



Relief For Disabled Liberian Children



Photo: USAID/World Food Program

Children at a clinic for the disabled on the outskirts of Monrovia, Liberia, can now eat thanks to food provided by USAID.

When Sao Setuah's family fled from Sierra Leone's brutal rebels in 1998, the wheelchair-bound boy, who was then eight-years-old, was left behind. Setuah's wide, easy grin is as crooked as his legs, injured during infancy due to circumstances of which he knows little. After his family was forced to flee without him, a priest brought him to a Liberian clinic called Our Lady of Fatima Centre run by an American Catholic nun. The Centre teaches skills and self-respect to 300 disabled Africans.

Five years later, Liberia's civil war raged and the Centre's lifeline to humanitarian aid was severed. Setuah found himself between bullets, one of thousands cowering in the Liberian centre for the disabled. In 2003, fighting between rebel and government forces engulfed the compound as insurgents swept toward Liberia's capital of Monrovia. With the arrival of Nigerian peacekeeping troops, the World Food Program was able to distribute food from USAID to the people in Monrovia - including Sao Setuah.

Until that time no cooking oil, sugar, or protein-rich foods were available, because the warehouses had been heavily looted during the fighting. As the area was stabilized by peacekeepers outside the Centre's gates, thousands lined up for what was for many their first real food in weeks. The disabled children now eat thanks to twenty-five metric tons of cornmeal provided by USAID. Handicapped children like Sao Setuah are playing once again and can be seen with checker boards perched on wheelchair armrests.

Photo & Caption

