



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

Country: Sierra Leone

Planning Year: 2004

Country Operations Plan 2004

UNHCR Sierra Leone

Part I. Executive Summary

- **Political Context**

Positive political developments in Sierra Leone have set the stage for 'promoted voluntary repatriation' of Sierra Leonean refugees. 2002 saw a return to stability, heralded by an unprecedented humanitarian, political and military effort by the international community. The year was marked by the declaration of the end of the civil war, the re-establishment of state authority throughout the country, the restoration of traditional leaders and the holding of peaceful elections. There were tremendous improvements in the security situation as the government restructured security forces and gradually took responsibility for ensuring that forces were in place to secure stability throughout the country. At the time of writing, some 220,000 Sierra Leoneans have returned to the country since September 2000, of whom some 126,000 have been individually assisted by UNHCR. Another 220,000 internally displaced persons have been resettled in home areas, mostly in northern and eastern provinces.

- **Security Situation**

Internally, although there are yet to be notable serious security concerns, attention should be paid to reports about unexploded ordinance (UXO) being discovered in Kailahun, Kambia and Kono districts, the three main districts of return. Not all the chiefdoms will be completely free of hidden UXO but ongoing sensitisation and clearing by UNAMSIL should help prevent injury and loss of lives.

Another security concern at national level is the lack of follow-up on the reintegration of former ex-combatants to their communities - an objective of both national and UNAMSIL Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes. The planned draw-down of UNAMSIL peace-keeping troops from 16,000 in late 2002 to 5,000 by the end of 2004 is being gradually implemented, closely linked to the achievement of critical benchmarks established by the Security Council, particularly improvements in the capacity of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and Army to maintain security.

- **Protection Issues**

For Sierra Leonean returnees, with the advance to the promotion phase of the voluntary repatriation operation, prospects for return are good with the exception of Kissi Tongi and Kissi Teng chiefdoms in Kailahun district, where there continue to be some security

concerns as previously noted. Problems for returnees are now more related to inadequate basic services, such as water, shelter and health facilities, and community issues relating to the social reintegration of various groups – especially with concerns of the youth and little immediate prospect for legal, viable employment in general.

In the main areas of return, the Government continues to gradually re-establish its authority, with national protection infrastructure, effective law and order maintained by the police, security by the army supported by UNAMSIL, functional local administration and justice systems.

For 'old caseload' Liberian refugees, there will need to be a continued focus on consolidating durable solutions. Local integration assistance for this caseload needs to focus on promoting self-reliance. A substantial proportion of these refugees experienced multiple displacement and serious human rights abuses in their country of asylum during the Sierra Leone war and have hence lacked opportunities for local integration.

Legal assistance initiatives will address issues such as facilitation of issuance of work permits, residency status, naturalisation and birth certificates. Close to 10% of the caseload has been submitted for resettlement in 2002-03, following an individual screening exercise. Resettlement in 2004 is likely to focus on several categories in need of resettlement, with group submissions starting to be made in 2003. Voluntary repatriation is not expected to be a durable solution in the foreseeable future.

An important focus in 2004 will be on promoting local capacity building, including developing a protection and assistance framework and implementing a national refugee law, a draft of which was first provided by UNHCR to the government at its request in 2002 and which is hoped to be passed in 2003. This will include enabling a mandated government agency to become operational in refugee protection and assistance, including determination of refugee status. In conjunction with government capacity building, there will be increased focus on building the capacity of civil society and local NGOs, with sensitisation on refugee rights in local communities, bar associations, academic institutions and other fora.

• **UNHCR's Role**

In this context the role of UNHCR in Sierra Leone will be to:

- Protect and assist Liberian refugees.
- Continuously adapt existing strategies and programmes to meet the emergency needs of new refugees and the local integration for old caseload refugees.
- Promote repatriation and reintegration of Sierra Leoneans.
- Monitor the protection and basic welfare situation of returnees in areas of origin and refugees in camps and the urban environment.
- Enhance Government capacity to handle refugee issues (by promoting the adoption and implementation of national refugee legislation, establish a body mandated to handle refugee issues, develop a protection and assistance framework, etc.)

- Through the UNDP / World Bank / UNHCR 4Rs strategy, pro-actively contribute to joint planning and projects and campaign for co-funding from a broad range of donors to support the Government of Sierra Leone and UNHCR endorsed implementing partners to continue reintegration and recovery support without UNHCR funds.
 - Upon the identification of gaps in services in return areas, coordinate a variety of cost-effective responses in various sectors, and campaign for additional resources and activities to address potential short-falls which create protection risks for people of concern to UNHCR in Sierra Leone.
- **Overview Of Beneficiary Populations, Theme Addressed, Programme Goals and Objectives.**

I. Sierra Leonean Returnees	
<p>Main Goal: The remaining Sierra Leonean refugees still residing in the countries of asylum and willing to return will do so during 2004. Some 40,000 new returnees (i.e.20,000 from Guinea, 15,000 from Liberia and 5,000 from other countries) will be voluntarily repatriated by UNHCR in 2004. In addition, 11,500 will return spontaneously and have access to community-based assistance in Sierra Leone. At the same time, communities in the main return areas (Kambia, Kono, Kailahun, and Pujehun districts) will continue to receive assistance aimed at rebuilding community life through UNHCR and its partners. Some 186,000 returnees from 2002 and 2003 will also benefit from this community-based assistance. A total of 237,500 returnees will be assisted in 2004. However, as UNHCR gradually phases down its financial commitments, the returnee areas are being integrated into the mainstream of assistance provided by the Government of Sierra Leone, bi- and multi-lateral donors and international financial institutions.</p>	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<p>➤ 40,000 returnees voluntarily return from countries of asylum to their areas of origin in conditions of safety and dignity</p>	<p>➤ Protection incorporated into all policies and procedures in the repatriation operation.</p> <p>➤ Accurate and up to date country of origin protection information for mass information campaigns and repatriation counselling, in order to ensure that refugees and displaced returnees are able to make free and informed decisions about voluntary repatriation provided.</p> <p>➤ Government supported to promote and enforce 'The declaration on the rights and security of returnees'.</p> <p>➤ Monitored adherence to tripartite agreements with certain countries of asylum and the country of origin, as well as the bilateral agreements between UNHCR and the country of origin in repatriation operations not governed by a tripartite agreement.</p> <p>➤ Ensured local community preparedness and</p>

	<p>sensitisation in country of asylum and country of origin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continued collaboration with Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Special Court (SC). Facilitated missions to refugee camps, information sharing with appropriate protection safeguards, briefing sessions to the TRC and SC, facilitated return of refugee witnesses, and other ad hoc assistance provided where appropriate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Returnees are not subject to vulnerability caused by the repatriation process which may lead to exploitation and other forms of abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Women and children understand and can defend their rights with support from a mass information campaign with specific targeted material on repatriation. ➤ Established cross border follow up of GBV cases that need support after repatriation. ➤ Enhanced capacity of community networks, particularly recruiting returnees with experience in this area, to avoid further dependency and improve chances for sustainability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All stakeholders: (refugees, returnees, governments, IPs, HCR, etc.) are involved in the various procedures and phases of repatriation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Established weekly field based co-ordination meeting covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Manifest / registration ◆ Trucking capacity ● Medical screenings ● Security / custom screening ● Escort vehicles ● Alternate transport for vulnerable individuals. ➤ Improved regional information sharing including regular regional / sub-regional, cross-border repatriation meetings. ➤ Cross-border co-ordination and hand over of vulnerable caseload handled by IPs in Country of Asylum and Country of Origin. Co-ordinated transfer of vulnerable list between Country of Asylum and those in Country of Origin. ➤ Established information system on sharing arrival, departure time and movements with partners. ➤ Unaccompanied and separated children and missing adults identified, documented and registered and family tracing and reunification are carried out.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Returnee communities profit in the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Services in return areas realised through

<p>long-term from more sustainable basic services and development projects through the advocacy of UNHCR and efforts to design an integrated community reintegration and development programme in collaboration with local authorities and other agencies.</p>	<p>the UNDP / World Bank / UNHCR 4R strategy, with contribution to joint projects and campaign for co-funding from a broad range of donors to support Government of Sierra Leone and UNHCR endorsed implementing partners to continue reintegration and recovery support and restoration of national protection for returnees without UNHCR funds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Information compiled on the state of basic services (physical and social), and activities of other (non-UNHR funded) agencies in main areas of return (mapping, advocating information, sharing, pro-active support to Government of Sierra Leone co-ordination). ➤ Joint assessments (per sector) with the appropriate developmental agencies. Organised /facilitated donor missions. ➤ QIP and leadership training provided in community development (other development bodies playing major roles). ➤ Joint premises supported / facilitation of presence of development actors. Joint staff support / district-based sector focal points. ➤ Established mechanism to trace caseload of returnees who have not benefited from UNHCR assistance.
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<p>II. Liberian refugees (new caseload: 2002 - 2004)</p>	
<p>Main Goals: 90,000 Liberian refugees will receive international protection and humanitarian assistance in 2004 pending durable solutions. The refugee population will become less dependant on food aid and other humanitarian assistance as they grow socio-economically more self-reliant.</p>	
<p>Principal Objectives</p>	<p>Related Outputs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All Liberian refugees enjoy safe asylum in Sierra Leone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensured continued admission and safe asylum. ➤ New refugees are registered, in collaboration with Police security screening. ➤ Registration of new refugees. Ensured specific focus on identification of protection needs and vulnerable cases. ➤ Protection is strongly reflected in mass information campaign on relocation from

	<p>border areas to refugee camps and relevant policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Durable solutions identified, including putting in place procedures for the systematic identification of cases in need of resettlement according to UNHCR criteria and in accordance with resettlement standard operating procedures. ➤ Legal assistance provided via Govt (e.g. facilitate issuing of identity cards, work permits, births certificates, regularisation of immigration status.).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Refugees live free of fear and without suspicion of being combatants and state security is supported, as the civilian character of asylum is being maintained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ UNHCR represented on Inter-Agency Task Force for the Mapeh Internment Camp. ➤ Continued collaboration with the Mapeh internment facility. ➤ Appropriate support to ensure the demobilisation of former child soldiers. Ensured accelerated reintegration of former child soldiers in refugee camps. ➤ Continued special refugee status determination procedures (including exclusion assessment) for ex-combatants who have undergone an appropriate period of demobilisation. Durable solutions sought. ➤ UNHCR / Police MOU from 2003 evaluated and revised with the Sierra Leone Police. Assistance to the Govt to implement refugee legislation advocated for. ➤ Enhanced improved security in refugee camps through trained police deployments, support to security wardens, enhanced UNHCR and IP presence in camps, and promoted respect for the laws of Sierra Leone as well as camp by-laws. ➤ Police supported to identify and remove combatants from refugee camps to Mapeh internment facility. ➤ At-risk groups (adolescents, young adults, separated / unaccompanied minors, ex-child soldiers) have access to positive alternatives (education, vocational skills training and income generating activities) to reduce vulnerability to recruitment ➤ Refugees aware about prevention of military recruitment. ➤ Child ex-combatants have access to programmes such as education, vocational

	<p>skills training and income generation activities, as part of rehabilitation and reintegration efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Child combatants are separated from adult combatants and have access to appropriate rehabilitation services and are able to reintegrate safely within communities in refugee camps.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Refugees have increased access to all strata of SL society and services. Successful capacity building of SLE Government, as well as civil society, to better handle refugee issues, including implementation of domestic legislation/administrative procedures the government's international obligations under the UN and OAU Refugee Conventions.. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assistance to the Govt to implement refugee legislation advocated for. ➤ A government body mandated to become operational in handling refugee issues. ➤ Govt. recruit and train appropriate staff for refugee related issues. ➤ UNHCR's proposed role in the new national refugee structure, including provision of protection advice. ➤ Capacity of civil society and the legal profession built regarding ability to deal with refugee protection issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active involvement of civil society in supporting refugee legislation; • Help to provide a refugee law course in a university; • Briefings to the Bar Association ➤ Legal aid/services for refugees through law firm(s) promoted. ➤ Awareness of local authorities, civil society, host communities and refugees themselves enhanced through sensitisation on refugee rights.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Women and girls are less likely to become victims of gender based violence, and those who have already fallen victim are catered for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Co-ordinated multi-sectoral response and prevention of GBV (health, legal, psychosocial, security) established ➤ Reporting mechanisms for cases of GBV. ➤ Gender balanced refugee teams in food distribution, refugee committees and other voluntary or paid work opportunities. ➤ Regular information: women's / child rights. ➤ Built capacity of refugees, especially at risk groups, through skills training, support to refugee initiatives, adult education etc. ➤ Monitored assistance provided, ensuring that distribution of the assistance does not create protection risks for vulnerable individuals, e.g. shelter, food, education, NFI etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implemented and monitored High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women. ➤ Data management system for GBV cases to influence planning & implementation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Women & children are being effectively protected through security measures set up in the camps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gender balanced security committees in camps formed. ➤ Committees on UNHCR security guidelines sensitised ➤ Routine patrolling of the camps facilitated. ➤ Firewood collection in groups in the company of camp security. ➤ Clearly marked communal bathroom and toilet facilities for men and women to prevent potential GBV. ➤ Refugee leaders and camp management to maintain camp-based protection services e.g. continuous police presence and functioning refugee grievance committee.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Refugees and host communities live in acceptable ecological conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Environmental management strategies are included in a broad-based manner throughout all sectors and partnerships. ➤ Appropriate environmental awareness raised in refugee camps and host communities through training. ➤ Reduced demand and increased supply of suitable fuel-wood through stoves and community nurseries and tree plantations. ➤ Organised regular tree planting exercises with refugees and host community. ➤ Refugees, returnees and community members generate income through tree crop farming and the manufacture and sale of energy efficient stoves
III. Liberian refugees(old caseload: 1990-2001)	
<p>Main Goal: Liberian refugees, who arrived during the first civil war and are mainly living outside the camps in urban centres enjoy international protection. Those in need of durable solutions will benefit from local integration or resettlement assistance. 6,700 urban Liberian refugees will be assisted in 2004.</p>	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Liberian refugees ('residual caseload') are no longer in need of special protection and assistance as they are 	<u>Local integration</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Protection staff provide inputs to programme unit and implementing partners

<p>gradually being locally integrated.</p>	<p>to ensure that vulnerable refugees are assisted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A multi-sectoral response and prevention of GBV (health, legal, psychosocial, security). ➤ Regular information on women's and child rights provided. ➤ Legal assistance to refugees is facilitated via the Government (e.g. legal/immigration status including naturalisation, permanent residency, work permits, birth certificates). ➤ Information continues to be developed or updated to meet refugees' information needs. ➤ Identity cards are issued, following a registration exercise. <p><u>Resettlement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continued evaluation of resettlement needs to systematically identify refugees who cannot benefit from voluntary repatriation or local integration.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Well-targeted, mostly vulnerable, refugees have access to local integration assistance and other forms of poverty alleviation measures in order to support their efforts to attain a level of self-reliance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Socio-economic assessment of the caseload conducted focusing on ascertaining their access to mainstream poverty alleviation measures - taking into account the assessments and recommendations in the individual screening exercise of the residual caseload. ➤ Local integration assistance focused on promoting self-reliance (schemes to support sustainable income generation, loan schemes, vocational skills) ➤ Education assistance (fees, uniforms) continued and expanded ➤ Food and NFI assistance provided to vulnerable beneficiaries ➤ Medical assistance including gynaecological services provided ➤ Mechanism is set up to regularly consult beneficiaries and actors in formulating practical durable solutions.
<p>Old Liberian Caseload & urban caseload benefit from response services for survivors of GBV.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Referral mechanism established with centre providing health, legal and counselling services.