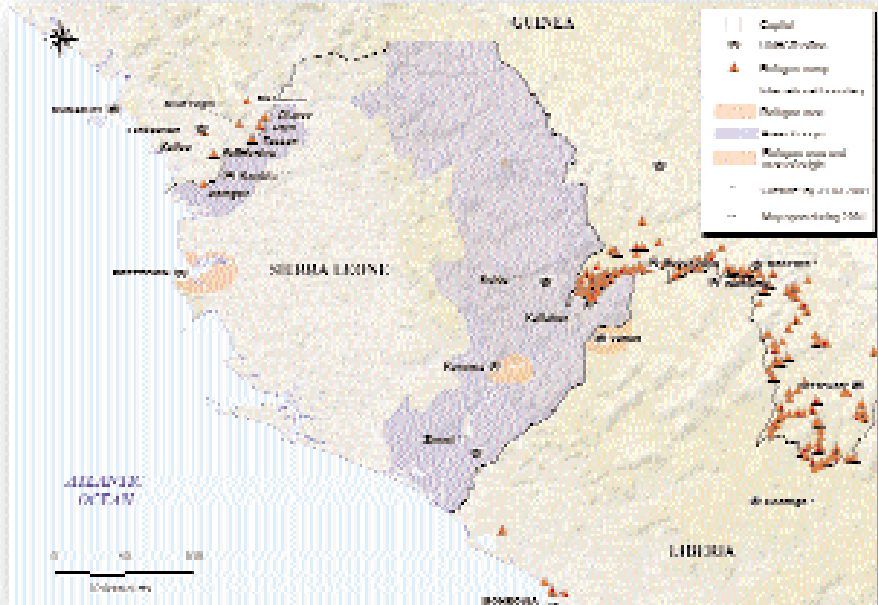


# Sierra Leone

## in short

### Main Objectives

- Monitor the physical safety and living conditions of returnees in main areas of return and report any security or protection-related incidents to the Government; follow-up and intervene with the authorities if necessary.
- Provide community-based reintegration assistance in a cost-effective manner to communities receiving large numbers of returnees with a view to increase their absorption capacity and render return more viable.
- Encourage increased involvement of local grass roots organisations and international development agencies to speed up economic and social recovery and prepare the ground for longer-term sustainable development programmes.
- If the security situation in Sierra Leone improves, increase support for voluntary repatriation by providing reintegration packages and transport assistance.
- Offer technical advice and support (material, financial or logistical), if required, to the Government and others taking care of IDPs in main areas of return.
- Help Liberian refugees in need of continued international protection achieve long-term solutions through local integration or resettlement.



### PLANNING FIGURES

Population	Jan. 2001	Dec. 2001
Sierra Leonean Returnees <sup>1</sup>	30,000	140,000
Liberian Refugees <sup>2</sup>	5,000	5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>35,000</b>	<b>145,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> Barring unforeseen events, and provided that the peace process is revived, with improved security and humanitarian access to return areas, UNHCR estimates that up to 110,000 Sierra Leonean refugees could return over the course of 2001, mainly from neighbouring Guinea and Liberia.

<sup>2</sup> Following screening of Liberian refugees, approximately 5,000 are likely to remain in Sierra Leone, either on the grounds of a continued need for international protection or for other humanitarian reasons. About 1,500 persons are expected to need further material and financial assistance in 2001.

### TOTAL REQUIREMENTS • USD 16,197,657

fruit. Instead, continuing fighting in the north-east as well as in border areas prompted an outflow of some 14,000 Sierra Leonean refugees into Forecariah and Guéckédou in Guinea between May and August. A further 7,000 people have been displaced in Bumbuna and another 5,000 in Porto Loko in the north due to clashes between government forces and the RUF as well as in-fighting between pro-government Civil Defence Forces and the Sierra Leone army. The recent arrival of some 5,000 IDPs in Daru town has required increased attention from humanitarian agencies.

The intensification of attacks on refugees (including theft, beatings, rape and murder) in Guinea's Forecariah and

## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### Recent Developments

Since the collapse in May 2000 of the Lomé Peace Agreement (signed in July 1999) several attempts have been made by regional leaders, the UN and international aid agencies to re-activate the peace process in Sierra Leone. None have yet borne

Gueckedou regions since early September caused the spontaneous return of more than 7,000 Sierra Leonean refugees to the Lungi area in Sierra Leone; and more returnees are arriving at the time of writing. The limited absorption capacity of receiving villages – exacerbated by a large presence of IDPs and the threat of nearby RUF positions – made it impossible for the returnees to settle, even temporarily. The Government and UNHCR therefore started to relocate the returnees to a cluster of approximately 30 villages in a safer part of the Lungi peninsula. The returnees have received food, relief items, seeds and agricultural tools and affected communities have, where necessary, received help with basic services and shelter. Several thousand refugees are also believed to have returned spontaneously to the RUF-controlled Kambia and Kono districts. UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies have been unable to confirm these reports due to inaccessibility and lack of a UNAMSIL presence there. However, it is expected that some returnees will make their way to safer areas such as Kenema district, where humanitarian assistance is more readily available.

In September and October about 2,000 Sierra Leonean refugees returned by sea to Freetown from Conakry (Guinea) aboard overcrowded ships. UNHCR was not involved in arranging sea transportation, but it helped ensure the returnees' safety upon arrival and assisted with formalities, accommodation, relief items and medical services at a transit centre set up outside of Freetown. The centre quickly became overcrowded, so UNHCR made plans to establish a new transit site in Jui. The Office has organised transport (with UNAMSIL escort) to final destinations for returnees who originate from safe but distant locations (Kenema and Bo districts). Refugees coming from areas located closer to Freetown have received a cash allowance to make their own transport arrangements.

## Constraints

Continued insecurity and lack of access to areas of return prevent UNHCR from actively supporting the voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees to their homes.

The current fragile political, military and humanitarian environment in the sub-region, particularly Guinea and Liberia, may trigger large-scale population movements from or towards Sierra Leone, some taking place in inaccessible areas with facilities scarcely even adequate for the existing population. Such a large-scale spontaneous return is likely to cause a serious humanitarian crisis, which could only be averted through a political solution at the regional level.

The fact that UNAMSIL peace-keeping forces have only been partially deployed poses a major constraint to the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Currently, more than half of the country remains beyond the reach of humanitarian agencies. Further deployments (and an increase in the number of troops)

would permit access to areas which have been cut off from humanitarian aid for years. Furthermore, an increased presence of UNAMSIL forces outside Freetown would greatly facilitate voluntary repatriation.

Despite a few positive signs, attempts to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate members of warring factions have come to an almost total standstill since the May 2000 crisis. Armed groups continue to ignore human rights and scorn the work of aid agencies. For example, in the southern district of Pujehun, pro-government Civil Defence Forces have harassed and intimidated humanitarian workers.

Given the current fluid and highly volatile situation in Sierra Leone (and neighbouring countries), UNHCR's planning for 2001 will require considerable flexibility. Unfortunately, such planning cannot be reconciled with the current trend of earmarking of funds by some donors. Furthermore, it is crucial that UNHCR has immediate access to the financial resources it would require should the situation evolve. Greater flexibility on the part of all donors – and early funding – will therefore be important elements in the success of this operation.

# STRATEGY

## Returnees from abroad and IDPs

UNHCR's chief concern is to remain prepared to respond adequately to a number of conceivable scenarios. For example, UNHCR's ability to engage in a full-fledged repatriation and reintegration operation of up to 450,000 Sierra Leonean refugees currently in the countries of asylum is contingent upon the evolution of the political and security situation in the country. At the same time, the Office must be ready to help large numbers of refugees who may decide to repatriate spontaneously. UNHCR will therefore continue to closely monitor the situation in Sierra Leone and has pre-positioned relief items in the country for any eventual emergency.

Meanwhile, the Office will continue to monitor the safety and living conditions of those refugees who have returned on their own to areas considered relatively safe (mainly in the Kenema and Pujehun districts and the towns of Bo and Daru). The key to successful reintegration is to increase the capacity of these communities to absorb the returning population at a relatively early stage while also preparing for large-scale return.

Repatriation is expected to take place in several phases, with each phase requiring further practical elaboration of the underlying strategy. In the first phase, UNHCR will monitor an estimated 51,000 returnees likely to repatriate on their own from asylum countries and provide limited reintegration assistance to receiving communities. As soon as the situation permits, the Office will begin to encourage return by giving reintegration



packages (and occasionally transport assistance) to about 42,000 returnees. A fully-fledged repatriation operation will eventually be launched for a projected (additional) 17,000 returnees. Transport assistance will mainly be made available for vulnerable groups as well as for returnees having to travel long distances. The last phase is likely to begin only after the rainy season (October 2001).

Returnees will receive material assistance equivalent to that offered by the Government to resettling IDPs. Reintegration packages will contain food, household items, sleeping mats, jerry cans, plastic sheeting and other shelter materials. UNHCR's community-based reintegration programme will focus on areas expected to receive the largest numbers of returnees. The programme will also help some 50,000 IDPs. Priority will be given to upgrade basic infrastructure (water supply, sanitation and access roads) and public services (education and health). Income-generating projects and skills-training will be established gradually as refugees return to these communities.

In the event of large-scale return, it is expected that other agencies will become more actively involved in areas where rehabilitation projects have been initiated by UNHCR. The Office will, if required, assist the Government or other actors with technical advice and financial, material and logistics support to cater for IDPs in main areas of return. UNHCR will associate itself with major rehabilitation programmes, such as the Community Resettlement and Rehabilitation Project funded by the World Bank, in order to link up with longer-term development-oriented programmes at an early stage. This will con-

tribute to self-reliance and therefore sustainable return in communities of origin.

The situation of returning refugee women and girls is precarious, as many have suffered sexual abuse and other forms of physical violence both in Sierra Leone and during exile. Disabled returnees, including those who suffered amputations in the hands of rebel forces, will be targeted through special medical rehabilitation programmes. Victims of violence will receive counselling and other support services through local women's organisations and NGOs. A range of income-generating programmes will help returnees – particularly women and single heads of family – to earn a living. These will involve micro-credit facilities, on-the-job training, rehabilitation (and de-mining) of inland valley swamps for cultivation and the restoration of plantations for cash crops. To avoid overlap, these projects will be implemented in the context of services made available by other agencies and the Government.

UNHCR will support primary schools in main areas of return in order to facilitate the reintegration of returnee children and returnee teachers will be offered refresher courses. Children who have been separated from their parents will be helped to rejoin them and separated or unaccompanied minors, particularly girls, will be protected from exploitation through counselling and education. Adolescents will have access to alternative education, vocational skills-training and reproductive health education and services, including HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. Former child soldiers will be able to participate in special reconciliation and rehabilitation programmes (psychosocial counselling, peace education and vocational skills-training).

The reintegration of ex-combatants needs to be given special attention, particularly in light of the approval by the Security Council of the establishment of a special court to bring the perpetrators of atrocities in Sierra Leone to justice. (However, crimes committed prior to the signature of the Lomé Accord, which granted blanket amnesty to rebels, may not be considered). UNHCR will continue to assess the legal situation of individual returnees who may have participated in the armed conflict prior to seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Activities to foster their reintegration will include skills-training in masonry, carpentry, metalwork and car mechanics.

UNHCR will continue activities to protect the environment by building on the knowledge and awareness acquired by refugees during their stay in the camps in Guinea and Liberia. Training will cover the use of fuel-efficient stoves, tree planting and environmentally-friendly agricultural practices.

The primary responsibility for the safety of returnees resides with the Government, so UNHCR will advocate the deployment of government monitors in areas receiving large numbers of returnees. The Office will also encourage closer interaction between UNHCR protection staff and local authorities in these areas. A number of training courses will be organised for government officials, the police and immigration officers to improve their knowledge of international refugee law and the guiding principles behind voluntary repatriation. UNHCR will continue to assist the National Commission for Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (NCRRR) to increase its field presence, improve communications and enhance co-operation with local authorities and traditional chiefs.

UNHCR's principal goal is to contribute to improved conditions in Sierra Leone so that refugees can return in safety to their homes; that whenever possible their return is rendered viable by access to basic services, adequate shelter and other infrastructure; and that they are able to support themselves and their families.

## Liberian Refugees

Most of the remaining Liberian refugees have been living in Sierra Leone since the early days of the Liberian civil war. However, only very few have repatriated voluntarily recently, citing their continued fear of persecution as the main reason for not returning to Liberia. A screening exercise conducted in 2000 revealed that the great majority of these refugees are likely to remain in Sierra Leone, either due to their continued need for international protection or on humanitarian grounds, which warrant local integration. Humanitarian factors include the fact that a large proportion of the refugees has developed strong family links in Sierra Leone over the years. UNHCR will therefore continue to work to identify the most appropriate lasting solution for these refugees. This entails negotiating with the Government regarding their future legal status in the

country and the possibility of local integration. Meanwhile, the Office will build upon self-reliance activities commenced in 2000. Resettlement would be another solution, but it is expected that only a very limited number of Liberian refugees will be offered this option.

In 2001, UNHCR will offer material assistance to approximately 1,500 of these Liberians, in an effort to encourage their local integration and economic independence. They will receive vocational training, agricultural inputs and livestock, counselling, help to trace relatives, education and limited financial support for income-generating activities (through micro-credits). The most vulnerable refugees will receive food and help to cover the cost of primary health care. The Office will also ensure that refugee children in vulnerable families are able to attend school.

The aim is that by the end of 2001, the majority of the Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone will have found a lasting solution and achieved self-reliance.

## ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Management

UNHCR plans to expand its operational capacity in Sierra Leone through the creation of an additional 24 international and 87 national posts. The country programme will subsequently comprise 30 international and 109 national staff and one Junior Professional Officer. At the regional level, an internal repatriation and reintegration cell comprising staff from Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Regional Directorate in Abidjan will continue to meet regularly to ensure well co-ordinated activities and efficient utilisation of resources.

Security permitting, new offices will be opened in Kailahun, Kambia, Koidu and Zimmi. Although no security incidents have been reported involving UNHCR staff, the Field Staff Safety Advisor in Sierra Leone will work closely with the Regional Field Staff Safety Officer in Abidjan to carefully evaluate the security situation in each of these locations prior to the deployment of additional staff. The deployment of UNAMSIL troops (though partial) has enhanced the security environment for humanitarian workers and their presence in areas of return is essential for UNHCR's work. The Code of Conduct for Humanitarian Operations in Sierra Leone guides the work of UN agencies, NGOs and ICRC and calls upon all actors to show respect for the work of humanitarian agencies, ensure the protection of civilians and enable access to populations in need of aid. However, the delivery of humanitarian assistance may require aid agencies, including UNHCR, to resort to armed escort. Medical facilities remain scarce, with the two hospitals

in Freetown able to treat only minor medical conditions. More serious illness will necessitate medical evacuation.

### OFFICES

<b>Freetown</b>
Kailahun (to be opened in 2001 security permitting)
Kambia (to be opened in 2001 security permitting)
Kenema
Koidu (to be opened in 2001 security permitting)
Zimmi (to be opened in 2000 security permitting)

### Co-ordination

UNHCR plans to work with both international and national NGOs. Preference will be given to agencies likely to remain in Sierra Leone beyond the emergency phase. Local grassroots organisations and development-oriented international organisations will therefore be favoured during the selection process. UNHCR has recently concluded agreements with a number of NGOs and these agreements may be renewed in 2001 as long as performance in 2000 was satisfactory. The list of partners is therefore only indicative.

A joint UNHCR/OCHA Management Information System will make pertinent information relating to return, displacement and the ongoing level of rehabilitation and reconstruction in Sierra Leone available to UN and other aid agencies, using digital maps, an expanded intervention matrix and consolidated refugee and IDP databases. This information is expected to contribute to improved planning and co-ordination between the various agencies involved. Inter-agency co-ordination will take place principally in the context of the Strategic Framework led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Freetown. The committee on repatriation and resettlement planning (which includes UN agencies, relevant Government ministries, NGOs and donors) will meet periodically to assess security and supervise co-ordination. UNHCR will work closely with WFP, which will give food rations to returnees for the first two months after return. UNICEF will be involved in strengthening the national educational system and will work with UNHCR to set up schools in areas of return. FAO and UNHCR will work together to distribute tools, seeds and livestock to returning refugees.

The Office will continue its partnership with UNDP and the World Bank to facilitate a smooth transition from emergency assistance to longer-term development within the framework of the Brookings Process.

### BUDGET (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme	Supplementary Programme	Total
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	1,151,510	4,323,099	5,474,609
Community Services	5,000	450,000	455,000
Crop Production	5,000	550,000	555,000
Domestic Needs/Household Support	10,000	750,000	760,000
Education	25,000	1,025,000	1,050,000
Fisheries	0	75,000	75,000
Food	5,000	75,000	80,000
Forestry	0	130,000	130,000
Health/Nutrition	5,000	725,000	730,000
Income Generation	15,000	450,000	465,000
Legal Assistance	10,000	150,000	160,000
Operational Support (to Agencies)	10,000	810,500	820,500
Sanitation	0	75,000	75,000
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	0	850,000	850,000
Transport/Logistics	10,000	1,900,000	1,910,000
Water (non-agricultural)	0	900,000	900,000
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>1,251,510</b>	<b>13,238,599</b>	<b>14,490,109</b>
Programme Support	932,408	775,140	1,707,548
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,183,918</b>	<b>14,013,739</b>	<b>16,197,657</b>

### PARTNERS

#### Government Agencies

National Commission for Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Resettlement  
Sierra Leone Road Authority

#### NGOs

Action Aid  
*Action contre la Faim*  
American Refugee Committee  
Environmental Foundation for Africa  
Family Home Movement  
Forum for African Women Educationalists  
*Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*  
Handicap International  
International Medical Corps Sierra Leone  
*Initiative pour une Afrique solidaire*  
International Rescue Committee  
International Islamic Youth League  
Kenema Diocesan Development Office  
*Médecins sans Frontières (NL, B)*  
Methodist Church of Sierra Leone  
Norwegian Refugee Council  
OXFAM  
Sierra Leone Red Cross  
World Vision