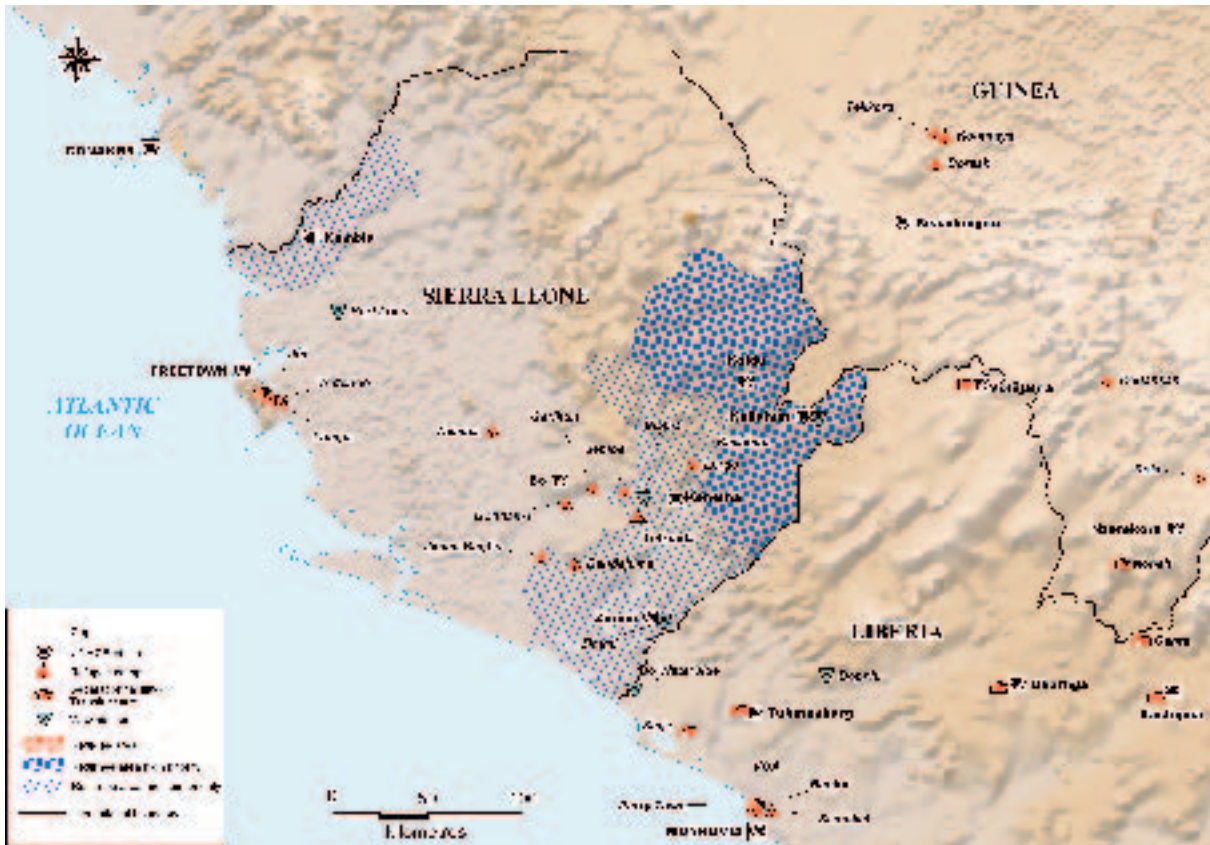


Sierra Leone



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 organizing 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 urging 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 who arrived during the 1990s, including local integration, naturalization and third country resettlement; prepare for organized repatriation of Liberian refugees to begin as soon as conditions in Liberia improve sufficiently; promote the enactment of national refugee legislation together with the adoption of appropriate administrative procedures.

Impact

- Some 26,000 Sierra Leonean refugees repatriated by land and air from asylum countries, mainly Guinea and Liberia, representing nearly 90 per cent of the 2004 planning figure (bringing the total number of returnees since 2001 to some 272,000).
- Returnees benefited from transport allowances, food and other items. In main areas of origin, they benefited from multi-sectoral support to reintegration in the form of community empowerment projects (CEPs). Water, education, agriculture and road projects were implemented in Kailahun, Kono and Pujehun.
- Continued support for the reintegration of returnee communities was provided to the Sierra Leone Government through close collaboration between UNHCR, the UN Country Team (UNCT), the UNCT-sponsored Transitional Support Team (TST), and the World Bank amongst others.

- Between October and the end of 2004, some 15,000 Liberian refugees repatriated – some were assisted, while others returned spontaneously.
- Over 550 refugees who had lived in Sierra Leone for more than 10 years were resettled in third countries.
- The general living conditions of the 55,000 Liberian refugees in camps improved during the year. In particular, overall camp security improved.
- Family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns were strengthened in the camps.
- Refugee women accounted for 45 per cent of the membership of Camp Management Committees, and participated more fully in the management of the camps.

Working environment

The context

In 2004, the security and political situation in Sierra Leone remained stable. In a country still recovering from an 11-year conflict, thousands of persons, including refugees, returned home. The continued

reduction in the number of UNAMSIL troops reflected the Government's increased ability to manage security unaided.

The Government moved closer towards enactment of a refugee law, jointly drafted by UNHCR. The Government continued to demonstrate its commitment to regional cooperation on refugee matters by signing a tripartite agreement on the repatriation to Liberia in September 2004. The improved political and security situation in Liberia allowed for commencement of the facilitation of repatriation of refugees on 1 October 2004.

Constraints

Genuine reintegration still remained conditional on continued humanitarian and recovery assistance. More than 70 per cent of the population live below the poverty line with very limited access to basic services. Most of the humanitarian needs of communities are still being met by relief agencies, with only limited handover of responsibility to the relevant ministries in 2004.

Persons of concern

Main origin / Type of population	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Liberia (refugees)	65,300	61,900	51	55
Liberia (returnees)	13,400	13,400	60	-
Guinea (returnees)	12,200	12,200	48	-
Various countries (returnees)	700	700	-	-
Liberia (asylum-seekers)	100	100	-	-

Income and expenditure (USD) Annual programme budget

Revised budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
31,324,949	16,864,027	14,438,686	31,302,713	31,297,064

¹ Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments. The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

Poor road conditions, especially during the rainy season, continued to place serious constraints on the successful implementation of the operation. As a consequence, returnees in outlying districts have to cope with extended periods of isolation. Cross-border trade is very limited, and the shortage of employment opportunities leaves many young men out of work.

Funding

Funding was adequate to make minimum standards of camp protection and care more evenly attainable. A number of operational partners also received funds directly from other sources. Two international NGOs funded and managed the health programme in all eight camps, whilst other agencies contributed to water and sanitation and income-generation programmes with. A multi-year EU-funded project, "Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development", began in June. The project funds NGOs to engage in water development, agricultural and environmental rehabilitation activities for the camp and host populations through to 2007, with overall technical orientation being provided by the UNHCR Technical Unit in Kenema. The Liberian voluntary repatriation operation had not been anticipated in the budget for 2004, so the start-up costs in Sierra Leone had to be supported by supplementary funds from the regional repatriation programme.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

Protection activities in camps identified and responded to the needs of unaccompanied and separated children (many of whom were formerly associated with fighting forces) as well as children at risk of exploitation and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and domestic violence. Regular monitoring was undertaken, leading to family tracing, referral for legal aid and interventions regarding the availability of work permits and the detention of refugees.

UNHCR endeavoured, in 2004, to improve and update the registration data gathered in 2003, using a digital photo database to verify holders of ration cards at food distributions. In September, UNHCR's

new Project PROFILE registration software platform, including the proGres database application, was introduced in Freetown and Kenema.

In 2004, UNHCR introduced initiatives for prevention and response to SGBV, including domestic violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. These involved developing regular and systematic liaison by UNHCR protection staff, together with implementing partners, with SGBV committees operating in each camp. This resulted in stronger community backing and support for reporting of incidents by victims and a strengthening of both the prevention and response mechanisms. The engagement of a legal consultant based in Kenema ensured systematic application of legal measures to bring perpetrators to justice.

Activities and assistance

Community services: The 18 Community Empowerment Projects (CEPs) implemented in 2004 covered reproductive health awareness, HIV/AIDS and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, sensitization on the principles of good governance, human rights and peace building for newly elected local councils, leadership capacity building for youths and local authorities, community radio and a women's recreational centre. The CEPs required the full participation and engagement of communities in addressing their immediate needs. CEPs for women and youth groups in areas of return have helped to empower these traditionally marginalized groups. Communities, especially refugee men, were sensitized to SGBV issues through men's action groups in the camps, or SGBV committees in urban refugee settlements. Nine CEPs in crop production were implemented and included food processing units and support for rice and cassava cultivation. In collaboration with FAO, an additional 2,000 farming families, including women and youth groups in returnee and host communities benefited from agricultural inputs (seeds and tools) distributed during the first farming season of the year. Fifteen CEPs were implemented on restocking of cattle, goats and sheep, livestock rearing and retailing and construction of animal shelters for 15 communities in main areas of return.

Domestic needs/Household support: Sierra Leonean returnees were given plastic sheets, mats, blankets, kitchen sets, jerry cans, lamps and soap.



Sierra Leone: On 21 July 2004, the final UNHCR convoy from Liberia crossed over the Mano River bridge into Sierra Leone carrying 286 refugees. This convoy carried the last of some 272,000 refugees who returned home after Sierra Leone's brutal 11-year civil war ended in 2000. *UNHCR/E. Kanalstein*

Seed rice, groundnuts, cassava cuttings and agricultural tools were provided and 240 farmers received agricultural training. Processing facilities such as cassava grinding machines were constructed for use by 2,000 refugee families in camps.

Education: UNHCR reintegration activities in education focused on providing support to schools through the supply of textbooks and furniture to 20 schools in Kono and Kailahun for use by more than 1,000 pupils. The CEPs included 34 educational projects covering construction and rehabilitation of schools, the provision of furniture, teaching and learning materials, vocational training for young people, especially young female school drop-outs, and adult literacy.

Eleven thousand two hundred children in refugee camps out of some 19,000 enrolled in schools in September 2004 and 83 per cent of the enrolled students in the 2003/2004 academic year completed schooling in July 2004. Access to senior secondary education was promoted through two channels. A boarding home was built for 200 refugee secondary students, located in Blama host community near

Tobanda camp. An e-learning programme benefited 350 senior secondary-age students, aged 16 to 25, living in camps not served by a senior secondary school in the host community area and who had not benefited from secondary education. It covered various technical disciplines, including distance education courses in journalism, physics, maths, and general science and computer applications.

Food: As in previous years, each refugee in the camps received a monthly food ration ensuring the minimum required nutritional standard of 2,100 kilocalories per person per day. No micro-nutrient deficiency was observed in camps during 2004; there were no newborns of dangerously low birth weight and malnutrition among under-fives was kept down to 100 out of 9,400 refugee children.

Amongst the urban refugees, food assistance was provided to people identified as extremely vulnerable (i.e. those with serious health or social problems, such as SGBV). For repatriating refugees, a cooked meal was provided at the way stations for overnight stops. Returnees transported to drop-off points were provided with a two-month food ration by WFP.

UNHCR arranged for food pipeline agencies to distribute food for an additional two months in areas of return.

Forestry: Environmental education in camps and host community schools gained momentum and school teachers were actively involved in the environmental action groups in the camps and host communities. In addition, over 900 nurseries (giving a cumulative total of 1,200 nurseries) were set up in forest areas close to the camps for the cultivation of various species chosen to rehabilitate the environment, mainly indigenous varieties known to thrive in local conditions. Linear planting of large numbers of the newly grown trees was conducted along roads and rows of shelters in camps and host communities. Furthermore, 1,400 refugees were trained in making fuel-saving stoves.

Health/Nutrition: Basic health-care delivery services were provided to returnees during convoy movements from the border to drop-off points. In addition, 21 projects, including construction of community health posts, health staff quarters and HIV/AIDS awareness raising, were implemented in 20 communities in areas of return. For logistical support, one new ambulance was given to the government hospital in Kambia district.

Primary health care facilities were maintained in all locations accommodating refugees. UNHCR upgraded a system for medical referral from camp clinics to government hospitals in Bo, Kenema and Freetown. HIV/AIDS activities were extended to all camps; 786 refugees (278 women) were trained as HIV/AIDS activists to carry out sensitization activities in the camps and condoms were distributed as part of the HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns. The Lassa fever prevention and control activities were expanded, leading to a reduction of incidence.

Income generation: Nineteen income-generating CEPs were implemented in main areas of return, mainly for women's groups. These activities ranged from small-scale trading in foodstuffs and household commodities to the running of entertainment centres and restaurants. A micro-credit scheme established in November 2003 in two camps was expanded to four camps in 2004, enabling over 2,000 refugees clients, 75 per cent of them female, to receive small business start-up loans. A complementary micro-development enterprise geared towards training refugees in business management

skills formed part of the Income Generating Activities programme. Vocational training for some 1,500 refugees led to income-generation opportunities for a few of them, especially in Gerihun camp where training was followed up with access to credit. Sadly, a very high percentage of former trainees remains unemployed due to lack of practice, markets and access to start-up credit, tools and materials. Owing to funding constraints it was not possible to provide any of the refugees who received vocational training with initial capital start-up kits or funds.

Legal assistance: Agreements were signed with a lawyer in Kenema to provide legal services to refugees, mainly juveniles and survivors of sexual violence. A law firm was engaged to cater for the legal needs of the urban refugees living in Freetown, Kenema and Bo.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR covered the operational, management and staffing costs of the five implementing partners involved in providing services to the refugees. A combined total of some 204 CEPs in the various sectors outlined above were thus implemented in four districts (Kono, Kailahun, Kambia and Pujehun) and distributed in 40 chiefdoms, benefiting more than 280 communities. The delivery of services by implementing partners was better in 2004 than in the previous year, due in part to increased allocations for operational support.

Sanitation: In the main districts of return, a total of 116 latrines were constructed for the improvement of sanitary conditions in 38 communities. As part of a reinforced general health promotion strategy, 15 refugees in each of the eight camps were trained on hygiene promotion; they then encouraged environmental cleanliness in the camps. Community sanitation tool kits were provided; over 4,000 latrines were either constructed or repaired and some 2,400 garbage pits maintained.

Shelter/Other infrastructure: Seventy-nine community infrastructure projects, including court barriers (community gathering arena), youth centres, guest houses and the construction of bridges benefited over 65 communities in main areas of return. In Kissi town settlement, each urban refugee family received materials and technical support for the construction of family shelters (young people were paid incentives to assist extremely vulnerable persons).

Transport/Logistics: Liberian refugees were repatriated by road, using UNHCR trucks and the light vehicle fleet managed by GTZ, from camps to the way stations and from there to the drop-off points in Liberia. Trucks were also provided for the transportation of domestic non-food items, materials for community empowerment projects and water drilling equipment. Spot repairs were carried out to the road through Zimmi to the Liberian border, in preparation for the first repatriation convoy movements.

Water: In the reintegration programme for Sierra Leonean returnees, a total of 93 water points were installed and/or rehabilitated, giving safe and clean drinking water to 82 communities in main areas of return. Refugees in camps enjoyed a constant supply of safe water with an average supply of 22 litres per person per day. Though two of the eight camps (Taiama and Gondama) did not attain the minimum standard of 22 litres per person per day, the situation improved for many of them (from 10 litres per person per day in 2003 to 12-17 litres per person per day in 2004).

Organization and implementation

Management

UNHCR maintained its branch office in Freetown, a sub-office in Kenema and field offices in Bo, Kailahun, Kambia, Koidu, Zimmi. The field office in Kambia was closed at the end of December. The offices were run by 35 international and 168 national staff, including one JPO, 10 UNVs and five secondees. In the context of the regional approach taken to refugee issues, cross-border meetings with UNHCR offices in other countries, mainly Guinea and Liberia, were held often, particularly in view of the repatriation of Liberian refugees.

Working with others

In 2004 UNHCR worked with 12 partners to implement its repatriation and reintegration project. The Transition Support Team, set up by the UN Country Team in 2003, established itself in 2004 in all four main districts of return as well as six other districts in the country, sharing UNHCR premises in three

districts: Kono, Kailahun and Kambia. This support team worked closely with UNHCR to ensure that, when the Office phases out, any infrastructure and services still required by returnee communities will be provided by local government structures in conjunction with their longer-term development partners.

The Liberian refugee programme was implemented in collaboration with 16 implementing partners. A number of operational partners also made important contributions to the provision of camp services, both in terms of funding and implementation. In order to ensure that the future phase-down and rehabilitation of camps takes place in a development framework that benefits both refugee self-reliance and the socio-economic stability of host communities, UNHCR entered into an agreement with the European Commission to provide technical coordination to an EU-funded programme covering natural resource management (in environmental work and agriculture), water development, and health care.

Overall assessment

The year 2004 was the first in recent memory in which Sierra Leone did not receive an emergency influx of Liberians. The Liberian refugees were adequately housed in camps and funding was by and large sufficient to offer minimum standards of camp protection and care. Conditions in Liberia began to improve, and organized voluntary repatriation began.

The Liberian repatriation operation got off to a promising start, although conditions in areas of return were not yet favourable, with the result that fewer refugees came forward to request UNHCR to facilitate their repatriation than had been anticipated. Lofa County, the area of origin of more than half of the refugees, had still to be declared ready for return at the end of the year.

Sierra Leonean refugees continued to return from neighbouring countries, with the numbers diminishing in the second half of the year and the operation coming to a formal close at the end of 2004. The Transition Support Team of the UN Country Team helped strengthen the new local governance structure to enable it to interface with development agencies and donors in 2005 and – beyond the end

of the UNHCR-funded reintegration programme – in 2006. The CEPs funded by UNHCR and implemented by NGOs meanwhile set a high standard for these continuing development processes by insisting on the full participation and engagement of communities in addressing their immediate priority reintegration needs.

Significant progress towards durable solutions was achieved for the first time for the 'old' group of Liberian urban refugees (who arrived in Sierra Leone in the late 1980s and early 1990s). In 2004, over 540 persons departed for resettlement abroad, while the cases of an additional 1,300 individuals were submitted for resettlement, most of them from this urban group.

2004 also saw progress towards the finalization of a refugee law, with the Cabinet approving a draft that, if adopted, would be fully aligned with international standards and best practice. When it comes into effect, this legislation will establish the institutional framework and administrative procedures for the management of refugee issues by the Government of Sierra Leone.

Offices

Freetown

Bo
Kailahun
Kambia (closed, end 2004)
Kenema
Koidu
Zimmi

Partners

Government agencies

National Commission for Social Action
Sierra Leone Roads Authority

NGOs

African Concern
African Development and Emergency Organization
American Refugee Committee
Arch Diocesan Development Office
Bo/Pujehun Development Associates
Caritas Kenema
Catholic Relief Services
Christian Children's Fund
Environmental Foundation for Africa
International Medical Corps
International Rescue Committee
Johns Hopkins University/MENTOR
Lutheran World Federation
Medical Emergency Relief International
Network Movement for Justice and Development
OXFAM
Peace Winds Japan
Right to Play
Sierra Leone Red Cross Society
Talking Drum Studio-Search for Common Ground
World Vision International

Others

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
FAO
UNV

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Prior years' project
	Annual programme budget	Annual and Supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	5,838,249	0
Community services	4,052,576	2,195,808
Domestic needs / household support	575,353	0
Education	1,396,494	379,728
Food	193,417	58,727
Forestry	68,271	128,119
Health and nutrition	788,739	448,783
Income generation	201,313	151,135
Legal assistance	242,992	188,900
Operational support (to agencies)	3,570,693	1,107,329
Sanitation	263,185	141,932
Shelter and infrastructure	885,502	1,561,787
Transport and logistics	6,501,684	703,563
Water	692,119	653,090
Instalments with implementing partners	2,405,208	(7,718,901)
Sub-total operational activities	27,675,794	0
Programme support	3,621,270	0
Total disbursements	31,297,064	0
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	17,069,704	
Reporting received	(14,664,496)	
Balance	2,405,208	
Prior years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1 January		7,466,763
Payments made		907,594
Reporting received		(7,718,901)
Refunded to UNHCR		(587,234)
Balance		68,222
Unliquidated obligations		
Outstanding 1 January		3,160,811
Disbursements		(2,169,086)
Cancellations		(991,725)
Outstanding 31 December		0