

LIBERIA

IN SHORT



Main Objectives

- Advocate the protection and welfare of Liberian returnees and other war-affected populations.
- Ensure that sufficient material assistance and services are provided to stabilise their communities and make return durable.
- Refine assistance to Sierra Leonean refugees by encouraging refugee participation and prioritising activities that foster self-sufficiency.
- Support the gradual, safe and dignified return of individual Sierra Leonean refugees; launch and promote organised repatriation should the general security situation sufficiently improve in Sierra Leone.
- Identify the best durable solution for urban refugees through a review of individual cases in line with policy directives and a regionally agreed framework.

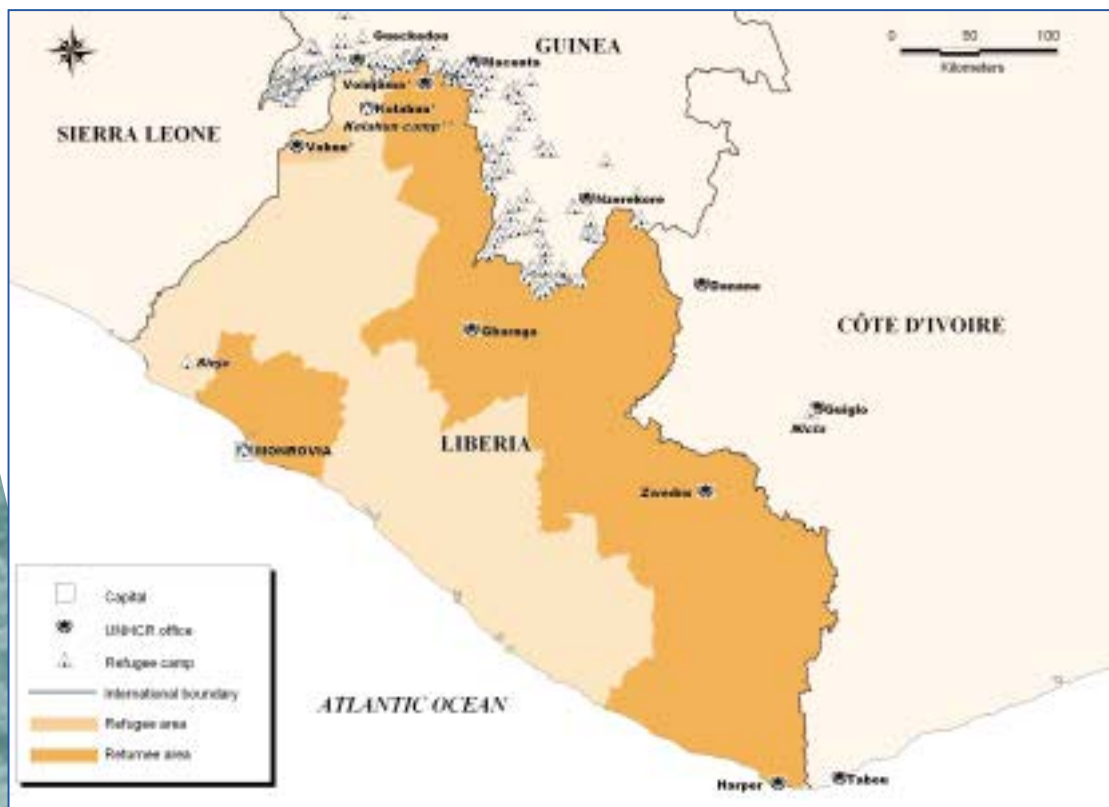
Planning Figures

| Population | Jan. 2000 | Dec. 2000 |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Liberian Returnees* | 335,000 | 401,000 |
| Sierra Leonean Refugees** | 90,000 | 55,000 |
| Urban Refugees | 30 | 30 |
| Total | 425,030 | 456,030 |

* UNHCR estimates that 66,000 Liberian refugees will return home in 2000 of whom 22,000 will be assisted with a repatriation package and 44,000 will return spontaneously.

** It is assumed that 35,000 Sierra Leonean refugees will repatriate in 2000 comprising 15,000 spontaneous and 20,000 assisted returns.

Total Requirements
USD 17,610,412



*The presence of UNHCR offices in Vahun, Kolahun and Voinjama is being reviewed.
** Refugees are being relocated from Kolahun camp to Sinje.



WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

The most recent events to significantly affect UNHCR's activities in Liberia occurred in Lofa county, the largest county of return of Liberian refugees and until recently the heart of UNHCR's assistance programme for some 20,000 Sierra Leonean refugees.

On 11 August 1999, a Liberian dissident group attacked Kolahun, Lofa County, and by evening the violence had engulfed much of Upper Lofa. Within a couple of days all international and national UNHCR staff based in Upper Lofa, together with NGOs and other UN agencies, were evacuated to Monrovia, the capital. All three UNHCR offices in Upper Lofa have been looted. At the political level, Liberia accused Guinea of militarily supporting the attacks: Guinea denied any involvement. The border between Guinea and Liberia has since remained closed.

The tension between the two countries was further aggravated in early September when 28 civilians were killed in a Guinean border town, Macenta, in an attack allegedly perpetrated by Liberian rebels. Guinea lodged a formal complaint against Liberia, which denied the charge.

At the time of writing, Lofa County is in UN security phase V, which means in practice that humanitarian agencies have yet to return to Upper Lofa and all repatriation convoys to the area have been suspended. Furthermore, Sierra Leonean refugees in Upper Lofa, particularly in Kolahun, have been cut off from assistance and continue to flee to Tarvey, Lower Lofa. Since the Liberian Government gave the go-ahead in late September, UNHCR has begun to relocate Sierra Leonean refugees presently in Tarvey, as well as those en route from Upper Lofa to the new site in Sinje, Grand Cape Mount.

Constraints

The planning and implementation of UNHCR's activities in Liberia is fraught with uncertainties resulting from political tension and instability in Liberia and neighbouring countries. The unexpected closure of the border between Liberia and Guinea, the lack of access to vital areas of operation and wide-scale looting of UNHCR property are only some factors influencing the efficacy of the Office.

The Government's ability to protect refugees and Liberian returnees is drastically limited by its lack of resources. Meanwhile, the international community has so far failed to assist post-conflict reconstruction. If this situation is allowed to persist it will cloud any prospect of long-term stability for Liberian returnees and probably delay the planned hand-over of UNHCR's reintegration activities to development agencies. Such a delay could in turn jeopardise the fragile peace and reconciliation process in Liberia. UNHCR's goal is self-sufficiency for refugees and returnees. But this goal remains a very substantial challenge in a devastated country whose economy remains in deep depression in the aftermath of seven years of civil war.

STRATEGY

Liberian Returnees

UNHCR will have completed its organised repatriation of Liberian refugees by the end of 1999. Nearly 390,000 persons will have returned since the operation began in May 1997. Those who then still wish to return (especially from Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea) will be helped by a modest repatriation package until June 2000. Reintegration activities in Liberia will also continue until June 2000. This deadline will be evaluated in the spring in order to ensure the sustainability of reintegration.

Until the recent outbreak of fighting in Upper Lofa County, UNHCR staff were monitoring the welfare and safety of returnees and refugees on site. The withdrawal of UN agencies and NGOs has heightened concern for the safety of these populations. Humanitarian agencies must therefore rapidly return to Upper Lofa as soon as the security situation permits.

Good governance, respect for human rights, and the rule of law will continue to be promoted nationwide. UNHCR will continue to support advocacy and civic groups. The Office will continue to encourage the observance of human rights, with particular emphasis on women and children's rights, through training and radio programmes. As far as possible this will be in conjunction with other UN agencies and advocacy groups. UNHCR will also continue to train and nurture law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and other Government institutions.



The long-term stability of Liberian returnee communities will be enhanced through Quick Impact Projects targeting all populations affected by war. These will cover pressing needs for running water, health, education, community services and income-generation. The rehabilitation of basic community services and infrastructure (access to water, health clinics, schools and roads) and income-generating activities (including those based on micro-credits) will increase the numbers of people who can be absorbed in return areas. It will also boost local economic autonomy and self-sufficiency of returnees and their communities.

Family tracing and reunification programmes for returnee children are important components of reintegration. A training project designed for Liberian returnee women (e.g. female-headed households and high school drop-outs) will focus on tie-dyeing, tailoring, agricultural skills, soap making and personal hygiene. Grinding mills will be provided to returnee women, enabling them to process harvested crops in their communities. Agro-forestry and energy-saving schemes will ensure improved protection of the environment in areas hosting large concentrations of returnees. Projects will include tree nurseries, the use of leaves instead of polythene bags for tree seedlings and the training of community members in the making of fuel-efficient stoves.

It is expected that while UNHCR's interventions can engender a modicum of stability and trust in targeted areas, development-oriented agencies must follow suit. Populations ravaged by war have the right to basic security and services. Given the limited resources of the Government, this can only be achieved through increased participation of the international community and development agencies.

Sierra Leonean Refugees

Over 90,000 Sierra Leonean refugees have sought asylum in Liberia in several waves since the onset of civil strife in Sierra Leone in 1991. UNHCR will continue to protect and assist these refugees pending the creation of an atmosphere conducive to voluntary repatriation to their country of origin. It will enhance self-sufficiency and local reintegration, with particular emphasis on community-based projects.

The Lomé Peace Accord on Sierra Leone signed in July 1999 and the return of the leader of the Sierra Leonean rebels to Freetown in early October

represented a significant breakthrough. These events brought renewed hope for hundreds of thousands of Sierra Leonean refugees and displaced persons in the region. However, the slow pace of disarmament and demobilisation, and continued lack of humanitarian access (prerequisites for voluntary repatriation) are of major concern to UNHCR. It is impossible to envisage organised, large-scale repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees to a country still bristling with armed soldiers. Nevertheless, it is projected that 35,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia may repatriate voluntarily in 2000.

Although the Government works with UNHCR to eliminate persecution of Sierra Leonean refugees, incidents of harassment, exploitation, robbery and violence have continued, particularly in Lofa County. The criminals are allegedly members of the Government's own security forces. The restructuring of these forces and the instillation of some sort of practical understanding of humanitarian issues remain an imperative. The security incidents in Upper Lofa in August 1999 and the resulting lack of access to refugee host areas had disastrous consequences for these refugees and UNHCR's protective role. This led to a decision in September 1999 to relocate Sierra Leonean refugees in Upper Lofa to a safer site in Sinje.

Basic humanitarian assistance will be provided for 48,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in Montserrado and Cape Mount counties (including those relocated from Upper Lofa). This assistance will cover food, water, health, shelter and education as well as the distribution of domestic items. Training and income-generating activities (including agriculture) will be promoted to encourage self-sufficiency. Agricultural materials such as insecticides, fertilisers, agricultural tools, seeds and supplies for swamp farming will be provided.

Family tracing and reunification programmes will be pursued. Refugee children who in the past were associated with the fighting forces in Sierra Leone will be able to attend day centres to encourage their reintegration into the regular refugee community. There are several projects for refugee women including one to help guard against and respond to sexual violence against Sierra Leonean refugee women and adolescent girls. Full involvement of refugee women in camp management and food distribution will also be encouraged. A modest environmental project will be promoted in sites hosting Sierra Leonean refugees, entailing



training and workshops on environmental issues, the replanting of trees, and the promotion of the use of energy-saving stoves.

The overarching goals of UNHCR's assistance to Sierra Leonean refugees are that their basic needs and safety be assured while they remain in exile, and that those who wish to return home be helped to do so, security and other factors permitting.

Urban Refugees

Some 30 urban refugees of various nationalities (e.g. Sudanese and Ethiopians) will receive UNHCR's assistance and protection. Their needs will be reassessed in pursuit of the most appropriate long-term and sustainable solutions. Those who have developed strong ties with Liberia through protracted residence there will be helped to integrate further if voluntary repatriation does not appear to be a viable option. The possibility of resettlement in a third country will also be explored as an alternative solution.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management Structure

In 2000, UNHCR will operate with a total of 96 staff (of whom 21 are international and 75 national). Six Junior Professional Officers are expected to augment operational capacity. In addition to its Branch Office in Monrovia, UNHCR has offices in Gbarnga, Harper, Kolahun, Vahun, Voinjama and Zwedru. The latter are the main returnee and refugee host areas, where living conditions for staff are difficult for want of clean water, electricity and other basic facilities, or access to health services. Given the insecurity prevailing in Upper Lofa, the Office is currently reviewing its presence in the area. For regional coordination and policy setting, UNHCR in Liberia falls within the remit of the Regional Directorate for Central and West Africa based in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

Coordination

UNHCR will coordinate with the Government, NGOs, other UN agencies (WFP, UNDP, UNOPS, and UNICEF) and the donor community through regular meetings. Workshops and targeted training will continue to strengthen local organisations, particularly the Liberian Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (UNHCR's Govern-

ment counterpart) as well as local authorities, security organs and local NGOs. Refugees and returnees showing leadership potential will be encouraged to assume greater responsibility through participation in the delivery of reintegration assistance.

| Offices | | |
|--|-----------|--------|
| Monrovia | Kolahun* | Zwedru |
| Gbarnga | Vahun* | |
| Harper | Voinjama* | |
| * The presence of these offices is under review | | |
| Partners | | |
| Government Agencies | | |
| Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission | | |
| NGOs | | |
| Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit | | |
| Action contre la faim | | |
| Initiative pour une Afrique solidaire | | |
| Adventist Development and Relief Agency | | |
| American Refugee Committee | | |
| International Rescue Committee | | |
| Save the Children Fund/UK | | |
| Medical Emergency and Relief Cooperative International | | |
| Lutheran World Federation/World Service | | |
| Dutch Relief Agency | | |
| Don Bosco | | |
| Sustainable Development Promoters | | |
| Children Aid Direct | | |
| Organisation for Children and Adolescent Mothers | | |
| Common Grounds Productions/Talking Drums Studio | | |
| Environmental Foundation for Africa | | |
| Family Empowerment Programme | | |
| Liberian United to Serve Humanity | | |
| Other | | |
| United Nations Volunteers | | |





Budget (USD)

| Activities and Services | Annual Programme | Supplementary Programme | Total |
|---|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Protection, Monitoring and Coordination | 3,080,482 | 0 | 3,080,482 |
| Community Services | 590,600 | 8,000 | 598,600 |
| Crop Production | 338,900 | 0 | 338,900 |
| Domestic Needs/ Household Support | 736,600 | 200,000 | 936,600 |
| Education | 1,565,100 | 0 | 1,565,100 |
| Fisheries | 20,000 | 0 | 20,000 |
| Food | 78,100 | 20,000 | 98,100 |
| Forestry | 197,500 | 0 | 197,500 |
| Health/Nutrition | 1,257,000 | 20,000 | 1,277,000 |
| Income Generation | 563,000 | 0 | 563,000 |
| Legal Assistance | 214,000 | 20,000 | 234,000 |
| Livestock | 50,000 | 0 | 50,000 |
| Operational Support (to Agencies) | 1,797,400 | 100,000 | 1,897,400 |
| Sanitation | 256,600 | 0 | 256,600 |
| Shelter/Other Infrastructure | 228,400 | 80,000 | 308,400 |
| Transport/Logistics | 2,324,200 | 800,000 | 3,124,200 |
| Water (non-agricultural) | 373,900 | 0 | 373,900 |
| Total Operations | 13,671,782 | 1,248,000 | 14,919,782 |
| Programme Support | 2,690,630 | 0 | 2,690,630 |
| Total | 16,362,412 | 1,248,000 | 17,610,412 |

