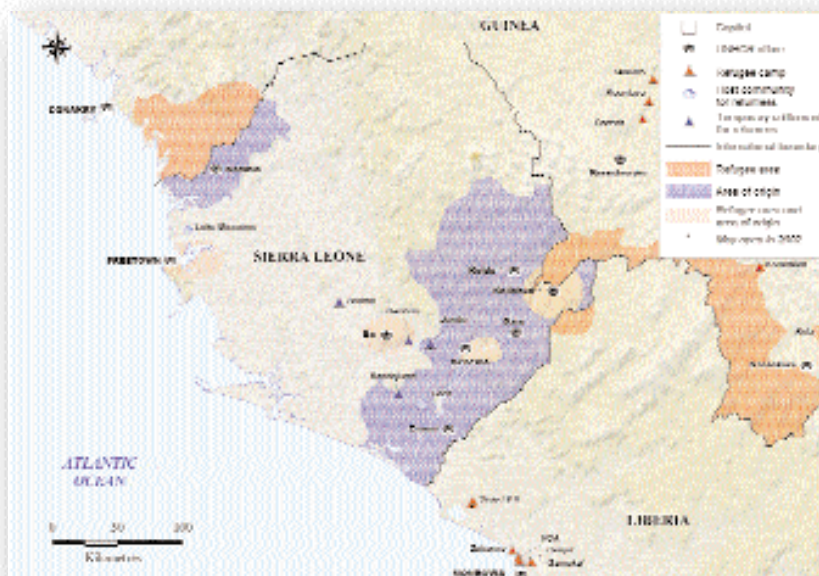


# Sierra Leone

## Main Objectives

- Facilitate and later promote, in conditions of safety and dignity, the voluntary return of 50,000 Sierra Leonean refugees and 50,000 internally displaced returnees temporarily assisted in the safe areas to their places of origin, as well as provide assistance in their places of origin.
- Monitor the situation and provide information on actual security and living conditions of their places of origin to Sierra Leonean refugees in countries of asylum and to those returnees who have not yet been able to return to their areas of origin. In close co-operation with the Government and other partners, set up monitoring mechanisms to ensure physical safety and improved living conditions for returnees.
- Promote the enactment of national legislation and the adoption of administrative procedures for refugee issues, including status determination, by the Government.
- Provide Liberian refugees who still need international protection with the opportunities to achieve long-term solutions through local integration, naturalisation and resettlement.
- Provide assistance to newly arrived Liberian refugees.



## PLANNING FIGURES

Population	Jan. 2002	Dec. 2002
Sierra Leonean Returnees	63,000 <sup>1</sup>	100,000
Liberian Refugees	13,000 <sup>2</sup>	17,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>76,000</b>	<b>117,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> In addition to 59,000 returnees registered between September 2000 and September 2001, another 4,000 are expected to return by December 2001. Furthermore, it is believed that an unknown number of Sierra Leonean refugees have spontaneously returned to the RUF-controlled areas inaccessible to UNHCR.

<sup>2</sup> As of September 2001, there are 7,000 screened and 4,500 newly arrived refugees who have been registered. The latter number is expected to rise by 1,500 by December 2001.

## TOTAL REQUIREMENTS: USD 14,959,111

## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### Recent Developments

Since the signing of the Abuja Cease-fire Agreement in November 2000, the political and security situation in Sierra Leone has steadily improved. In May 2001, a communiqué was signed by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the Government, the Civil Defence Force and UNAMSIL, instituting the clauses stipulated in the Agreement and resuming the disarmament exercise. Since the signing of the communiqué, several important steps have been taken towards restoring peace and civil order. By the end of September 2001, some 20,000 combatants had been disarmed and more than 10,000 weapons

destroyed. The Government is in control of 60 per cent of the country and is working towards securing the remainder. UNAMSIL peacekeeping troops and the Sierra Leone Army have been deployed to parts of the country thus far controlled by the RUF, such as Kono and Kambia districts. The border between Sierra Leone and Guinea was reopened at Kambia and Pamelap. These developments allow some humanitarian activities and assistance to resume in Kailahun, Kambia and Kono districts.

In August 2001, the meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Mano River Union countries (Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone) made commitments towards re-activation of the non-aggression clause of the Mano River treaty, the repatriation of refugees from the sub-region to their countries of origin and the

return of all dissidents to their places of origin. A joint security meeting of the Ministers of Defence and Security of the Mano River Union in September 2001 resulted in the reopening of the border with Liberia. Such outcomes are expected to further contribute to peace and stability in the sub-region.

On the other hand, the situation in Lofa county, and in Liberia as a whole, is of major concern, as the deterioration of the security situation could result in the sudden massive return of Sierra Leonean refugees. New influxes of Liberian refugees began in March 2001 and may continue in 2002. By September 2001, some 4,500 Liberians have been newly registered in safe areas of Sierra Leone, although thousands more are estimated to be in RUF-controlled areas.

### Constraints

Despite the prevailing calm, the political scene in Sierra Leone remains complex. There are fears that parliamentary and presidential elections, now set for 14 May 2002, could derail the peace process. Current discussions on voter registration procedures may permit internally displaced persons, including returnees, a dual option of voting in the district of their current residence or their district of origin, rather than limiting voting to the district of residence. It is hoped that such a policy will alleviate political tensions about the location of returnees.

Although Sierra Leonean refugees presently appear to be cautious about returning to their areas of origin, there is a real possibility of spontaneous mass return to unprepared communities, bringing pre-existing tensions to the boil. The deployment of UNAMSIL and the Sierra Leone Police may trigger an increased number of returnees in previously inaccessible areas. The security situation in the countries of asylum may also encourage such spontaneous returns. Essential elements of social infrastructure at the chiefdom level have been destroyed and massive reconstruction is required. In their efforts to reintegrate ex-combatants, former IDPs and returnees into the community, district and local administrations have barely kept pace with the disarmament, resettlement and repatriation process.

Progress in disarmament will also affect UNHCR's programme. The Government's capacity to implement the reintegration of ex-combatants has so far been hampered by lack of funds. Those demanding reintegration compensation packages have already caused sporadic civil disorder. Liberian refugees arriving in Kailahun district will remain extremely vulnerable until disarmament of ex-combatants in the district leads to refugees' unhindered access to humanitarian assistance.

## STRATEGY

### Sierra Leonean Returnees

During 2002, UNHCR will be involved in the facilitation and eventually the promotion of the mass return of Sierra Leonean refugees. Following a comprehensive mass information campaign in the countries of asylum, voluntary repatriation will only be facilitated to areas deemed to be safe after careful consideration of decisions and assessments made by the National and District Resettlement Assessment Committee and UNAMSIL. A large-scale voluntary repatriation will only be promoted when overall conditions are deemed conducive to safe and durable mass return. By the end of 2002, it is expected that some 100,000 Sierra Leonean returnees will have been assisted in their places of origin. Among those, 50,000 internally displaced returnees will be transferred from the host communities and temporary settlements where they have been accommodated since their arrival in the course of 2000 and 2001.

During 2001, support for the reintegration of returnees in their places of origin has been limited as most of the assistance was provided in the host communities, temporary settlements and transit camps where, by September 2001, 42,400 returnees were residing. In 2002, most returnees will benefit from reintegration assistance in their communities of origin. Each returnee family will receive a package consisting of food, non-food items and agricultural inputs; and short-term reintegration programmes in the form of Quick Impact Projects will be implemented. UNHCR's reintegration activities, including rehabilitation of schools, health centres and road repairs, as well as income-generating activities, are community-based and demand-driven interventions. Such assistance will be implemented within the framework set out by the Government and co-ordinated by the National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NCRRR) in close co-operation with other agencies involved in activities for IDPs, former combatants and other war-affected populations. UNHCR will continue to carry out systematic returnee monitoring, forge partnerships with other actors in monitoring the rights of returnees and build up the capacity of the Government.

UNHCR's focus on community-based assistance will also assist vulnerable people in their societies. This assistance will include a programme to support survivors of sexual and gender-based violence through counselling, specialist medical care, training for income generation and the promotion of group solidarity. The rights of women will be promoted through gender-based community work aimed at giving women the confi-



Sierra Leonean war-wounded IDP and returnee from Guinea in Freetown. UNHCR/L. Taylor.

dence to be more active in community development decisions. Separated children will be assisted with family tracing and reunification, while those who are unaccompanied will additionally be provided with accommodation through interim care centres and foster families and will be assisted with education, vocational training, recreational activities and other basic services. Child protection activities will focus on promoting returnee children's rights, including rapid reintegration in schools and communities. The environmental interventions initiated in past years will continue in 2002, aiming to establish a continuum between environmental activities undertaken in Guinea and Liberia.

By the end of 2002, UNHCR aims to have put in place the mechanisms that will enable returnees to resume economic activities and enjoy access to social infrastructure upon their arrival. UNHCR's reintegration programmes will be limited in time and scope; efforts will therefore be made from the outset to form partnerships with organisations involved in longer-term development activities. UNHCR will, when necessary, call for funds to be channelled directly to such organisations.

### **Liberian Refugees and Asylum-Seekers**

The majority of the refugees and asylum-seekers in Sierra Leone are Liberian nationals. Following completion of the organised voluntary repatriation programme in 1999, UNHCR embarked on an individual screening exercise in order to assess the need for continuing international protection, determine durable solutions and target assistance. Some 7,000 Liberians presented themselves to UNHCR during the exercise in 2000 and 2001. Results indicated that some 44 per cent of the population could be expected to return home without fear of persecution, although UNHCR has put on hold promotion of voluntary repatriation pending stabilisation of the security situation in Liberia. Over seven per cent are in need of resettlement. The remaining are those who cannot be expected to return to Liberia in the near future and are in need of assistance to become self-sustainable. Forty-nine per cent were assessed as being in need of either local integration or long-term stay in Sierra Leone until they are able to return to Liberia at a later stage. Twenty per cent of the screened refugees appeared to meet the criteria for Sierra Leonean naturalisation and will be targeted for a sensitisation campaign.

It is anticipated that the political and security situation in Sierra Leone will allow continued asylum for Liberian refugees. At this stage, most of the 7,000 refugees are expected to remain in Sierra Leone and not to opt for repatriation due to insecurity in Liberia. UNHCR will continue to promote local integration focusing on promoting self-reliance of an estimated 3,500 Liberian refugees through micro-credit, vocational training, agricultural and livestock inputs, and education for the children. The Office will also work with the Government to legalise the immigration status of refugees, including through the issuing of identity documents; facilitating naturalisation of those who meet the requirements for Sierra Leonean citizenship; and promotion of residency status for

others. Those who are in need of resettlement will also be assisted. The most vulnerable refugees will receive food and assistance to cover the cost of primary health care. As for Sierra Leonean returnees, UNHCR will address the specific needs of refugee women, women heads-of-household, and children. UNHCR is aware of the significant number of children who are not attending school following the premature termination of educational assistance in 1998. It will therefore ensure that refugee children in vulnerable families are able to attend school. For some 230 separated minors identified through the screening exercise, tracing programmes will be put in place in collaboration with child protection agencies. The Government will be encouraged to facilitate birth registration and to issue birth certificates for refugee children born in Sierra Leone. A sensitisation campaign on these matters will be carried out in refugee communities. The local integration assistance for this group of refugees will be generally discontinued by the end of 2002.

Some 4,500 Liberian refugees were newly registered in accessible areas between March and September 2001, as a result of armed conflict in Lofa county; 2,500 of them are assisted in the temporary settlements established for Sierra Leonean returnees, pending establishment of a Liberian refugee camp. It is expected that the number of newly arrived Liberian refugees could rise to 10,000 by the end of 2002. UNHCR has asked the Government to recognise the new influxes as *prima facie* refugees under the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa. Currently, the majority of new Liberian refugees are located in RUF-controlled areas to which UNHCR and other humanitarian organisations have only limited access. Therefore only small-scale protection, monitoring and assistance initiatives are possible in these areas. A camp specifically for Liberian refugees is currently being constructed at a reasonable distance from the border in Bo district. Upon completion in November 2001, those in need of care and maintenance assistance and those currently accommodated in the temporary settlements for Sierra Leonean returnees will be transferred. Those willing to remain in Kailahun district or in other parts of the country will benefit from community-based assistance provided to Sierra Leonean returnees and local populations.

## **ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Management Structure**

The Regional Directorate for West and Central Africa (DRACO) will ensure co-ordination among the offices in the region, including emergency preparedness and contingency planning. The Repatriation Cell formed in April 2000 to oversee the repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees will continue to



meet on a regular basis, bringing together the offices in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone as well as DRACO. The cell will also discuss issues of a regional nature pertaining to Liberian refugees. For the year 2002, UNHCR in Sierra Leone has a total of 57 officers, 13 international, 43 local, and one JPO, but the staffing level is currently being reassessed in the light of increased activities in the country. Security permitting, UNHCR will open offices in Kailahun and Koidu, in addition to those set up in Bo, Daru, Kambia, Kenema and Zimmi over the course of 2001.

### Co-ordination

Through some 15 international NGOs, four local NGOs and two UN agencies, UNHCR will provide assistance and international protection for Sierra Leonean returnees and Liberian refugees. As part of efforts to bridge the gap between short-term humanitarian relief and longer-term sustainable development, preference will be given to agreements with those NGOs which are likely to remain operational beyond the initial phase of reintegration. Similarly, development-oriented international NGO partners will be encouraged to work with national organisations towards an eventual transfer of activities. Activities will also be implemented through Government structures such as the Sierra Leone Roads Authority and NCRRR. Co-ordination of assistance will be ensured through the Sectoral Committee on Repatriation, involving UN agencies, line ministries, NGOs and donors. UNHCR will also take an active part in the relevant sectoral committee meetings.

In the main areas of return, UNHCR will supplement the efforts of UNICEF, WHO and other agencies in the sectors of basic education, primary healthcare, water, sanitation and nutrition. WFP will give returnees a two-month food ration upon arrival. Thereafter they will be included in the existing food-for-work and other programmes. FAO will provide seeds and tools as well as livestock to returning internally displaced and refugee families. The Office is also closely co-ordinating with IOM, OCHA, UNAMSIL and UNDP. Through the Sierra Leone United Nations Country Team and the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), common objectives and planning scenarios have been agreed upon by the agencies. This precludes duplication of effort, setting out clearly defined responsibilities for assistance to the various categories of war-affected population. A contingency plan has also been developed with other United Nations agencies in the context of the CAP.

### OFFICES

Freetown	Bo
Daru	Kailahun (To be opened in 2002, security permitting)
Kambia	Kenema
Koidu (To be opened in 2002, security permitting)	Zimmi

### PARTNERS

Government Agency
National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation
NGOs
American Refugee Committee
Bo Pujehun Development Associates
Concern Worldwide
Family Homes Movement
Forum for African Women Educationalists
<i>Initiative pour une Afrique solidaire</i>
International Islamic Youth League
International Medical Corps Sierra Leone
International Rescue Committee
Lutheran World Federation
<i>Médecins sans Frontières</i> (Belgium)
Methodist Church of Sierra Leone
Norwegian Refugee Council
Oxfam International
Peace Winds Japan
Save the Children
Talking Drums Studio information
The Environmental Foundation for Africa
Others
<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i>
FAO
UNVs

### BUDGET (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	2,245,934
Community Services	882,123
Crop Production	1,179,452
Domestic Needs	1,074,609
Education	727,397
Food	342,055
Forestry	193,836
Health	736,849
Income Generation	711,370
Legal Assistance	316,576
Operational Support (to Agencies)	1,438,630
Sanitation	217,990
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	1,116,781
Transport/Logistics	1,635,342
Water	420,890
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>13,239,834</b>
Programme Support	1,719,277
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,959,111</b>