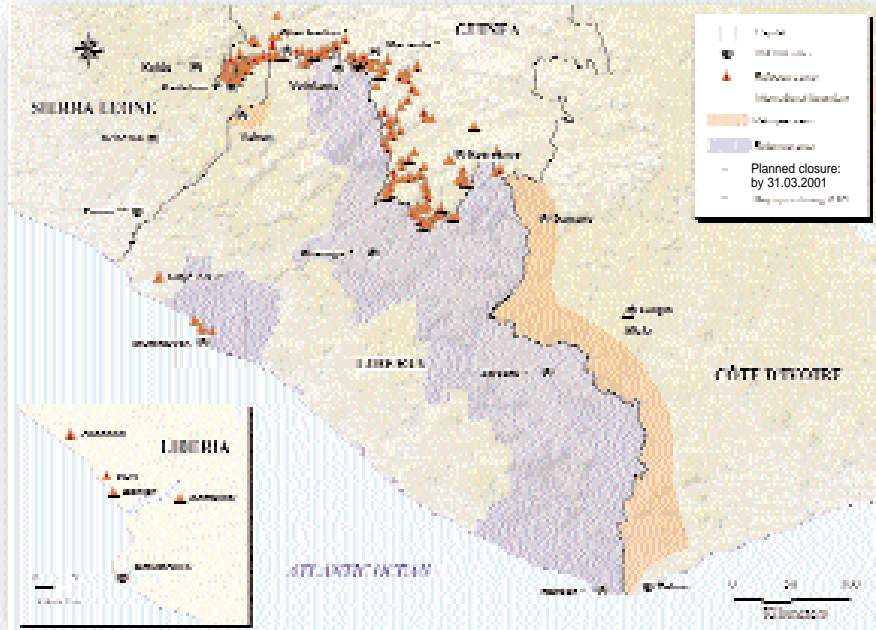


Liberia in short

Main Objectives

- Protect and assist Sierra Leonean refugees living in camps, with a focus on activities fostering self-reliance. Support those who decide to return on their own and subsequently monitor their situation insofar as possible. When large-scale repatriation becomes feasible, mount a comprehensive logistics operation to support the voluntary return of Sierra Leonean refugees currently in three counties in the north and west of Liberia.
- Continue to work to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in refugee communities.
- Empower refugees through education and skills training to enhance their capacity to integrate and rebuild their country upon return.
- Monitor the welfare of Liberian returnees and war-affected populations; make return viable through the implementation of basic infrastructure rehabilitation projects in Lofa county and eventually hand over these projects to the Government, other UN agencies and/or NGOs.
- Help urban refugees and their dependants cover their basic needs (including education and medical care) while identifying longer-term solutions for them.



PLANNING FIGURES

| Population | Jan. 2001 | Dec. 2001 |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Sierra Leonean Refugees ¹ | 80,000 | 55,000 |
| Liberian Returnees ² | 380,000 | 430,000 |
| Urban Refugees ³ | 44 | 44 |
| Total | 460,044 | 485,044 |

¹ Large-scale repatriation is contingent upon an improvement in the overall security situation as well as access by humanitarian agencies to main areas of return in Sierra Leone. Out of a total of 80,000 Sierra Leonean refugees, 35,000 in Grand Cape Mount and Montserado counties receive assistance from UNHCR. Another 45,000 are believed to be living in Vahun (Lofa county) and surrounding areas. Up to 25,000 of these refugees may repatriate voluntarily in 2001.

² Repatriation depends on the security situation in Lofa county (to which some 30,000 Liberian refugees are expected to return voluntarily from Guinea) and on the border between Guinea and Liberia being open for individuals who wish to return. Some 20,000 Liberians could decide to return from Côte d'Ivoire, mainly to counties where UNHCR has phased out its reintegration programme.

³ Although permanent solutions will be offered to some urban refugees, their overall number is unlikely to fall as increasing numbers of asylum-seekers enter Liberia.

TOTAL REQUIREMENTS • USD 15,787,728

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

By the time organised voluntary repatriation comes to an end in December, more than 380,000 Liberians will have returned home, half of them to the six districts of volatile Lofa county.

Intensified fighting there has not yet permitted the return of UN and other relief agencies who evacuated the area amid mounting insecurity, including attacks on humanitarian workers, hostage-taking and looting of assets. The Government has reportedly regained control of Vahun, Foya, Kolahun and Zorzor as well as parts of Voinjama. However in August 2000 UNHCR's office in Vahun was again looted of communica-

tions and computer equipment. The prospect of peace and stability in the area has been dimmed by recent reports of shelling of several towns and villages in Zorzor District, and the evacuation of residents of Barkedu town in Voinjama. Nevertheless, UNHCR expects that up to 30,000 Liberian refugees may wish to return individually from Guinea to Lofa county in 2001, security permitting.

Due to the volatile security situation in Lofa county, UNHCR has been finding it extremely difficult to monitor refugees and returnees in the area. Reports about their conditions have however been received from various agencies and the Government. Recent renewed attacks and military activity in the region have uprooted and displaced many citizens. This prompted the ICRC to undertake an independent fact-finding mission to Zorzor District (followed by the Government and some international NGOs). It revealed that many of the displaced are living in precarious conditions. As a result, ICRC delivered material support to some 7,500 persons while WFP provided food for 13,000. Security permitting, UNHCR plans to resume monitoring activities and operations in the area in 2001.

Constraints

With unemployment as high as 85 per cent, and an external debt burden of more than USD 3 billion, Liberia has an uphill struggle to rebuild its economy and basic infrastructure, shattered by its seven-year civil war. The country's main difficulty is to garner sufficient international support and resources in the face of widespread accusations about involvement in the Sierra Leonean conflict, particularly its alleged support of illicit trade in diamonds and rebel activity in the region.

For UNHCR's work with refugees and returnees alike, the most important constraint continues to be insecurity, particularly in Lofa county. Operations are also hampered by inaccessibility due to abysmal road conditions, particularly during the rainy season. Furthermore, members of the national security forces need training on the tenets of international and regional refugee law (to which Liberia is a party) as well as basic human rights law. Poor resources and inadequate pay for security officers have not motivated them to enforce these laws and some ethnic groups (such as the Mandingo) have faced harassment upon return to their homes.

The harsh working and living conditions in Liberia render this operation particularly difficult in terms of material and human resources. Humanitarian staff face a chronic shortage of medical



facilities, water, electricity and other basic services, as well as logistical problems exacerbated by a shortage of vehicles.

STRATEGY

Sierra Leonean Refugees

As a consequence of tardy implementation of the Lomé Peace Accord, UNHCR has not yet commenced organised voluntary repatriation to Sierra Leone. Some spontaneous movements have, however, been observed and according to the Government, approximately 5,000 Sierra Leonean refugees have returned from Liberia during the current year. About 35,000 Sierra Leonean refugees reside in camps in Montserrado and Grand Cape Mount counties and another 45,000 are scattered throughout Lofa county with little or no access to humanitarian assistance. An important objective for 2001 will be to re-establish contact with the latter group of refugees to ascertain their living conditions and extend adequate international protection to them. To this end, UNHCR will continue to advocate with the Liberian Government for improved security and attempt to resume missions to upper Lofa county, particularly to the Vahun region. Training will continue for local security officers (the military, immigration, and police) to foster a better understanding of UNHCR's work, and the needs and rights of refugees.

The only long-term solution for Sierra Leonean refugees is the restoration of peace and stability in their country. Any positive developments in this direction over the next few months would enable UNHCR to begin implementing a carefully planned repatriation and reintegration strategy. If the security situation in Sierra Leone does not drastically deteriorate during the course of 2001, some 25,000 Sierra Leonean refugees are expected to repatriate from Liberia either with UNHCR's help

or on their own. Pending the commencement of organised voluntary repatriation, UNHCR will continue to enhance its preparations by means of various activities with cross-border impact. These include expanding the refugee database which will underpin reintegration activities in Sierra Leone.

UNHCR will continue to intervene to assure the physical safety of refugees in refugee camps in association with its government counterpart. Most concerns to date relate to incidents between refugees themselves with only occasional tension between refugees and national security authorities or citizens. Intervention is required at all levels, from mediation of disputes between refugees to representation of refugee rights in the first instance with local immigration and police officers, but also with senior police and government officials if necessary. Persons of concern held in custody will continue to receive monitoring visits.

Awareness training on women's rights will be organised for refugees, implementing partners and government staff. A project entitled "Action for the Rights of the Children" will focus on protection and support for unaccompanied minors. The campaign against harmful traditional practices (such as female genital mutilation) will continue, with training and awareness raising workshops. Elderly people and single-head families will receive additional support.

UNHCR and its partners will focus on safeguarding refugee children's rights (including the prevention of child prostitution, forced labour and participation in rebel activities) through the expansion of peer support groups (such as girls' clubs) and access to counselling and information. Adolescents will be informed about how to prevent HIV/AIDS (and other sexually transmitted diseases) and given access to contraceptives. Psychosocial support will be made available for abused and neglected children; former child soldiers will have access to special rehabilitation programmes.

Camp-based Sierra Leonean refugees will have access to essential services, particularly for health and education, through various NGO partners. Clinics offering basic health care (including minor surgery, maternity and child care, and family planning) will continue to operate in all camps in Montserrado (Banjor, Samukai, VOA-1 and Zuannah) and Grand Cape Mount (Sinje) counties. Refugees with more serious conditions will continue to be referred to appropriate hospitals in Liberia (and exceptionally outside Liberia if necessary). Primary education will be made available for more than 8,000 refugee children and 300 refugee children from camps in Montserrado county will receive secondary education.

A national NGO will work with UNHCR to encourage refugees, particularly women, to participate in camp management (construction and maintenance of water and sanitary facilities, basic infrastructure and drainage systems) as a means

to increase their self-reliance. Refugee women will also be able to attend leadership training courses to help them contribute to decision-making in the camps. Recreational activities will be organised for young people. Vulnerable refugees will receive special support tailored to their needs; a monthly Family Forum focusing on cultural activities will be organised together with inter-camp sports events and counselling clubs. UNHCR will help unaccompanied children to trace their families and an accelerated education and life-skills programme will be implemented for adolescents.

UNHCR will help refugees – especially women and girls – prepare for their eventual repatriation by organising a variety of training courses. These will include literacy classes and skills training (for example cloth dyeing, tailoring and bread-making) to further their capacity to earn an income. Refugee women will also be encouraged to engage in agricultural activities and UNHCR will provide seeds, tools, training and technical support for the setting up of kitchen gardens, upland and swamp rice farming, and the cultivation of maize, cassava and vegetables. Some small-scale cattle husbandry will also be supported.

Projects will be undertaken in the refugee camps and surrounding host areas to raise environmental consciousness, encourage the community manufacture of fuel-efficient ecological stoves and reforest camp sites and surrounding areas. Agro-forestry projects will be organised not only to help host communities re-establish economic life but also to mitigate tension between refugees and local communities over the use of land and resources.

UNHCR's main concern is that Sierra Leonean refugees are safe and adequately cared for during their stay in Liberia, and that their return to Sierra Leone only takes place when security and other conditions permit. Meanwhile, the agency will help them acquire new skills to enable them to participate more actively in the rebuilding of their country upon return.

Liberian Returnees

Although most areas of return are deemed relatively safe (with the exception of Lofa county), and very few returnees have reported harassment, UNHCR will advocate with its government counterpart for the deployment of additional returnee monitors in major areas of return. At present, the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) has monitoring staff in all field locations and their continued presence after UNHCR's withdrawal is crucial.

To counter insecurity in Lofa county and enable repatriation and reintegration activities to resume, UNHCR continues to support the launch of a community-based security watch project whereby, over a period of three years, 1,800 police officers would be trained and modestly equipped to provide safety for local residents, returnees and refugees. The implementation of

this project lies at the heart of UNHCR's 2001 programme in Liberia, but its initiation will require the re-establishment of a sufficiently secure working environment in Lofa, and the unconditional support of the Government of Liberia.

UNHCR will organise training on international protection for members of law enforcement agencies and other government institutions on a more regular basis than in the past. This should address the problems inherent in high staff turnover within the Government and lead to improved safety for its citizens. Workshops will emphasise refugee and returnee rights and obligations as stipulated in relevant international instruments.

Although much has been done to facilitate the reintegration of Liberians returning from exile – with more than 150 community-based Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) completed in five counties over a period of three years – the transition from reintegration to development has been slower than was originally hoped and basic public services remain in a quandary for want of national resources. UNHCR is concerned that achievements in returnee communities may be jeopardised without a viable strategy for the hand-over of activities to the Government and other agencies.

In 2001, UNHCR will significantly scale down reintegration activities in all counties except Lofa. (In certain cases, UNHCR may also assist communities hosting returnees who are unable to return to their places of origin.) All projects commenced in previous years will be completed. If the security situation permits the resumption of UNHCR's activities in Lofa county, several new QIPs will be undertaken there. These will focus on the rehabilitation of key infrastructure: eight schools, five clinics, rural water supplies, sanitation and limited work on roads and bridges. UNHCR will revitalise agricultural activities among returnees (especially women) through the distribution of seeds and tools coupled with training in crop production, small-scale cattle husbandry and commercial crop processing (rice and cassava mills). Business training and micro-finance is also planned, mainly for returnee women, to stimulate production and trade in returnee communities.

To advance the role of women in returnee communities UNHCR will continue to offer leadership training, in addition to literacy courses and other workshops designed to equip them with marketable skills. Psychosocial support programmes will also be established to help returnee women reconstruct their lives. An extensive reproductive health programme will address the prevention of HIV/AIDS as well as other sexually transmitted diseases; contraceptives will be distributed upon request.

Activities for refugee children and adolescents will focus on improving access to education and family tracing. The legal profession, community leaders and social workers will be offered training on the rights of the child. Radio programmes will continue to be produced to address issues related to psychological trauma and healing.

If security conditions allow activities to commence in Lofa county, community environmental management projects will be supported in schools and communities there. These will involve the promotion of 'eco-stoves', plant nurseries, community woodlots and agro-forestry. They will not only improve general welfare but also deepen public understanding of the direct relationship between the environment and economic production.

UNHCR's support for reintegration is only the first link in a chain of essential rehabilitation and development activities required to help returnees resume their lives. If other agencies do not follow suit, and if investment and development aid do not materialise, the long-term viability of returnee communities will be seriously jeopardised.

Urban Refugees

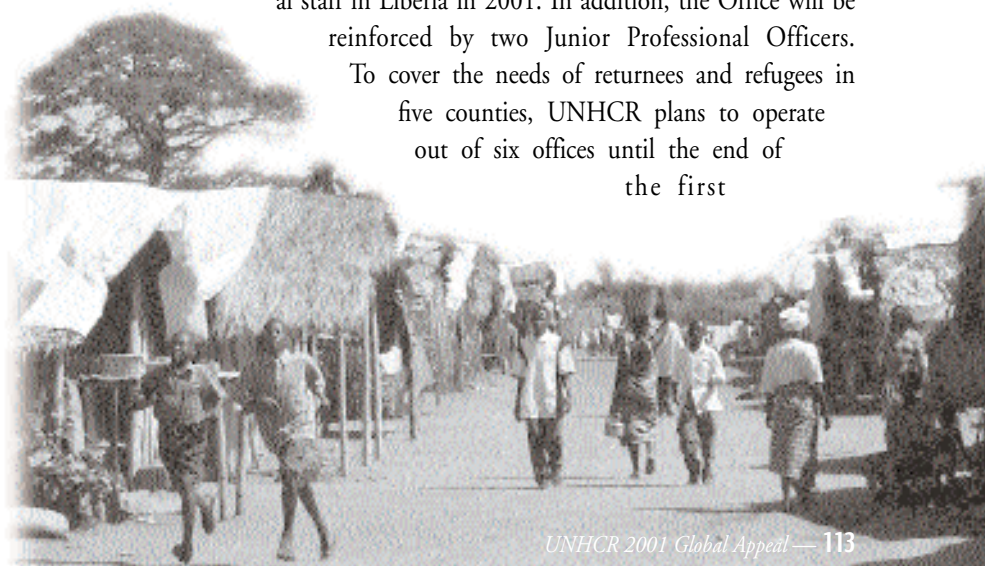
UNHCR will continue to give support to the national asylum committee for individual refugee status determination. A limited number of urban refugees (mainly Sudanese) will be supported. Pending long-term solutions such as repatriation or resettlement, they will receive subsistence allowances and medical services according to individual needs. Educational support will include university scholarships (through the DAFI fund) for 30 students to study outside of Liberia.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

UNHCR plans to operate with 16 international and 69 national staff in Liberia in 2001. In addition, the Office will be reinforced by two Junior Professional Officers.

To cover the needs of returnees and refugees in five counties, UNHCR plans to operate out of six offices until the end of the first



quarter. This implies reactivation of the offices in Voinjama and Vahun (provided that the security of staff be guaranteed by the Government), which will serve as forward operational bases for refugees and returnees in Lofa county. As of April, it is expected that the offices in Gbarnga, Harper and Zwedru will be closed (having served Liberian returnees for more than three years). The remoteness of most locations in rural Liberia (including UNHCR's field offices) and the general lack of access to services and infrastructure will continue to affect the management of a complex returnee and refugee operation.

OFFICES

| Monrovia |
|---|
| Gbarnga (planned closure: early 2001) |
| Harper (planned closure: early 2001) |
| Vahun (to reopen, security permitting) |
| Voinjama (to reopen, security permitting) |
| Zwedru (planned closure: early 2001) |

| BUDGET (USD) | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Activities and Services | Annual Programme | Supplementary Programme | Total |
| Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination | 1,589,165 | 0 | 1,589,165 |
| Community Services | 348,130 | 12,000 | 360,130 |
| Crop Production | 155,000 | 0 | 155,000 |
| Domestic Needs/ Household Support | 294,645 | 0 | 294,645 |
| Education | 1,359,240 | 0 | 1,359,240 |
| Food | 32,070 | 10,000 | 42,070 |
| Forestry | 138,000 | 0 | 138,000 |
| Health/Nutrition | 653,910 | 50,000 | 703,910 |
| Income Generation | 477,500 | 0 | 477,500 |
| Legal Assistance | 209,215 | 50,000 | 259,215 |
| Livestock | 73,000 | 0 | 73,000 |
| Operational Support (to Agencies) | 3,279,170 | 150,000 | 3,429,170 |
| Sanitation | 122,500 | 0 | 122,500 |
| Shelter/Other Infrastructure | 153,000 | 29,600 | 182,600 |
| Transport/Logistics | 2,291,020 | 1,200,000 | 3,491,020 |
| Water (non-agricultural) | 382,000 | 0 | 382,000 |
| Total Operations | 11,557,565 | 1,501,600 | 13,059,165 |
| Programme Support | 2,728,563 | 0 | 2,728,563 |
| Total | 14,286,128 | 1,501,600 | 15,787,728 |

Co-ordination

Since the beginning of the Liberian repatriation and reintegration programme, UNHCR has established a solid base of operational partners, including the Government and some 20 NGOs. UNHCR's main partner is the LRRRC, which is responsible for overall co-ordination of the repatriation and reintegration activities of all humanitarian actors in the country. To prepare for UNHCR's eventual disengagement, the emphasis has been on building capacity for legal work, finance, management and reporting, particularly among national NGOs. It is expected that this process will continue through a system of sponsorship whereby international NGOs will be responsible for providing adequate training to national counterparts prior to the handing over of responsibilities. In 2001, the agency plans to sign implementing agreements with one governmental agency, nine international and seven national NGOs. In each camp, the inhabitants have elected leaders to sit on Refugee Welfare Committees set up to handle everyday problems. Close relations will be maintained with WFP, which will give basic food commodities (cereals, pulses and edible oil) to the refugees and returnees. Other UN agencies such as UNICEF and UNDP will continue to work in partnership with UNHCR on questions related to education and the Brookings Process, with a view to bridging the gap between reintegration and longer-term development.

PARTNERS

Government Agencies

Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission

NGOs

Action Contre la Faim

American Refugee Committee

Association for Female Lawyers for Liberia

Common Grounds Productions / Talking Drums Studio

Don Bosco Rehabilitation and Skills Training Programme

Environmental Foundation for Africa

Family Empowerment Programme

Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit

Initiative pour une Afrique solidaire

International Rescue Committee

Liberian 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's Commission of Liberia

Save the Children Fund/UK

Sustainable Development Promoters