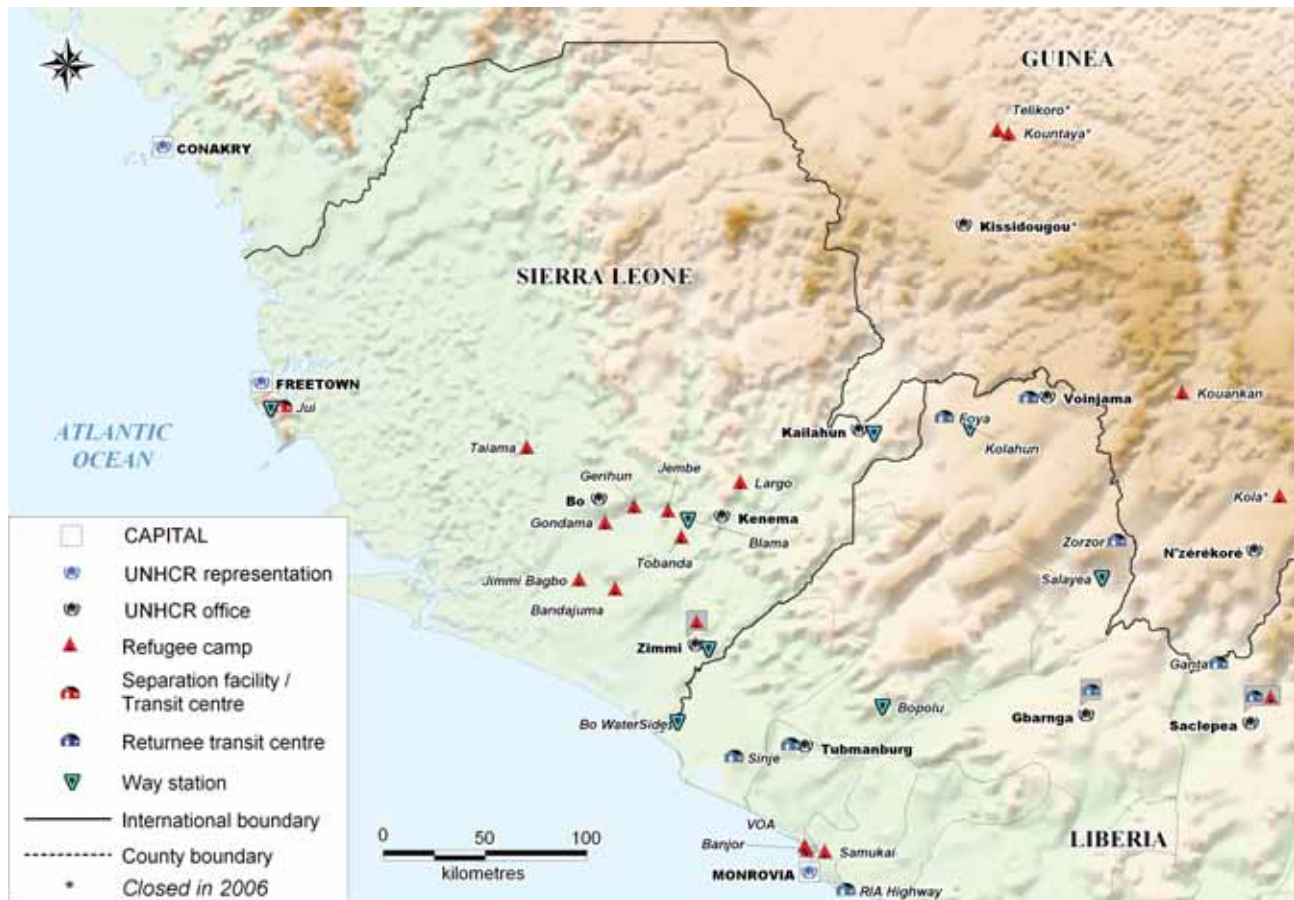


Sierra Leone



Operational highlights

- More than 11,000 refugees returned voluntarily to Liberia with UNHCR's assistance; 12,000 went back on their own.
- UNHCR conducted a comprehensive verification and profiling exercise of the nearly 6,000 urban refugees living in Freetown, Bo and Kenema.
- The Office helped to resettle some 170 urban refugees.
- Women and men were equally represented in camp refugee committees, and refugee women increased their participation in decisions affecting their welfare.

Working environment

Sierra Leone emerged from civil war in 2001 and has made good progress in consolidating peace. The first post-war elections were held in 2002 and the next presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled for July 2007. However, the country still faces challenges in governance and economic progress, and suffers from a lack of social services and high unemployment. Despite these difficulties, Sierra Leone has received and re-integrated close to half a million returnees since 2002.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Liberia	27,300	27,300	51	52
Asylum-seekers	Nigeria	200	200	11	10
Total		27,500	27,500		



Graduation ceremony at the Angelina Jolie Skills Training Project. The 50 graduating refugee women received a certificate and one sewing machine each.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

In 2006, UNHCR aimed to accelerate the sustainable voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees; find durable solutions for urban refugees and asylum-seekers while improving their access to basic rights; provide care, protection and self-reliance activities for refugees still in camps; and identify local integration opportunities for potential residual populations. The Office also sought to support the development of protection capacity in the Government and civil society; ensure that registration data is accurate and up-to-date; and rationalize the use of resources by consolidating services, camps and offices.

Protection and solutions

Sierra Leone continued to offer a favourable protection environment for refugees. A refugee bill went through its second reading in Parliament and will be enacted in May 2007.

Voluntary repatriation to Liberia gained substantial momentum in 2006, with more than 11,000 assisted and 12,000 spontaneous returns. Furthermore, a survey of repatriation intentions indicated that another 12,000 refugees hoped to return in the first six months of 2007.

The verification exercise and the participatory assessment conducted for urban refugees not only provided accurate figures, but also helped to establish the profile of refugees with special needs. UNHCR and

its partners counselled nearly 6,000 refugees. The Office began discussions on local integration with those Liberian refugees who might opt to stay in Sierra Leone upon the conclusion of the repatriation programme. The Government was amenable to local integration, but emphasized the need for international support for integration to be successful. Some 170 refugees, including survivors of violence and torture, persons with special medical needs and women at risk, were resettled in third countries.

Activities and assistance

Community services: Some 1,300 camp-based refugees were trained to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, and 30 volunteers were trained to pass on the knowledge gained to urban refugees. More than 600 victims of violence and abuse received medical attention and/or psychological and legal counselling. Women of reproductive age were provided with sanitary kits throughout the year. Refugees with special needs received food and medication.

Domestic needs and household support: UNHCR provided non-food items throughout the year to refugees, particularly to those with special needs.

Education: Due to the repatriation process, only 60 per cent of refugee children, 50 per cent of them girls, attended primary schools in camps. Though UNHCR stopped supporting secondary schools in camps in June, the Government allowed refugee children, both in camps and urban settings, to join the national school system. UNHCR helped these children by covering their school fees and provided uniforms to urban refugees.

Food: Refugee in camps received food rations. Children under five years benefited from supplementary-feeding programmes and individuals with special needs received larger rations.

Health and nutrition: UNHCR organized medical screening and vaccination for all returnees to Liberia. Health standards were maintained at a satisfactory level in all the camps and there was no outbreak of any epidemic in 2006. HIV and AIDS awareness sessions were conducted for some 700 refugees and condoms were regularly distributed.

Income generation: Refugees supported themselves by fishing, hunting and growing crops in and around the camps. A government self-reliance programme will make land available for the remaining refugees and facilitate their integration within local communities.

Legal assistance: UNHCR gave training in protection to government and NGO staff. Twenty-four unaccompanied

and/or separated refugee children in the camps were reunited with their families.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR helped its implementing partners cover various operational, management and staffing costs.

Sanitation: Almost all shelters in refugee camps had family latrines. Refugee volunteers cleaned and maintained garbage dumps and collected waste in the camps.

Shelter and other infrastructure: Close to 7,000 camp shelters were kept in good shape throughout the year, while some unnecessary shelters and facilities were removed.

Transport and logistics: UNHCR transported refugees and their belongings to areas of return. Returnees with special needs benefited from follow-up care.

Water: Potable water, which was tested and chlorinated regularly, was available in all camps. On average, refugees lived less than 200 metres from water points.

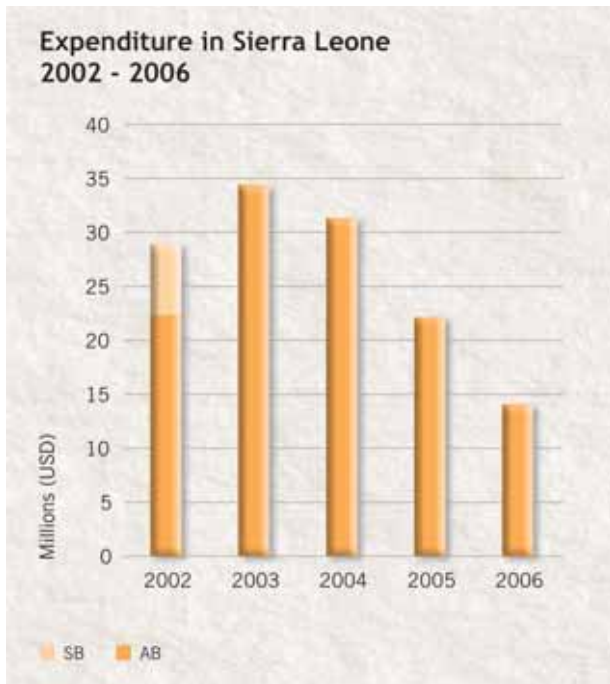
Constraints

At the beginning of 2006, Liberian refugees showed considerable interest in voluntary repatriation. However, this interest was dissipated by delays due to lack of logistical capacity, and many refugees eventually changed their minds. Furthermore, repatriation declined drastically, as those who were not able to reach Liberia in time for the sowing season decided to postpone their return and farm in Sierra Leone instead.

Urban refugees in Sierra Leone are generally averse to any durable solution other than resettlement. In June 2006, a group of former Liberian combatants and refugees, demanding resettlement, stormed into the UNHCR compound in Freetown and destroyed vehicles and office equipment.

Financial information

UNHCR has scaled down its budget from USD 35 million in 2003 to USD 17 million in 2006 as return and reintegration programmes for Sierra Leonean refugees were concluded. In 2006, UNHCR had to reduce support to implementing partners and refugees as a result of funding shortfalls. Support for secondary schools in refugee camps was stopped in June 2006 in order to shift resources towards reconstruction and the return and reintegration of internally displaced persons and refugees in Liberia.



Organization and implementation

Management

UNHCR operated from five offices in Freetown, Kenema, Bo, Kailahun and Zimmi. Operations, management and staffing structures were streamlined in accordance with operational needs. The field office in Koidu was closed, and the separation of 49 staff in various duty stations was implemented smoothly with the full involvement of staff representatives.

Working with others

UNHCR's main government counterpart, the National Commission for Social Action, assumed greater responsibility for refugee affairs. In addition to its usual coordination role, the Commission took over the management of one refugee camp and prepared to do the same in seven other camps by January 2007.

UNHCR continued an active partnership with UNDP, the World Bank, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNIDO, WHO and FAO in a joint effort to consolidate peace and recovery in Sierra Leone. The Office provided technical advice to the

UN transitional support teams to ensure that community-empowerment projects in areas of return were sustained.

Overall assessment

UNHCR updated the refugee database for both camp-based and urban refugees. The profiling of urban refugees allowed the Office and its partners to evaluate and process durable solutions for refugees on a case-by-case basis. With group resettlement discontinued, it remains to be seen whether Liberian urban refugees will opt for voluntary repatriation or local integration as durable solutions.

As for camp-based Liberian refugees, mass-information campaigns and "go-and-see" visits were instrumental in convincing them to repatriate. The number of refugees who did return home was only slightly below the Office's target.

Besides organizing standard repatriation convoys, UNHCR also gave cash grants to refugees opting to return on their own to remote locations in Liberia. Anticipating the end of organized repatriation in June 2007, UNHCR pushed local integration as the solution for the remaining Liberian refugees in talks with the Government and local authorities. In this context, among the alternatives being considered was the settling of refugees in villages around the camps.

Partners
Government agencies: National Commission for Social Action.
NGOs: African Development and Emergency Organization, Bo Pujehun Development Associates, Caritas Kenema Office, Catholic Relief Services, Christian Children's Fund, International Rescue Committee, Lutheran World Federation, Network Movement for Justice and Development, Peace Winds Japan, Talking Drum Studio.
Others: <i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i> , UNV.
Operational partners
NGOs: Action contre la Faim, Care International, German Agro Action.
Others: FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, World Bank, WFP, WHO.

Budget, income and expenditure (USD) Annual programme budget

Final budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
17,056,087	5,550,897	8,522,099	14,072,996	14,072,996

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Previous years' projects
	AB	AB and SB
Protection, monitoring and coordination	4,741,471	0
Community services	375,019	280,198
Crop production	0	95,752
Domestic needs and household support	61,777	0
Education	289,946	362,574
Food	59,436	6,116
Forestry	0	5,703
Health and nutrition	378,945	179,040
Income generation	88,519	73,419
Legal assistance	24,551	(7,155)
Livestock	0	5,872
Operational support (to agencies)	1,531,906	791,995
Sanitation	58,448	136,696
Shelter and infrastructure	224,157	141,008
Transport and logistics	3,032,034	317,014
Water	81,879	279,556
Instalments with implementing partners	771,342	(2,667,790)
Sub-total operational activities	11,719,430	0
Programme support	2,353,565	0
Total expenditure	14,072,996	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure		(126,795)
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	4,633,286	
Reporting received	(3,861,944)	
Balance	771,342	
Previous years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1st January		3,254,830
Reporting received		(2,667,790)
Refunded to UNHCR		(125,353)
Adjustments		0
Balance		461,687