

Clean Up in Liberia

TRAILER

During Liberia's civil war, much of the country was left in ruins and the capital Monrovia swelled with people fleeing the fighting inland. Now, the government is trying to clean up the city but some residents are being left without homes or incomes as a result.

RUNTIME: 05:30

COUNTRY: LIBERIA

FILMING LOCATION: MONROVIA

LANGUAGE: ENGLIS

SOURCE: A24 MEDIA/ REUTERS

SCRIPT

COMMENTARY

In Liberia's capital, Monrovia Joseph Lasaley and his brother Amos Pongay are trying to salvage whatever they can after municipal council workers demolished their house and shop yesterday. The two moved from the countryside to Monrovia in 2006 to join university here.

ITV, AMOS PONGAY (English/Subtitled)

"They spoiled a lot of things here; our monies were here, everything gone. We can't see it because a lot of people were in here."

ITV, JOSEPH LASALEY (English/Subtitled)

“We are saying how will we live? You know after the war we are trying to rebuild our lives. We depend on the shop to sustain ourselves. I’m in university; I pay my school fees from the shop.

COMMENTARY

Liberia is trying to rebuild after a 14 year war that ended in 2003 destroyed the country. Many who fled fighting upcountry put up illegal structures here. To give the city a facelift and make way for new road construction, Mayor Mary Broh has been leading a city clean up exercise that’s seen many makeshift structures get flattened.

Every first Saturday of the month, the mayor and her team of volunteers also collect garbage from the streets and ensure that city by-laws are being observed.

ITV, MARY BROH, Mayor of Monrovia (English/Subtitled)

“We do have some major issues here, we have sanitation issues, we have hygiene issues, we have environmental issues. I am committed to the environment. When it comes to demolishing, the structure has to be a makeshift structure, it has to be in the way or in an alleyway, it has to be actually on somebody’s fence, which is actually violating the zoning law. We will have to demolish it, but we actually come and we mark it, we give you time, and we come again, we give you time, and eventually we demolish when you don’t move.”

COMMENTARY

The mayor’s team comes complete with music and public announcements that promote a clean environment. Some residents told us what they think of the new exercise.

ITV, Man with Megaphone (Subtitled)

“Today we have to decide what the future will be. Don’t forget the law of cleanliness is next to Godliness.”

ITV, BENJAMIN KNOWLDEN (English)

“The Mary Broh programme is in the right direction, err those houses that she is demolishing do not meet the city standard. And there is a law pertaining to zoning law, of which she is trying to enforce, or which she is enforcing.”

ITV, MAMA MASSAQUOI (English/Subtitled)

“Yeah we need for the government to help us to develop the country. We would like to clean up the country, you understand? But there’s no need to break the houses down, because some people they don’t have money, some people they can’t find work. Some people’s husbands were killed in the war; they don’t have money or anybody to help them.”

COMMENTARY

Over 1 million people now live in the city which lacks proper sanitation services. Majority of them stay in 14 slums here. The Mayor says there’s a need to decongest Monrovia and is encouraging residents to relocate to towns where sectors like timber and iron ore mining are being revived.

ITV, MARY BROH (English)

“The government is signing concessions, they are going through the mining concessions, the logging concessions; you are talking about oil palm plantations. You have a whole lot of concession to the table. So it is left to the legislature, to fast-track, after they do their due diligence, to sign off the concession so people can go back to the rest of the 14 counties and try to get some employment.”

COMMENTARY

For residents like Chris Jones the clean up drive is more of an inconvenience. He runs a money changing business by the roadside and whenever he hears the mayor's truck coming he has to close shop.

ITV, CHRIS JONES, Monrovia Resident (English)

"We are afraid. So we often pack our wares and hide it until she goes because she confiscates your wares when she comes. So we have to hide it and then bring it back after she leaves."

COMMENTARY

When the coast is clear, Chris set's up once again. In downtown Monrovia, this Hatai shop that sells traditional tea, has also been marked for demolition. Many intellectuals like coming to such shops to discuss current affairs over a cup of tea. A number of Liberia's elite are not opposed to the demolitions

ITV, HABIB SHERIFF, Hatai Association Elder (English)

"All of us we believe that the government have to do her work. We know development is painful, which is how it's supposed to be and that's it, so be it."

COMMENTARY

While the government wants to reconstruct and develop Monrovia, the livelihoods of people here should not be threatened in the process. Clear plans of resettling those affected in areas they can find jobs and housing will need to be made if the exercise is to benefit everyone.

SHOTLIST

(AJ) MONROVIA, LIBERIA (RECENT) (REUTERS - ACCESS ALL)

1. VARIOUS OF MONROVIA RESIDENT, JOSEPH LASALEY, GOING THROUGH PAPERS IN DESTROYED HOUSE

2. MONROVIA RESIDENT, AMOS PONGAY, MOVING A SHELF

3. VARIOUS OF DESTROYED HOUSES

4. (SOUNDBITE) (English) MONROVIA RESIDENT, AMOS PONGAY, SAYING:

“They spoilt a lot of things here; our money is gone. We can’t find it because a lot of people were here.”

5. (SOUNDBITE) (English) MONROVIA RESIDENT, JOSEPH LASALEY, SAYING:

“We are saying how will we live? You know after the war we are trying to rebuild our lives. We depend on the shop to sustain ourselves. I’m in university; I pay my school fees from the shop.

6. VARIOUS OF HOUSES NEAR OCEAN SHORE

7. VARIOUS OF SLUM

8. VARIOUS OF MONROVIA MAYOR, MARY BROH, INSTRUCTING VOLUNTEERS DURING CLEAN UP EXERCISE

9. VARIOUS OF PEOPLE COLLECTING GARBAGE OFF STREET

10. (SOUNDBITE) (English) MONROVIA MAYOR, MARY BROH, SAYING:

“We do have some major issues here, we have sanitation issues, we have hygiene issues, we have environmental issues. I am committed to the environment. When it comes to demolishing, the structure has to be a makeshift structure, it has to be in the way or in an alleyway, it has to be actually on somebody’s fence, which is actually violating the zoning law. We will have to demolish it, but we actually come and we mark it, we give you time, and we come again, we give you time, and eventually we demolish when you don’t move.”

11. UNIDENTIFIED MAN HOLDING MEGAPHONE, SAYING:

“Today we have to decide what the future will be. Don’t forget the law of cleanliness is next to Godliness.”

12. VARIOUS OF TRUCK WITH SPEAKERS BLARING MUSIC

13. GARBAGE BEING Poured INTO TRUCK

14. (SOUNDBITE) (English) MONROVIA RESIDENT, BENJAMIN KNOWLDEN, SAYING:

“The Mary Broh programme is in the right direction, err those houses that she is demolishing do not meet the city standard. And there is a law pertaining to zoning law, of which she is trying to enforce, or which she is enforcing.”

15. (SOUNDBITE) (English) MONROVIA RESIDENT, MAMA MASSAQUOI, SAYING:

“Yeah we need for the government to help us to develop the country. We would like to clean up the country, you understand? But there’s no need to break the houses down, because some people they don’t have money, some people they can’t find work. Some people’s husbands were killed in the war; they don’t have money or anybody to help them.”

16. STREET SCENES

17. LADY COLLECTING TRASH

18. (SOUNDBITE) (English) MONROVIA MAYOR, MARY BROH, SAYING:

“The government is signing concessions, they are going through the mining concessions, the logging concessions; you are talking about oil palm plantations. You have a whole lot of concession to the table. So it is left to the legislature, to fast-track, after they do their due diligence, to sign off the concession so people can go back to the rest of the 14 counties and try to get some employment.”

19. VARIOUS OF HAWKER, CHRIS JONES, HIDING FROM MAYOR

20. (SOUNDBITE) (English) HAWKER, CHRIS JONES, SAYING:

“We are afraid. So we often pack our wares and hide it until she goes because she confiscates your wares when she comes. So we have to hide it and then bring it back after she leaves.”

21. VARIOUS OF JONES AT HIS MONEY CHANGING STALL

22. VARIOUS OF TRADITIONAL HATAI TEA SHOP

23. CLIENTS AT SHOP

24. (SOUNDBITE) (English) HATAI ASSOCIATION ELDER, HABIB SHERIFF, SAYING:

“All of us we believe that the government have to do her work. We know development is painful, which is how it’s supposed to be and that’s it, so be it.”

22. VARIOUS OF PEOPLE TRYING TO SALVAGE BELONGINGS

ENDS