was traditionally noted for its hospitality, academic institutions, cultural skills, and arts/craft works. Liberia has a long, rich history in textile arts and quilting. The free and former US slaves who emigrated to Liberia brought with them their sewing and quilting skills. The census of 1843 indicated a variety of occupations, including hatter, milliner, seamstress and tailor. Liberia hosted National Fairs in 1857 and 1858 in which prizes were awarded for various needle arts. One of the most well-known Liberian quilters was Martha Ann Ricks, who presented a quilt featuring the famed Liberian [coffee tree](#) to [Queen Victoria](#) in 1892.

In modern times, Liberian presidents would present quilts as official government gifts. The [John F. Kennedy](#) Library and Museum collection includes a cotton quilt by Mrs. Jemima Parker which has portraits of both Liberian president William Tubman and JFK. Zariah Wright-Titus founded the Arthington (Liberia) Women's Self-Help Quilting Club (1987). In the early 1990s, Kathleen Bishop documented examples of appliquéd Liberian quilts. When current Liberian President [Ellen Johnson Sirleaf](#) moved into the Executive Mansion, she reportedly had a Liberian-made quilt installed in her presidential office.

The tallest man-made structure of Africa, the mast of former [Paynesville Omega transmitter](#), is situated in Liberia. Liberia is one of only three nations to use primarily a non-[metric system](#) of units, the others being [Burma](#) and the United States.

## Liberia

## Religion:

It is estimated that as much as 40 percent of the population of Liberia practices either [Christianity](#) or Christianity combined with elements of traditional indigenous religious beliefs. Approximately, 40 percent exclusively practices traditional indigenous religious beliefs. An estimated 20 percent of the population practices [Islam](#). A small percentage is [Bahá'í](#), [Hindu](#), [Sikh](#), [Buddhist](#), or [atheist](#).

## Liberia Education:

Students studying by candlelight in Bong County, Liberia

The [University of Liberia](#) is the country's largest College and is located in [Monrovia](#). Opened in 1862, it is one of [Africa's](#) oldest institutes of higher education organized upon the western model. Civil War severely damaged the University in the 1990s, but the University has begun to rebuild following the restoration of peace. The school includes six colleges, including a Medical School and the nation's only Law School, [Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law](#).

[Cuttington University](#) was established by the [Episcopal Church of the USA](#) (ECUSA) in 1889; its campus is currently located in Suakoko, [Bong County](#) (120 miles north of Monrovia). The private school, the oldest private college in Liberia, also holds graduate courses in Monrovia.

According to statistics published by [UNESCO](#) for 2004, 65% of [primary-school age](#) and 24% of [secondary-school age](#) children were enrolled in school. This is a significant increase in comparison to previous years; the statistics also show substantial numbers of older children going back to earlier school years. On average, children attain 10 years of education, 11 for boys and 8 for girls. Children, aged five to eleven, are required by law to attend school, though enforcement is lax. A 1912 Law required children ages 6 to 16 to attend school.

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