

Sierra Leone

Main objectives

- Promote and facilitate the voluntary return of 30,000 Sierra Leonean refugees by providing information on the modalities of repatriation, security and living conditions in their places of origin, as well as organising their movement in safety and dignity.
- Collaborate with the Government of Sierra Leone and other partners to ensure the protection and reintegration of returnees, while advocating for development actors to address their longer-term needs.
- Provide international protection and basic humanitarian assistance to camp-based Liberian refugees and pursue appropriate durable solutions for the long-standing group of 7,500 Liberian refugees including local integration, naturalisation and third country resettlement.
- Prepare the ground work for eventual organised repatriation of Liberian refugees when conditions in their country of origin become conducive.
- Promote the enactment of national legislation and the adoption of administrative procedures on refugee issues.



Planning figures

Population	Jan. 2004	Dec. 2004
Liberia (refugees)	70,000	54,150
Returnee refugees	50,000	30,000
Others of concern	190,000	240,000
Total	310,000	324,150

Total requirements: USD 32,759,654

sectoral gains are noteworthy: 78 per cent of pre-war agricultural production levels have been achieved, with a 34 per cent increase in access to health facilities and a 57 per cent increase in primary school enrolment in 2002. Nevertheless, an estimated 85 per cent of Sierra Leoneans still live below the poverty line and challenges to the recovery process remain daunting.

Working environment

Major developments

The year 2003 saw the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone underpinned by the progressive restoration of state authority. More than 32,000 Sierra Leonean refugees returned home from neighbouring countries. Of the 320,000 refugees who were registered with UNHCR at the height of instability in Sierra Leone, over 240,000 have returned with assistance from UNHCR. An environment of respect for human rights is being restored gradually as the rule of law extends throughout the country. Recovery efforts of the United Nations and other actors delivered reasonable results and some

In 2003, humanitarian and development agencies began to extend their focus beyond the priority of moving people and assisting them with basic shelter and domestic aid. A two-pronged strategy was adopted targeting on the one hand national authorities at the district level to foster good governance and facilitate the phase-in of development assistance in line with the Government's National Recovery Strategy. On the other hand, programmes targeted beneficiaries through extension of basic services (water, education, community services) and the implementation of small-scale community empowerment projects. These programmes were designed and implemented jointly by UNHCR and UNDP in collaboration with Government counterparts and specialised agencies such as UNICEF, FAO and WFP.

Conditions in neighbouring Liberia deteriorated progressively in 2003 and provoked a flow of refugees into Sierra Leone. Considerable improvements were made to the conditions in the eight UNHCR-assisted camp sites and way-stations that accommodate nearly 55,000 Liberian refugees. An estimated 4,000 refugees remain in border areas while 8,123 refugees, most of whom arrived in Sierra Leone during the 1990s are registered in urban areas.

Constraints

In addition to being a constraint to operational effectiveness, poor economic and social infrastructure is the main reason underlying the continued need for short-term reintegration assistance until development actors establish programmes. Furthermore, refugee and returnee dependence on the same scarce resources as hosting communities has given rise to tensions. For this reason, UNHCR assistance must be extended to deliver some benefits to surrounding communities. This approach has helped diffuse tensions in the past.

Sierra Leone remains susceptible to events taking place in neighbouring countries, particularly the conflict that has plagued Liberia for the past few years. The commitment of the international community to restoring stability in Liberia is a positive development particularly in light of the progressive reduction of UNAMSIL forces in 2004. Meanwhile, concerns persist over the infiltration of armed dissidents into refugee settlements.

Strategy

Sierra Leonean returnees: 2004 is planned as the last significant year of UNHCR inputs in repatriation and reintegration assistance in Sierra Leone. The ongoing voluntary repatriation operation is expected to come to an end in June. UNHCR is playing a significant role in a series of multi-lateral initiatives (UN, World Bank, AfDB, Government, EU, DFID) aimed at bringing lasting peace and development to the nation. UNHCR is first and foremost involved in the promotion of voluntary repatriation of refugees – whose return is an essential contribution to the recovery process. Respecting the Government's National Recovery Strategy, UNHCR works with other UN agencies of the County Team – primarily with a focus on the 4Rs strategy: joint planning and implementation from repatriation and reintegration to rehabilitation and reconstruction. The position of UNHCR vis à vis development is in readiness to participate in the shaping of strategies so that other stakeholders implement them, while keeping returnee protection issues at the forefront.

2004 will be the first year of the Sierra Leone UNDAF in which the contribution of reintegration works of UNHCR appears. Emphasis will be placed on encouraging other UN agencies and the Government to promote human rights and protection in main returnee areas. The programme also aims to complement the UN's Peace Building and Recovery Strategy.

By the end of 2004, it is expected that some 270,000 Sierra Leonean returnees will have received assistance in their places of origin. UNHCR in Sierra Leone will maintain close co-operation with its other offices in countries hosting Sierra Leonean refugees. This co-operation will cover all stages of voluntary repatriation; the mass information campaign to give refugees hard facts about the situation in their places of origin; the registration of refugees who express their wish to return; negotiations on the opening of border points with authorities on both sides and the actual movement of refugees (returnees) across the border.

Specifically, UNHCR will undertake:

- **Repatriation** in safety and dignity, by land, sea and air, with long trips being undertaken in manageable stages. UNHCR and medical escorts will accompany all movements. For road convoys, way-stations will provide night-stop facilities and cooked meals *en route*, while a returnee package of non-food items (NFI), food from WFP and other food pipeline agencies will be provided to individual families. An allowance for secondary transport will be distributed to returnees before arrival at their final destination. Vaccinations (yellow fever, measles, etc.), will be given as needed. Throughout, protection will be assured with an emphasis on children, women, elderly and other vulnerable individuals. UNHCR will ensure that returnees are aware of all their rights and that they also have or can obtain adequate identification documents.
- **Sectoral support / emergency rehabilitation** in main areas of return with an emphasis on water and sanitation and access, with the aim of increasing absorption capacity.
- **Community Empowerment Projects** (CEPs) to help communities re-establish themselves. CEPs are small-scale interventions in main areas of return, decided upon by the communities themselves and designed also as a main protection interface between returnees and UNHCR. As part of 4Rs, and a lead-in to the upcoming work of the World Bank in direct financing to communities through the Government's National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA), UNHCR's inputs strengthen the position of communities in striving for recovery.
- **Advocacy for transitional support**, promoting capacity-building of implementing partners, especially

A Liberian refugee in Kenema supplementing his income by weaving mats. UNHCR / B. Heger



Sierra Leone

at district levels, with information-sharing, training and lending long-term logistical support for their lead-in to development projects. Some modest investments in infrastructure will be supported to assist district-based focal points to attract, co-ordinate and manage larger development funds (such as joint funding of government district education offices with UNICEF).

The regional plan of action on Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV), initiated in 2002, will continue to be strengthened throughout 2004. UNHCR CEPs will support activities to empower refugee women, improve their status and give them a more active role in recovery. Environmental management and environmental awareness-raising will be continued through the programmes of UNHCR's operational partners.

Liberian refugees and asylum-seekers: Following the emergency response to the large refugee influx in 2002, good progress was made in expanding and constructing new camps, and attaining a level of basic service provision in 2003 - assuring refugee protection and basic assistance in the main sectors of shelter, water and sanitation, education and community services. With recent developments in the sub-region and a high international interest in Liberia, UNHCR has recently revised its 2004 planning figures to project, optimistically, that there will be no significant flow of refugees to Sierra Leone in 2004. However, as the peace process in Liberia is still fragile and, at best, will take time to consolidate, no large-scale promoted repatriation of Liberians will be feasible probably until the last quarter of 2004 when some spontaneous movement may take place. Thus care and maintenance activities in Sierra Leone will need to be maintained, infrastructure kept up and some NFI distributed. Services which were deficient in 2002 and 2003, including skills-training and education need to be provided to enhance protection and prepare refugees for return. Promotion of harmony in refugee areas will be supported with village-based projects, promoting good practices in agriculture and environmental management to reduce the refugees' dependence on humanitarian aid. SGBV reporting and response mechanisms will be further strengthened as will family tracing for separated children, ensuring they receive interim care until reunification. Data management systems will be maintained for each and every camp.

UNHCR will continue to provide legal assistance to the Liberian urban refugees (those who arrived more than 10 years ago) and will promote their local integration as the best durable solution. To this end, UNHCR will pursue negotiations with the Government on their legal status. As part of this process, UNHCR will assist refugees to obtain legal documentation (identity cards, resident sta-

tus, work permits and birth certificates). Third country resettlement will be pursued for some for whom it is the only viable durable solution.

Organisation and implementation

Management structure

UNHCR in Sierra Leone has a total complement of 214 staff: 177 national, 25 international, 11 UNVs and one JPO. Activities are managed by the Representative in Freetown, with the support of a sub-office in Kenema (in charge of most refugee operations) and five field offices in Bo, Kailahun, Kambia, Koidu and Zimmi.

Co-ordination

To ensure effective co-ordination and to develop complementary strategies, UNHCR in Sierra Leone will participate in sub-regional meetings regarding Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees with participants from governments, implementing and operating partners and other UN agencies.

Programmes and interventions in-country have been designed and will be implemented in partnership with UNHCR's main government counterpart, NaCSA, other UN agencies, international and national non-governmental and community-based organisations and the Red Cross.

UNHCR will continue to facilitate joint missions with donors in its operational zones and to provide information on key developments through monthly meetings in Freetown.

Offices
Freetown
Bo
Kailahun
Kambia
Kenema
Koidu
Zimmi

Partners
Government agencies
National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA)
NGOs
African Concern
African Development and Emergency Organisation
Arch Diocesan Development Office
American Refugee Committee
Bo Pujehun Development Associates
Caritas Kenema
Catholic Relief Service
Christian Children's Fund
International Medical Corps Sierra Leone
International Rescue Committee
Lutheran World Federation
Malaria Emergency Technical and Operational Response
Network Movement for Justice and Development
Oxfam International
Peace Winds Japan
Right to Play
Save the Children – UK
Search for Common Grounds
Sierra Leone Red Cross
The Environmental Foundation for Africa
World Vision Sierra Leone
Others
<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i>
UNV

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and co-ordination	5,978,953
Community services	3,749,967
Crop production	973,400
Domestic needs	1,650,583
Education	1,260,612
Food	269,192
Forestry	542,000
Health	699,253
Income generation	1,218,000
Legal assistance	1,404,118
Operational support (to agencies)	2,155,259
Sanitation	739,137
Shelter/other infrastructure	1,722,622
Transport / logistics	5,325,224
Water	1,568,533
Total Operations	29,256,853
Programme support	3,502,801
Total	32,759,654