

Liberia

George Weah B-roll

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UNICEF Video B-roll
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Video B-roll script:

UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador George Weah in Liberia, 20-26 January, 2004.

Thousands of Liberians lined the streets of the capital, Monrovia, to welcome international football star and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador George 'Oppong' Manneh Weah back to his home country, Tuesday, 20 January. Weah—a national hero—was in the country for a week of awareness-raising to help focus international attention on the plight of Liberian children in the aftermath of 15 years of civil conflict.

Liberia, a country with a population of 3.1 million, has been ravaged by conflict for almost fifteen years, which means that hundreds of thousands of children have no idea what it means to live in peace.

George Weah has had an extraordinary international soccer career, most notably with the prestigious Italian club AC Milan, with whom he won the Golden Ball award (for the best European player) and the Italian National Championship. In the same year soccer's international ruling body, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), named him World Player of the Year in 1995, and in 1996 he won FIFA's Fair Play Award. He went on to play for UK Premiership sides Chelsea and Manchester City. He currently plays in the United Arab Emirates for the club Al-Jazira.

Weah is President of the Junior Professionals, a team he founded in Monrovia in 1994. As a way to encourage young people to remain in school, the club's only requirement for membership is school attendance. Many of the young people, recruited from all over Liberia, have gone on to play for Liberia's national team.

While in Liberia, he met with internally displaced and other war-affected children, teachers, community members and government officials. He recorded public service announcements; participated in a radio talk show; took part in three press conferences; led an awareness-raising parade through the capital participated in a children's festival, and other activities organized in his honour.

He is an inspiration to Liberians young and old.

Some 81 percent of Liberian children aged 6-12 are not in school and only 42 per cent of those enrolled attain minimal levels of learning achievement because they are hungry and distracted.

Even before the war almost half of all school-age children were not enrolled in classes, while girls made up less than half the number of boys at the primary school level.

Today three quarters of all Liberians are illiterate and have no access to safe water or sanitation. Only one-fourth of Liberian children are fully immunized.

During the early part of 2003, one-third of Liberia's inhabitants had been displaced by conflict. Fighting had closed all schools, and children and women were subjected to rape and other sexual violence.

The conflict disrupted delivery of basic social services, increased vulnerability of women and children to extreme poverty, hunger, disease and HIV/AIDS. Seventy percent of the country is inaccessible to humanitarian intervention.

The decade and a half of violence has deprived children of all aspects of protection. Tens of thousands were lured into the militias with promises of food, water, shelter and protection. Children as young as nine were forcibly separated from their families and compelled to fight.

The use of child-soldiers has been a scourge in Liberia since the early 1990s, when former president Charles Taylor pioneered their systematic use in conflict.

UNICEF believes the disarming and re-integration into society of Liberia's child soldiers is fundamental to a lasting peace in the country, and key to breaking the cycle of conflict.

Hundreds of schools have been damaged or destroyed by fighting, or occupied by Liberian families fleeing fighting. Thousands of tonnes of school furniture, doors, roofs and window-frames have been burned for cooking fuel by those displaced from their homes.

The Liberian peace agreement signed in August 2003, which included deploying United Nations peacekeeping forces in Monrovia and nearby areas, offers genuine possibilities for long-term stability and development.

UNICEF is leading a \$6 million 'Back-to-School' initiative that has already returned 350,000 of the 750,000 targeted children to basic learning.

UNICEF's support includes rehabilitating buildings or providing temporary tent classrooms; providing thousands of 'Schools-in-a-box' – each of which contains basic teacher and student supplies for 80 children; and providing 'emergency education' and counselling training for teachers.

Difficulty in reaching parts of the country because of continuing insecurity and crippled infrastructure has compelled UNICEF to employ some unusual methods to distribute school materials. This includes teachers delivering school supplies by wheel barrow, and a fleet of outboard canoes to reach river villages.

The Liberian effort includes the training of almost 20,000 teachers, and the rehabilitation of 3,700 schools, providing a major boost to the economy. To encourage parents to send children to school, school fees have been waived, and children are no longer required to wear school uniforms. Another UNICEF project, funded by the US, aims to provide clean water and hygiene facilities to hundreds of schools.

During his stay, Mr. Weah visited UNICEF-assisted demonstration schools and interim care centres for children formerly associated with armed groups. As a grand finale, he played football with disarmed youth to an enthusiastic crowd in a packed stadium.

TIMECODE	SHOTLIST
01 00 00	Crowds of supporters and fans welcome George 'Oppong' Manneh Weah and his UNICEF support team in Liberia's capital, Monrovia
0035	Large 'Weah' painted on the a wall. Local children look on.
0100	Local resident describes why Weah is such an inspiration to his fellow Liberians: SOUNBITE GERALD KOUROUMA(ENGLISH)SAYING : « <i>I don't know how to describe him, his a type of man that make a difference. When you have him in your camp he make a difference. He 's here to help the Liberian. I know that Georges can make a difference. Liberian people need him better than ever before, because he's a man with dream and vision. He can make a difference for the nation , we need him to help, he can make it different »</i>
0120	Weah arrives for event at United Nations Military HQ (Star Base) in Monrovia. Participates in radio show talking about school, HIV/AIDS, disarmament of child soldiers and their reintegration into society
0150	Weah explains why his has travelled to Liberia: SOUNDBITE GEORGES WEAH (ENGLISH)SAYING : « <i>The children must understand that those people they think they should fight for them, they don't love them. . . nobody will allow us to fight against our brothers and sisters anymore »</i>
0305	Young Liberians wave fronds in greeting. Weah in Back-to-School t-shirt arrives at Don Boscoe Homes Interim Care Centre
0325	Locals perform welcome dance for Weah as UN soldiers look on. Weah dances
0405	Addresses crowd on importance of going to school
0425	Young boy talks about being better people tomorrow
0455	Weah applauds, UN soldiers
0530	Disarmed boys act out a back to school drama
0550	Exhibition football game
0635	'We Love You' Ambassador Weah sigh held
0700	SOUNBITE DIRECTOR DON BOSCOE HOMES ICC SAYING « <i>When Georges Weah talks, people will listen to him. He's able to talk to people and they will take his word. Everybody in Liberia see Georges Weah as a real(?)model .He's a hero, he's a peace setter and we are so thankful that we have such a man. . . ? . . . he's a citizen of Liberia. He has kept Liberia on the scene, on the international scene, he continues to do that. He's able to take our case out there to people he knows, people would listen to him But the children of Liberia need help. They need so much help now. The disarmament process cannot be sustainable if there is not sustain international goodwill toward Liberia for the DDRR process. We need everybody to help us. The children need people to help »</i>
0800	Large parade through the streets in connection with the Liberian Children's Parliament
0855	Weah with football along parade route
0920	Back-to-School group sings welcome song at stadium before football game
1005	Weah in audience applauding
1015	Local entertainer warms up crowd
1110	See UNICEF tshirt
1125	Weah and audience members in stands
1330	Onlookers and Liberian flag
1335	Weah and UNICEF staff pose for cameras
1400	Exhibition football game begins between UNICEF staff and the Liberian All-Stars, a professional team
1420	Weah welcomed by United Nations Special Envoy to Liberia Jacques Klein