

Liberia

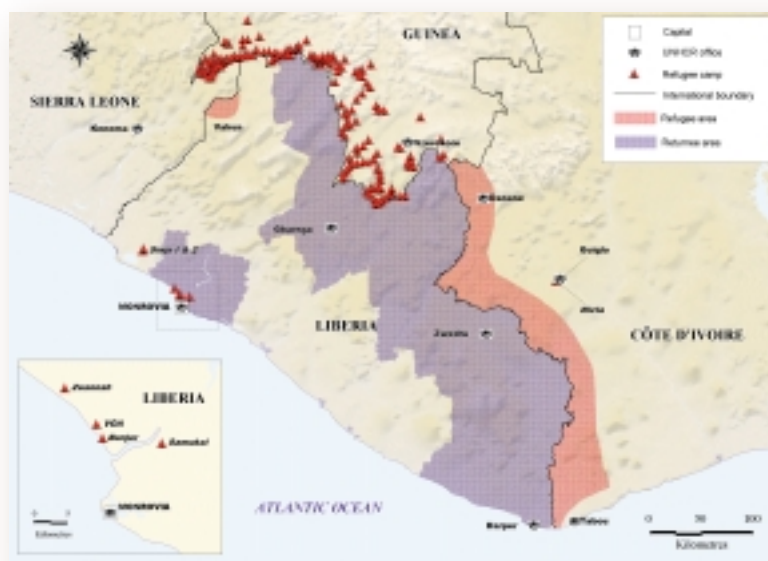
AT A GLANCE

Main Objectives and Activities

Support the return and reintegration of Liberian refugees; monitor protection in areas of return; enhance the absorption capacity in the main areas of return as well as the self-sufficiency of returnees through Quick Impact Projects; ensure the satisfactory handover of activities through links with development-oriented agencies; and, in the context of the Brookings Process, initiate projects that could have a cross-border impact should Sierra Leonean refugees choose to repatriate.

Impact

- UNHCR provided assistance for over 24,000 Liberian refugees who chose to repatriate during the year 2000, bringing the total number of returnees since 1997 to over 377,000.
- UNHCR conducted workshops on international protection, and human rights and refugee law, attended by over 700 participants including government officials, the police and the military. This resulted in fewer reports of harassment of refugees.
- The Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) project was highly effective, with the result that the community began providing increased support for Sierra Leonean vulnerable refugees.
- To improve economic development in areas of return and to increase the self-sufficiency of refugees, income generation and micro-credit projects were expanded. Given the overall state of the Liberian economy and the weak market for finished goods, the projects increasingly focused on the agriculture sector.



Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Persons of Concern			
	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Liberia (IDPs)	110,700	-	-	-
Sierra Leone (Refugees)	69,300	38,800	52	50
Liberia (Returnees)	42,400	24,200	-	-
Liberia (Returned IDPs)	13,400	-	-	-

	Income and Expenditure (USD)				
	Annual Programme, Trust Funds and Supplementary Programme Budgets				
	Revised Budget	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
AB/TF	16,959,940	6,402,927	9,187,580	15,590,507	15,584,827
SB	1,800,000	0	900,000	900,000	900,000
Total	18,759,940	6,402,927	10,087,580	16,490,507	16,484,827

¹Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

²Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

- UNHCR supported existing health and education facilities in main areas of return by increasing their capacity, providing supplies, and organising training of staff. Sierra Leonean refugees and surrounding communities benefited from adequate education and health services.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

Liberia is emerging from almost a decade of intense and widespread civil conflict. It is struggling to attract international interest to significantly boost reconstruction and development. Despite considerable optimism in the wake of the presidential elections in mid-1997, only a fraction of international assistance pledges subsequently materialised, and donor support has since further declined. National reconciliation efforts have been weak, unco-ordinated and inconclusive. For lack of resources, government institutions are virtually non-existent in rural areas. The prospects of economic subsistence for the 377,000 Liberians, who have returned since 1997, are therefore increasingly dim. UNHCR's programmes cannot compensate for the absence of longer-term development programmes.

During 2000, some 42,000 Liberian refugees chose to repatriate. The numbers of returns in the second half of the year remained minor, largely because of the renewed closure of the border between Liberia and Guinea in July, as well as the exacerbation of violence in Lofa county, the main area of origin of Liberian refugees. Access to some areas of return remained limited due to the volatile security situation.

Of the 70,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia, over 38,000 live in six UNHCR-assisted camps in Grand Cape Mount and Montserrado counties. Another 30,000 are in Lofa county where they have integrated. The Government has maintained a generous open-door policy. Sierra Leonean camp residents were provided with all essential services, but the reduction of the food basket from 1,700 to 1,130 kcal per person per day had an adverse effect on vulnerable groups and signs of malnutrition were reported.

Constraints

Insecurity remained a major constraint. Because of political tension between Guinea and Liberia, the border between the two countries was closed in July. All organised voluntary repatriation efforts for some 117,000 Liberians in Guinea had to be suspended. Furthermore, operations were often hampered by the continuing volatile security situation in Lofa county, and the sporadic fighting along the border areas in Nimba county. The difficult security situation in parts of Bong county also hindered the development of reintegration activities.

UNHCR had to operate in a country devoid of basic infrastructure. The Government lacked the resources to

fund or staff public sector services that could help sustain social order such as local administration, law enforcement and the judiciary. The Liberian economy was characterised by stagnation, debt and unemployment. The rural economy remained isolated from the meagre markets in the capital, Monrovia.

UNHCR's operation in Liberia also faced logistical problems. The trucking fleet for the transport of both returnees and project materials was extremely limited in capacity and difficult to maintain. Roads in many parts of the country became impassable during the rainy season.

The absence of adequate health facilities and shortages of water, electricity and other basic services hampered the smooth implementation of the programme.

Funding

Overall, UNHCR's operations in Liberia continued to be undertaken in an economically deprived environment. Funding beyond immediate humanitarian responses was extremely difficult to generate, as was further capacity to achieve durable solutions for the beneficiaries. From an economic standpoint, UNHCR's efforts to help stabilise returnees in their communities of origin were useful, but ran a high risk of being undermined by a lack of follow-up support.

UNHCR, as one of the few remaining donors in Liberia, suffered setbacks in its reintegration efforts, due to the funding shortfall in the latter half of 2000 (for a programme which had been prolonged an additional six months after the original closure date of 30 June). This had a detrimental effect on the beneficiary population. Schoolchildren were left without school materials, community services for returnees were halted. Vocational training (in the premises renovated by UNHCR) was discontinued and plans had to be abandoned for the renovation of several health posts and schools.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

The protection climate in Liberia remained complex and challenging. The border conflict between Liberia and Guinea generated protection problems for some Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia. Reports were received of the arbitrary arrest and detention of refugees suspected of being dissident forces fighting government troops in Lofa county. All refugees arrested on suspicion of being dissidents were released following UNHCR's intervention.

The security situation in Lofa county did not only affect refugees. Liberian returnees, mainly of the minority Mandingo ethnic group who were perceived to be a part of the dissident forces, were also victimised. In June 2000, seven returnees (all Mandingos) who were returning to Liberia from Guinea aboard an UNHCR repatriation convoy, were arrested and accused of being dissidents. Despite numerous interventions by UNHCR, their whereabouts remained unknown.

UNHCR received reports of the recruitment of Sierra Leonean refugees by the Liberian Government. This issue was raised directly with the Liberian Government. Some recruitment of refugees may have continued, but not on a large scale. Another factor, which continued to complicate the protection of refugees in Liberia, was the Liberian Government's inability to pay its civil servants, including security forces, who intimidated and extorted money from refugees.

Radio programmes were produced and broadcast weekly to refugees in neighbouring countries informing potential returnees of their human rights, national reconciliation and specific issues related to HIV/AIDS, women, children and self-help in Liberia. Refugees were also informed of reintegration activities in Liberia and over-

all conditions, thereby enabling them to make an informed decision on repatriation.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: Skills training, psychological counselling and adult literacy courses were organised in community centres in Bong, Nimba, and Grand Gedeh counties with high numbers of returnees. Over 6,300 women, girls and adolescent mothers participated in these activities. The skills training included small-scale income generation projects such as fabric colouring, soap-making, baking, and tailoring. Nearly 5,000 vulnerable Sierra Leonean refugees received material assistance including food supplements, clothing and footwear. Sanitary items were distributed to 5,350 women and adolescent girls. Under the SGBV project, community structures were established for the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence and an awareness campaign was organised. An estimated 8,000 women, 1,400 adolescents and 100 community leaders were sensitised on the issues. Twelve workshops on SGBV were attended by some 700 caregivers. This programme showed positive results and lower numbers of child labour, sexual exploitations, domestic violence, and girls' enrolment in societies combating female genital mutilation. But the income generation programme was less successful, mainly due to the poor environment, the high rate of unemployment in Liberia and other socio-economic factors. Over 100 refugee and returnee children were reunified with their families.

Crop Production: The programme focused on support for 3,000 returnee families in Grand Gedeh, Bong and Nimba counties to allow them to reach self-sufficiency in terms of food. Four seed banks were established by 900 women, the training of management teams was organised for seed processing and handling and overall management of seed banks. Four rice mills were also installed. At the end of the year, it was estimated that some 1,200 farmers developed and cultivated 50 hectares of lowland or swamp, yielding over 125 metric tones of rice. The yields from crop production enabled Sierra Leonean refugees to supplement their food rations. Some 280 hectares of land were cultivated,



yielding 1,800 metric tonnes (with less than 15 per cent post harvest loss). Of this total, refugee women cultivated 22 hectares of vegetables, yielding 70.4 metric tonnes. Training was provided in paddy fish culture and management and ten hectares of paddy were cultivated, yielding 26.5 metric tonnes, while the fishpond was stocked. Rice and cassava mills were installed in the camps to decrease the workload in food processing.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: Non-food items (plastic mats, blankets, laundry soap, kitchen sets and jerry cans) were distributed to 18,500 Sierra Leonean refugees in six camps. Because of the difficulties urban refugees continued to face in obtaining employment and reaching a minimum level of self-sufficiency, UNHCR provided them with a subsistence allowance.

Education: To support the Liberian educational system and infrastructure in Bong, Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Maryland counties, UNHCR rehabilitated ten school buildings, 14 library rooms, 15 resource centres and a regional educational office; distributed teaching materials, school supplies, and furniture to 200 schools (with more than 66,000 primary schoolchildren); and organised educational management training workshops for 370 teachers. Some 270 girls' social clubs were provided with income generation and skills training materials. About 200 income generation projects were started for parents-teachers associations, the proceeds being used to finance school materials and incentives for school teachers. Although some progress was made, considerable additional resources and training would have been required to ensure access to primary school education for all returnee children. The Ministry of Education was not able to take over the management and supervision of the primary education system. Approximately 7,500 refugee children (80 per cent of all eligible children) went to five camp primary schools and received school kits and footwear. Over 160 teachers received training and teaching kits. Nearly 500 refugee students attended the Accelerated Learning Programme and received school kits. Scholarships were awarded to 384 secondary students. Seventy-four students sat for the West African examination and 88 per cent were successful. Tuition and related fees were paid for 12 children of urban refugees to enable them to continue their primary education in Monrovia.

Food: UNHCR provided cooked meals for more than 16,000 returnees in transit centres and way stations. General food distributions of 1,130 kcal per person were conducted in all camps on a monthly basis. Monitoring of the food basket focused on the efficiency of distribution and quantitative control of the rations distributed to the refugees. Because of the low calorific content of the food basket, and following reported cases of malnutri-

tion, vulnerable refugees were given supplementary food (canned fish, salt and sugar) and special feeding.

Forestry: 5,800 fuel-efficient stoves were produced and used by refugees in the camps. Over 31,000 tree seedlings were transplanted in camps and refugee hosting areas. Natural resource mapping was conducted in all camps to indicate areas where intervention was required. A further 3,600 eco-stoves were produced and used in schools and local communities. This significantly improved environmental management by reducing the demand for wood. Over 200 volunteers, including schoolchildren, were trained to conduct public awareness campaigns and supervise nursery trees and domestic energy conservation. Plant nursery tools were distributed to eight participating community groups and, as a result, 31,712 acacia, coffee, cocoa and oil palm tree seedlings were nurtured.

Health/Nutrition: To support the public health structures in safe areas in Lofa, Grand Gedeh and Maryland counties, UNHCR rehabilitated six community health clinics. The Ministry of Health, however, remained unable to take over the management and supervision of the health care system. Curative and preventive health services continued to be provided to all camp refugees. In 2000, over 88,000 consultations were carried out in camps in Montserrado and Sinje. The most common diseases were malaria and respiratory tract infection. Some 5,300 women sought family planning services and were given contraceptives. Some 780 referrals were made to large hospitals and specialists. Training on health care, hygiene and HIV/AIDS was provided for 229 refugees, 50 nursing assistants, 70 community health workers, 87 traditional birth attendants and 22 traditional midwives. A standardised health information reporting system was introduced.

Income Generation: Five micro-credit programmes were operational in four counties (Montserrado, Bong, Nimba, Grand Gedeh). Eighty per cent of the beneficiaries were returnee women. The loan scheme, with a capital of USD 658,000, served 703 groups comprising 5,456 clients. The clients were involved in businesses such as production of charcoal, soap, bricks, tiles and aluminium pots, as well as retailing palm oil, vegetables, rice, pigs, poultry and second-hand garments. In view of the shattered Liberian economy and the difficulties of marketing, the reimbursement rate was low. Loans for agricultural activities proved more sustainable than loans to other sectors. Among the Sierra Leonean refugees, 285 clients received loans from a loan capital of USD 10,000. The loans were provided in the latter part of 2000, so sustainability and success will be evaluated in 2001.

Legal Assistance: Workshops on international protection, including monitoring of returnees and refugee rights and the responsibilities of host governments, were conducted and attended by government officials and personnel responsible for security. Government monitors were assigned to 39 official entry points and eight transit centres to verify the documents of returnees and escort convoys. Legal counsellors were also hired by UNHCR to intervene on behalf of returnees seeking to recover their property. A verification exercise was carried out in each camp to update the number of Sierra Leonean refugees.

Livestock: Training was provided for 200 returnee goat farmers in Grand Gedeh county in improved methods of animal husbandry, and 250 goats were provided. Over 400 poultry breeding pairs were distributed to women in the returnee community. The main purpose of the programme was to allow the beneficiaries to enrich their diets. In refugee camps, training workshops were organised in poultry production and management. Some 530 refugees received a pair of ducks or chickens each for breeding.

Operational Support (to Agencies): Radio programmes containing information on human rights, national reconciliation, HIV/AIDS and reintegration activities were produced and broadcast weekly to Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries. The administrative costs of implementing partners were covered including office rent, utilities, salaries and procurement of office equipment and supplies.

Sanitation: To ensure that adequate sanitation facilities were available to refugees in all camps, 41 four-block ventilated pit latrines and 400 family latrines were constructed and 79 bathhouses were rehabilitated. Fumigation was undertaken twice a year in the camps. Hygiene awareness was promoted at all sites. Following training and sensitisation, refugees assumed greater responsibility for the management of the sanitation system in the camps.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: UNHCR organised the rehabilitation of community structures to be used as transit centres in Gbarnga, Monrovia, Zwedru, Harper and Pleebo. In Bong and Nimba counties 71 km of road were repaired (including 18 bridges). Two airstrips in Harper and Zwedru were rehabilitated to facilitate the transport of personnel and small commodities needed for reintegration activities in Grand Gedeh and Maryland counties, especially during the rainy seasons. A landing ramp for Cavalla River Ferry was constructed, to facilitate the return of some 15,000 refugees from Côte d'Ivoire. In Sinje refugee camp, three bridges were repaired to enable refugees to travel to farms. Three cen-

tres were constructed to facilitate the distribution of food and non-food items. A transit centre, a community hall and 199 additional huts were constructed to accommodate vulnerable refugees.

Transport/Logistics: Warehousing of non-food items was managed in Monrovia, while maintenance of trucks, light vehicles and motorcycles was ensured by UNHCR's mechanical workshops.

Water: The potable water supply was expanded through the construction of ten new water points and the rehabilitation of 15 existing wells in Bong and Lower Lofa counties. To ensure long-term use of water points, UNHCR organised the training of water committees in all camps. An information manual was also printed and distributed to all participants. Following the construction of seven wells, and the rehabilitation of 70 wells in camps in Cape Mount and Montserrado counties, a target of 20 litres of water per refugee per day was reached in all camps.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

In January 2000, 66 staff were working for UNHCR in Liberia; 19 international staff, two JPOs, one UNV, and 45 national staff. By the end of the year, international staff were reduced to 15 internationals and two JPOs. UNHCR maintained an office in Monrovia, supported by offices in Gbarnga, Zwedru, and Harper. The two offices in Vahun and Voinjama remained unmanned because the Upper Lofa area remained under Security Phase IV. The offices in Gbarnga, Harper and Zwedru co-ordinated and monitored the repatriation and reintegration programmes. UNHCR in Liberia received support from the Regional Directorate in Abidjan through missions from specialised staff. In keeping with UNHCR's sub-regional approach, regular cell meetings were held with concerned UNHCR staff from the four countries (Guinea, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia) for direction and decision-making on a cohesive strategy.

Working with Others

UNHCR's activities in Liberia were implemented through the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (the government counterpart) and 23 implementing partners (ten national and 13 international). Monthly co-ordination meetings were organised by all UNHCR offices. Bi-weekly inter-agency co-ordination meetings, chaired by the Resident Co-ordinator, provided opportunities for information

sharing and security briefings. Close collaboration with WFP continued throughout the year. WFP provided monthly food rations to Sierra Leonean refugees, one or two-month food rations to Liberian returnees, school feeding programmes and incentives for 'Food For Work' projects implemented by NGOs funded by UNHCR. UNHCR, UNICEF, and international NGOs collaborated on the continuation of the successful Accelerated Learning Programme, which provided special schooling assistance to refugee children forced to abandon school during the war. UNICEF also provided support to the main areas of return in the education and water sectors. UNHCR provided logistical support to WHO for its vaccination campaigns.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

UNHCR's initiatives in capacity-building and support to returnees, local communities and NGOs, as well as government officials, showed positive results. Through effective and well-targeted workshops, participatory rural appraisals and active dialogue, participants were better informed about UNHCR's mandate. The workshops also focused on monitoring; measurable indicators were adopted for protection, SGBV, education, water and sanitation, and environmental management.

The targets set for the repatriation programme were not met. As of July 2000, UNHCR's repatriation programme came almost to a complete halt, mainly because of the heightened insecurity in some areas of return, particularly in Lofa county, and the closure of the border with Guinea. A number of reintegration activities, in the form of Quick Impact Projects, proved successful, especially income-generating activities in the agricultural sector. However, in a cash-strapped society, markets for all goods were not available. The ultimate goal - to bridge the gap between basic humanitarian assistance and longer-term development - was not reached. This was mainly due to the weakness of basic government structures, the local socio-economic environment and insufficient development support from the international donor community.

The assistance programme for Sierra Leonean refugees showed some positive results and appropriate services were rendered to the entire refugee population living in camps. Education was offered in nursery, primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational schools. In the health sector, the emphasis was placed on reproductive health and training of staff. Malnutrition rates were however detected in the Montserrado camps. This was largely attributable to the reduction of the food basket due to lack of funding, but compounded by the difficulties refugees faced in securing access to other sources of rev-

enue. The training and refresher courses for refugee teachers and health personnel, in the context of the Brookings Process, improved the quality of the education and health services. Current Sierra Leonean curricula were used to train them in view of the vital role they could play in developing education and health services in Sierra Leone, should they choose to voluntarily repatriate. Organised voluntary repatriation could not take place because of general insecurity in Sierra Leone.

The rehabilitation of refugee-hosting areas and the accompanying environmental management and education were achieved through participatory rural appraisals, involving both host and refugee communities in all phases of the projects. This increased involvement helped to improve the physical environment and delivery of services, as well as a mutual understanding and collaboration between the two groups.

Offices

Monrovia

Gbarnga
Harper
Vahun
Voinjama
Zwedru

Partners

Government Agencies

Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission

NGOs

Action contre la faim
Adventist Development Relief Agency
American Refugee Committee
Association of Evangelicals in Liberia
Association of Female Lawyers in Liberia
Children Aid Direct
Don Bosco Rehabilitation and Skill Training Programme
Environmental Foundation for Africa
Family Empowerment Programme
Initiative pour une Afrique solidaire
International Rescue Committee
Liberia Islamic Union for Reconstruction and Development
Liberians United to Serve Humanity
Lutheran World Federation/World Service
Medical Emergency and Relief Co-operative International
National Women Commission of Liberia
Organisation for Children and Adolescent Mothers
Save the Children Fund
Sustainable Development Promoters
Talking Drum Studio

Other

Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
United Nations Volunteers

Financial Report (USD)						
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects			Prior Years' Projects		
	AB/TF	SB	Total	notes	notes	
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	2,117,583	0	2,117,583		3,835	
Community Services	298,009	0	298,009		237,651	
Crop Production	136,421	0	136,421		71,726	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	220,440	0	220,440		31,550	
Education	1,364,287	0	1,364,287		784,116	
Food	32,494	0	32,494		41,391	
Forestry	77,600	0	77,600		77,787	
Health / Nutrition	680,250	0	680,250		458,204	
Income Generation	392,781	0	392,781		438,396	
Legal Assistance	184,872	455	185,327		50,015	
Livestock	22,264	0	22,264		20,604	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	1,399,779	2,959	1,402,738		700,705	
Sanitation	68,791	0	68,791		162,631	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	193,710	0	193,710		317,362	
Transport / Logistics	1,594,568	0	1,594,568		1,132,059	
Water	153,521	0	153,521		227,099	
Transit Account	6,630	0	6,630		0	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	3,877,073	727,885	4,604,958		(3,491,707)	
Sub-total Operational	12,821,073	731,299	13,552,372		1,263,424	
Programme Support	2,257,298		2,257,298		159,640	
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	15,078,371	731,299	15,809,670	(3)	1,423,064	
Unliquidated Obligations	506,456	168,701	675,157	(3)	0	
Total	15,584,827	900,000	16,484,827	(1) (3)	1,423,064	

Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	9,792,806	727,885	10,520,691		1,237,098
Reporting Received	5,915,733	0	5,915,733		4,728,805
Balance	3,877,073	727,885	4,604,958		(3,491,707)
Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0		7,343,123
Refunded to UNHCR	0	0	0		100,765
Currency Adjustment	0	0	0		0
Outstanding 31 December	3,877,073	727,885	4,604,958		3,750,651

Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0		1,820,345
New Obligations	15,584,827	900,000	16,484,827	(1)	0
Disbursements	15,078,371	731,299	15,809,670	(3)	1,423,064
Cancellations	0	0	0		393,973
Outstanding 31 December	506,456	168,701	675,157	(3)	3,308

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(6) Schedule 6