



# **COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN**

**Country: Liberia**

**Planning Year: 2004**

## THE CONTEXT

Positive developments in the political and security situations coupled with the injection of humanitarian and development assistance into the country are expected to create a pull factor for thousands of **Liberian refugees** and **internally displaced persons** (IDPs) to return spontaneously in the coming months. Consequently, approximately 85% of the financial resources programmed for UNHCR operations in Liberia in 2004 are for the repatriation and reintegration of Liberian refugees. Some 320,000 Liberian refugees remain in exile in neighbouring countries, including Guinea (146,699), Sierra Leone (67,637), Côte d'Ivoire (67,032) and Ghana (42,400).

Meanwhile, Liberia continues to host nearly 50,000 refugees, including 11,500 **Sierra Leonean refugees** for whom UNHCR will continue to promote and facilitate voluntary repatriation until June 2004. In addition, some 35,000 **Ivorian refugees** who fled conflict in the western provinces of Côte d'Ivoire in early 2003 remain in eastern Liberia. Access to this population was interrupted in March 2003 when humanitarian operations were suspended following the gruesome killing of aid workers in eastern Liberia. The situation of this population is unknown given the instability that has reigned on both sides of the border during the past year. Access to the eastern Counties of Liberia will resume with the deployment of UNMIL peacekeepers. Finally, UNHCR has been assisting providing international protection to 50 **urban refugees** in Monrovia, while identifying and pursuing durable solutions for them.

## PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES

- Provide international protection and ensure that asylum-seekers continue to be granted admission through a fair refugee status determination procedure. Secure the well-being of refugee populations through the provision of material assistance and basic services.
- Promote the voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees. Monitor developments in Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the Ivorian refugees. Pursue durable solutions for (mainly urban) refugees of other nationalities.
- Participate with other stakeholders in developing frameworks to ensure the safety and dignity of Liberian refugees who opt to repatriate from neighbouring countries. Facilitate the return of Liberian refugees and internally displaced persons who desire to return to areas with minimum security conditions.
- Monitor the return of Liberians to ensure that they are reintegrated properly into society and that their civil rights are respected. Initiate community-based reintegration to ensure returnees have access to basic services. Extend material assistance to IDPs, particularly where they are mixed with refugees or returnees.

## PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

### *Refugee protection and assistance*

- UNHCR has been promoting and facilitating the repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees since January 2002. The repatriation operation which is scheduled for completion in June. Thereafter, those who opt not to return will undergo individual refugee status determination procedures aimed at identifying alternative durable solutions for them.
- Prospects for the repatriation of Ivorian refugees remain dim: the political and security situation in Côte d'Ivoire remains fragile, with slow implementation of the peace process and continuing tensions between the main political actors.

### *Repatriation and reintegration*

- **UNHCR will not promote voluntary repatriation** until it is satisfied that criteria for safety and durable return are met throughout the country and that conditions are in place for sustainable return in safety and dignity. Nevertheless, the deployment of the 15,000-strong UN peacekeeping force—scheduled to reach full

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strength by June 2004—large numbers of IDPs and a fair number of refugees are expected to return spontaneously to their places of origin in conditions that could be less than ideal and that UNHCR will come under pressure to assist them.

- The returnee movement is expected to peak between October 2004 and June 2005 (in between the two rainy seasons) and in the run up to general elections which should be held at the end of 2005.
- Anticipated large-scale return will necessitate the establishment of UNHCR presence in the main areas of return, the construction of transit centres with infrastructure in the vital sectors of water, sanitation and shelter, the urgent mobilization of staff, equipment and relief items.
- There will be a need to mitigate the impact the pressures that returning populations will impose on already existing social and economic infrastructure, bearing in mind that humanitarian needs in Liberia are extensive and the capacity of Government, NGOs and other partners will take time to build.

### PRINCIPAL PROTECTION CONCERNS

The active involvement of the international community will be crucial to the restoration of stability in Liberia. Issues on which the Government will need support as a matter of urgency include enhancing the protection and physical safety of civilians (including refugees, returnees and IDPs), peace building and reconciliation, property restitution and restoration of the dysfunctional police and judiciary.

Long years of civil war gave rise to serious violations of human rights by state and non state actors. The protection of civilians was compromised severely and the condition of IDPs is characterised by poverty, trauma, malnutrition and deteriorating health. In addition to the masses that took shelter in public facilities (schools, clinics, stadiums) in Monrovia, there are large IDP concentrations in Harbel, Totota-Salala-Kakata, along the Gbarnga corridor, Buchanan and in Nimba County.

The effective handling of ex-combatants will be critical to the consolidation of peace in Liberia; failure could be a dangerous destabilising factor for the country and its neighbours. Therefore, along with other actors, UNHCR is advocating for and will contribute to the implementation of regional disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR) programmes. UNMIL estimates put the number of fighters in Liberia between 48,000 and 58,000 and there remain grave concerns that in the absence of effective regional DDRR programmes, fighters may simply drift into neighbouring countries in search of employment.

Addressing gender-based violence and its root causes, continues to be a key objective for humanitarian agencies in the region. Entrenched gender inequalities have left women and girls vulnerable to different forms of gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation.

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**PLANNING FIGURES**

Beneficiaries	POPULATION			
	Beginning 2004	New Arrivals	Repatriation	End 2004
Sierra Leonean Refugees	12,586	0	5,000	7,586
Liberian Returnees	55,000	65,000	0	120,000
Ivorian Refugees	85,000	10000	0	95,000
Urban Refugees	50	7	0	57
Internally displaced persons	100,000			100,000
<b>TOTAL</b>				

**PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

SECTOR	UNHCR INPUTS	RELATED INPUTS
<b>Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide information to refugees on conditions prevailing in their places of return;</li> <li>- Ensure that returnees' rights are respected by authorities;</li> <li>- Where necessary, secure "Safe corridors" for repatriation;</li> <li>- Transit accommodation security, including lights;</li> <li>- Support the inclusion of returnees/refugees in election preparatory processes;</li> <li>- Cooperate with new human rights tribunals set up under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.</li> </ul>	OHCHR and all United Nations Agencies will report and document protection and human rights concerns; design and implement advocacy and capacity-building initiatives; supporting traditional and community based structures; working towards the creation and enforcement of well coordinated early warning and intervention mechanisms on protection and human rights concerns.
<b>Community services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and implement 10 quick-impact projects (QIPs) targeting 450,000 direct and indirect beneficiaries and complementing DRR processes.</li> <li>- Random survey of urgent needs of vulnerable groups, development and implementation of the follow-up strategy.</li> <li>- War-trauma counselling; establishment of a peer-support networks.</li> <li>- Community-awareness on environment protection involving older people and teen-agers (generations' link).</li> <li>- SGBV prevention and response</li> </ul>	UNMIL, UNICEF, UNDP have a combined budget of some US\$ 24 million to address community services requirements, including for child protection, community based support, assistance to vulnerable populations.
<b>Crop production / Forestry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Procure and distribute 90,000 agricultural kits plus seeds. (see <i>Domestic Needs</i>).</li> <li>- Construct tree nurseries in each of the ten transit centres</li> <li>- Provide support for environmental education, tree planting and maintenance, and general clean-up</li> </ul>	FAO has budgeted some US\$ 1.5m to cover this sector, including providing improved planting materials, tools, equipment and training, data gathering and dissemination to ensure sector-wide coordination and avoid duplication and overlap of activities.

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<b>SECTOR</b>	<b>UNHCR INPUTS</b>	<b>RELATED INPUTS</b>
	campaigns through community participation	
<b>Domestic needs</b>	Purchase and distribute mats, soap, jerry cans, kitchen sets, buckets, plastic sheeting, plastic rolls, mosquito nets, lanterns, sanitary supplies, multi-purpose agricultural and construction tools kits (see also Crop Production).	ICRC is also providing household items for IDPs.
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peace Education</li> <li>- Rehabilitation of educational facilities, construction of emergency ones inclusive, incentives for teaching staff.</li> <li>- Formal and informal education, skills training.</li> </ul>	UNICEF has a budget of US\$ 6,150,000. Main activities include establishing protective and safe learning spaces/environments; emergency school supplies; service delivery for rehabilitation of educational and recreational facilities and provision of instructional, learning, sports and recreational materials (recreation kits); capacity building and training of teachers; advocacy and social mobilisation for community involvement and participation in education of all children, especially girls.
<b>Food</b>	Provide beneficiaries with hot meals during repatriation journeys.	WFP has budgeted some USD 40 million and will provide IDPs and returnees with 2,100 kcal rations for three months.
<b>Health/nutrition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Procure five health kits to be distributed through implementing partners to local hospitals and clinics (kits contents provide basic health services for 10,000 people for 3 months)</li> <li>- Rehabilitate basic health facilities along the return routes and return areas.</li> <li>- Re-establish health referral system in collaboration with WHO including running costs of five ambulances procured in 2003.</li> </ul>	WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA have a combined budget of some US\$29m for health and nutrition activities, including health services to vulnerable groups, reconstruction of the Ministry of Health, county health teams and other community-based structures; restoring/strengthening immunization services nationwide; reduction of severe malnutrition; addressing the reproductive health needs of women and girls incl. emergency psycho-social support to victims of gender-based violence during the conflict. ICRC will also be a key player in the health sector and will continue to run the JFK surgical hospital.
<b>Income generation</b>	Identify and engage skilled workers within returnee populations in various reintegration activities.	UNDP and IOM both plan to implement income-generation activities. ICRC is planning to initiate income generating projects for 8,000 vulnerable residents and an equal number of IDPs
<b>Shelter and other infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Construct 3,000 houses.10 camp-type transit facilities (for 7,000 people each) with two way stations between each of them.</li> <li>- Rehabilitate community facilities in returnee areas.</li> </ul>	ICRC is to provide 20,000 residents and 60,000 former IDPs with shelter and material assistance including construction and rehabilitation tool kits as well as technical know-how.
<b>Transport/logistics</b>	Transport beneficiaries, humanitarian staff relief items, staff and: procure and	WFP, IOM and UNJLC have a combined budget of some \$11.6m for this sector

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SECTOR	UNHCR INPUTS	RELATED INPUTS
	maintain vehicle fleets, charter aircraft, storage / distribution / handling of non-food items	
<b>Water and sanitation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Construct/rehabilitate some 770 water sources (wells, tap stands, etc); 500 latrines; 500 bath houses; procure 600 wheelbarrows.</li> <li>- Maintain water and sanitation facilities/ provide minimum services at waystation locations for returning populations; sensitization campaigns for a safe and healthy environment.</li> </ul>	UNICEF and WHO have a combined budget of some \$6.1m for water and sanitation and will support the construction of family latrines and bath houses. ICRC will also support the rehabilitation / construction / maintenance of wells and small water supply systems.

### UNHCR POLICY PRIORITIES

#### *Women/gender equity*

A position of Gender Advisor has been established to support efforts to enhance the participation of women in both the peace process and reintegration programmes. The Advisor will provide guidance and technical support to UNHCR and implementing partner staff, building on ongoing efforts to promote gender equity among refugees in countries of asylum. Priorities including enhancing women's participation in decision-making, building the capacity of groups to address the individual needs of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and facilitating the increased involvement of men in addressing SGBV issues.

SGBV prevention and response will continue to be a central theme in refugee programmes in 2004. A multi-sector approach has been adopted to ensure the integration of SGBV activities in all activities and will continue to be pursued vigorously. Systems for reporting and confidential case management will be strengthened, to ensure that quality services such as protection, health care, counselling and material assistance are provided to survivors.

Beyond SGBV, efforts will continue to promote self-reliance among women aimed at making them less vulnerable to exploitation and improving access to services. This objective will be pursued by the involvement of women in areas of food management, education and skills training. Income generation activities with emphasis on community-based initiatives will also be encouraged. Previously formed women's support groups will continue to be supported through gender awareness and leadership training to enhance women capacity to effectively participate in camp administration at all levels thus giving them a voice to speak out on issues affecting them. These groups will be strengthened to independently organise, manage and realise gains from their initiatives. The plight of single female-headed households will be assuaged through the support of these women groups to make them less vulnerable to exploitation by engaging in income generation activities including vegetable production and other areas in which they will be trained. These self-help initiatives will be promoted. Female peer educators will be supported through training, monitoring and supervision to carry out awareness promotion for HIV/AIDS, and SGBV prevention and response and reproductive health. Priority will also be placed on the timely provision of sufficient sanitary kits to all women including adolescents.

#### *Children and adolescents*

Children make up a large percentage of the refugee population. As such, the promotion of welfare systems for the protection of children and adolescent groups, particularly those with special needs will be pursued. The preferred approach will be to direct focus on the protection of children with the full participation of the refugee community through functional "community child welfare structures". These structures are supported to monitor child protection standards issues and report them to the relevant agency and UNHCR and carry out child rights awareness activities within the refugee communities. Focus will also be placed on supporting pre-school

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initiatives, universal access to primary education, continued education beyond primary level, health (immunization, treatment and prevention of diarrhoea diseases, malnutrition, malaria). The capacity of peer educators will also be improved to follow-up education on reproductive health including HIV/AIDS/STIs, SGBV (early marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, education for the girl child, gender awareness) and child's rights and child awareness issues. Sanitary packages and monthly counselling will continue for adolescent girls in school as motivation to remain in school.

Recreational programmes with the active participation of children and adolescents will be given priority. Special programmes such as literacy, skills training, and income generation activities will continue for youth out of school. Volunteer teachers will be encouraged to continue sustaining the day care facilities in the camps.

### *Beneficiaries with special needs*

Services to the **disabled persons** will be improved and in particular effort will be made not to isolate them but rather to make the community more responsive to their welfare. Their active participation in the improvement of their lives will be sought and encouraged. Special support will be availed such as glasses, wheel chairs and crutches. The disabled will continue to have equal access to services like income generating activities and other community activities to boost their self esteem and to gainfully occupy them.

Activities for the integration of **elderly persons** within the refugee community will be strengthened. Special efforts will be made to promote their social inclusion in their communities. Support to the group will be closely monitored to ensure that their basic needs are met.

### *Environment*

Improved environmental management practices with emphasis on tree nursery establishment and energy saving stoves production will be carried out. Environmental awareness raising and training of refugee school children on basic environmental preservation practices will be carried out. Partnership will be forged with community groups and providing materials inputs for demonstration sites for training refugees and local community members in land reclamation practices in refugee camps and host communities. Establishments of wood lots with local community members will be carried out. Agricultural assistance will be provided to Sierra Leonean refugees through the provision of farm tools, seeds, agro chemicals and effective extension services for sustainable crop production activities. Training of farmers in improved cultural practices of paddy rice, root and tuber vegetable crops will be emphasized for the maintenance of food security. Awareness raising activities will continue on harvest and post harvest techniques. Organization of refugee women farmers into co-operative groups for small income generation purpose will be carried out.

### *Registration*

The incessant armed conflict in Liberia has had ramifications on the stability of the numbers of the refugees both the assisted and the non-assisted. Unknown numbers of Sierra Leonean refugees still remain unaccounted for in the inaccessible areas. In June 2002, UNHCR lost two camps as a direct result of the armed conflict. Many refugees returned spontaneously to Sierra Leone in conditions that were not favourable. According to the January 2003 verification exercise carried out in the camps near Monrovia, a total of 17,586 refugees were being assisted in those camps as at that date. The verification has enabled a revalidation of the figures and profile of the caseload and the institution of the ACCESS database system. Continuous periodic updates will be carried out to improve the database. Also, as the voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees is ongoing, the Branch Office will need to update the data regularly. This activity will continue in 2004. Supporting materials and equipment (computers, registration kit, etc.) and staff training in the RICS, FBAR, ACCESS database systems will be required.

There will also be a registration/up-to-date of activities, which will aim at collecting information on the remaining or residual caseload as regards its profile, as well as the specific protection (such as documentation) and assistance needs and other durable solutions possibilities.

*Education*

The Branch Office will continue to pursue avenues towards the realisation of universal access to primary education for refugee children. The increase in enrolment has created overcrowding in all camp schools. The Teacher/Parent Associations in the camp schools, working together with UNHCR, have taken initiatives to construct makeshift classroom space. Provision of the extra space would be prioritised hand in hand with the increase in the provision of furniture and scholastic materials especially laboratory and science equipment for secondary level.

*Registration*

From the outset of the emergency in November 2002, UNHCR team and LRRRC staff at the border proceeded with the registration of the new arrivals at the Transit Centres in Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Maryland Counties. Although efforts had been made, there is need for the improvement of the method used for the registration.

The registration of the Ivorian refugees had been streamlined starting from the entry border points to the transit/camps. While many of the new arrivals preferred to settle in the general area along the border with their kinsmen and ethnic groups and were showing little interest in the camps, the fluid security situation obtaining currently at the border areas has been causing secondary movements thereby complicating the registration process. Effort will be made to realise the accurate numbers and structure of the refugee population. To this effect, the Branch Office will keep working in 2004 on the improvement of the registration system and the update of the statistical data for both assistance and reporting purposes. Therefore, the need for additional staff recruited, the identification of the implementing partner, the training of UNHCR and Implementing Partner staff on FBARS and RICS will be pursued. The issue of the acquisition of necessary equipment and database for the registration will have to be taken into account.

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS/CONTINGENCY PLANNING**

The ongoing war in Liberia and the volatile military and political situation in the West Africa sub-region have provided cause for continuous emergency preparedness and contingency planning. The current contingency plan is built around various scenarios.

It is assumed that should the elections in Liberia end in chaos there will be an out flow of Liberian refugees in the neighbouring countries. Similarly, Sierra Leonean refugees will be forced to return home involuntarily. Escalation in the war in Liberia will also caused mass exodus of Liberians into exile and Ivorian refugees to go home under conditions that may be less than ideal. The level of stability and peace in Sierra Leone, if sustained and consolidated, will serve as a factor for the promotion of voluntary repatriation. The break down in the peace process in Cote d' Ivoire, on the other hand, would cause additional influx of refugees into Liberia.

**NGOs, PARinAC and capacity building**

Partnership with the government, local and international NGOs will continue. Efforts will be made to strengthen the capacity of implementing partners to ensure maximum productivity. Coordinating mechanism through regular meetings will be maintained. The PARinAC concept, which was introduced in Liberia few years ago, will be reactivated.

**INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION**

UNHCR is and will continue to work closely with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and ensure synergy and coordination amongst all UN Agencies and other development and humanitarian actors in a strategic framework. Refugee and returnee issues and activity plans are coordinated by UNHCR through a weekly coordination meeting of all humanitarian actors in association with OCHA and the Government counterpart, LRRRC.



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There are further strong links with other UN Agencies enhanced through association and joint participation in an array of fora from sectoral working groups to a focus group on refugee and returnee interventions involving UNDP, WFP, UNICEF, OCHA and UNOL.

UNHCR is jointly operational with WFP in the provision of food to refugees and returnees. UNHCR is also working together with FAO in a joint effort to improve crop production, livestock and fisheries. FAO is providing the required expertise. UNHCR is also an active participant with all UN Agencies in the sub region in the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP).

UNHCR continues to strengthen links with the NGO community, participating in coordination meetings and building up capacity of national NGOs with training and resources. In addition to frequent contacts with operational partners at the Programme Unit level, UNHCR will continue to chair regular information sharing meetings with operational partners and government counterpart.