

West Africa

Operational highlights

- Some 43,000 Liberian refugees and more than 51,000 Liberian internally displaced persons (IDPs) returned home, as did some 10,000 Nigerian refugees from Cameroon. UNHCR also assisted 2,400 Togolese refugees to repatriate from Benin.
- Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone and Guinea, and Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea and Liberia, were allowed to integrate locally.
- UNHCR helped governments improve asylum systems, either by providing inputs to legislation or by strengthening institutions dealing with asylum issues.
- The Office became formally involved with IDPs in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia as part of the inter-agency response to internal displacement.
- UNHCR was able to phase down some operations, handing over activities to development partners and local authorities.

Working environment

In 2006, the relative stability of most West African countries allowed UNHCR to advance its search for durable solutions. In Liberia, voluntary repatriation operations moved steadily ahead. Repatriation possibilities for Togolese refugees, many of whom returned spontaneously in 2006, improved following the consolidation of the reconciliation process in the country. UNHCR continued to examine conditions for the local integration of residual groups, particularly Liberians in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, and

Benin

Burkina Faso

Cameroon

Cape Verde

Côte d'Ivoire

Gambia

Ghana

Guinea

Guinea-Bissau

Liberia

Mali

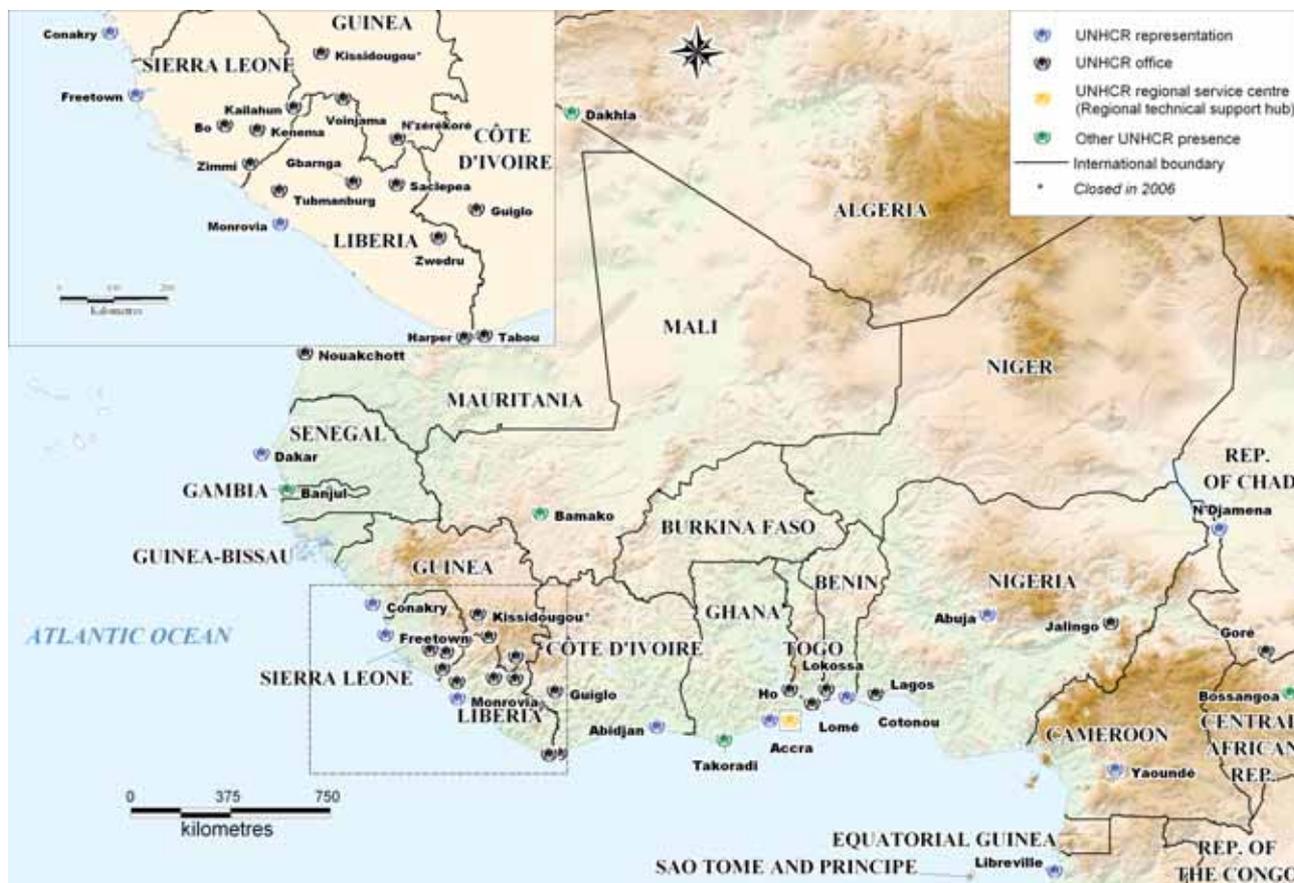
Niger

Nigeria

Senegal

Sierra Leone

Togo



Sierra Leoneans in Guinea, the Gambia and Liberia. The Office pursued resettlement as a protection tool, while at the same time facilitating ongoing voluntary repatriation movements.

Despite positive developments, the region witnessed some conflict in 2006, which resulted in population displacement. Fighting in the Casamance region of Senegal forced more than 6,000 people to flee to The Gambia. Renewed clashes between rebel groups and the army in the north of the Central African Republic drove 25,000 refugees into Cameroon. Some 709,000 people remained displaced in volatile Côte d'Ivoire. Meanwhile, in neighbouring Guinea, social tensions

stemming from the worsening political and economic situation manifested themselves in recurring nationwide strikes and anti-government protests.

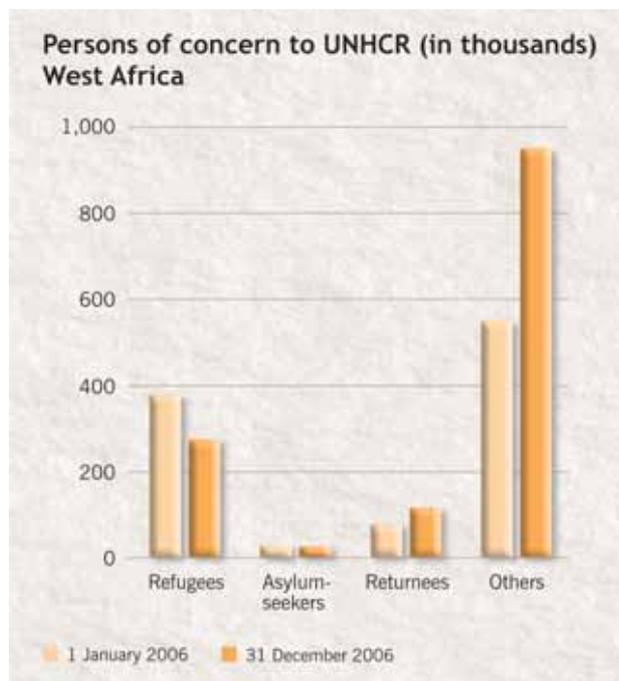
UNHCR updated contingency plans and stepped up emergency preparedness for new refugee influxes. Mixed migratory flows assumed significant proportions, particularly in Mali and Senegal.

Achievements and impact

In 2006 UNHCR continued with the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming initiative in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Liberia and Senegal. Participatory assessments resulted in a better understanding of refugees' concerns. In some countries, the assessments enabled UNHCR to better address a wide range of protection issues, including sexual exploitation of refugee girls, child labour, discrimination against persons living with HIV and AIDS, and prostitution of adolescent girls.

A regional project for Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone identified adolescents at risk and helped them through literacy classes, vocational training and HIV and AIDS awareness programmes. In Ghana, UNHCR helped start a refugee action committee and a peer counsellor network in Buduburam camp to support victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

UNHCR established two community centres in Benin and one in Burkina Faso under the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project (SPCP) to host the offices of



several refugee organizations. The registration project, Project Profile, was introduced in all West African countries, except Mali and the Gambia. Verification exercises confirmed that progressively reducing direct assistance to refugees helped to ease tensions between them and host communities.

UNHCR helped provide preventive and curative care for measles, malaria, acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea. The Office also arranged for the treatment of malnutrition among children under five. However, finding a standard approach for the delivery of health services to urban refugees and internally displaced populations was a challenge.

In West Africa, an average of 74 per cent of refugee children in camps and settlements were enrolled in primary school. While gender parity has not been achieved, especially in the last years of primary school, the gap in the early years of schooling is being closed. At the secondary level, approximately 47 per cent of adolescent boys – but only 22 per cent of adolescent girls – were in school. More than 170 refugee students (approximately 72 women and 98 men), were enrolled in the German-sponsored DAFI university scholarship programme in West Africa in 2006.

UNHCR organized the repatriation of 43,000 Liberian refugees from neighbouring countries in 2006. In addition, more than 51,300 Liberian IDPs were helped to return home and all 35 IDP camps in Liberia were closed. As reconciliation initiatives continued in Togo, refugees began to return to that country spontaneously. UNHCR helped with the travel costs of the approximately 2,400 refugees who returned in 2006.

Regional initiatives focusing on durable solutions

Missions were undertaken to Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia to assess the legal and socio-economic framework for local integration and to help field offices prepare local integration strategies for 2007 and beyond. The missions ascertained governments' commitment to local integration. In this context, regional protocols offer a broad framework for local integration as they substantiate the right to establish residence provided certain conditions are met.

In Sierra Leone, UNHCR's main national counterpart, the National Commission for Social Action, led the local integration process and started key preliminary negotiations with refugee communities and local authorities, notably "paramount chiefs". UNHCR also assisted in the repatriation of more than 10,000 Nigerians from Cameroon. At the time of writing, a reintegration programme was being implemented in conjunction with the Government of Nigeria and UN agencies.

UNHCR assumed its coordination role for clusters under its responsibility as part of the inter-agency response to internal displacement. In Liberia, the Office identified gaps in the national protection system. UNHCR plans to address these gaps by helping national institutions adhere to international principles. Following the return of IDPs to their communities of origin, the Emergency Shelter Cluster focused on areas of return to facilitate reintegration.

Constraints

The difficult socio-economic situation was a major preoccupation for refugees and others of concern in West Africa. Many refugees and returnees had difficulty settling locally or reintegrating back home without UNHCR's support. Some 44,000 urban refugees in the subregion were hit especially hard by the unfavourable economic conditions.

The adoption of austerity measures by UNHCR in 2006 affected most operations and reduced some basic services to refugees. These sometimes fell below minimum standards of protection and assistance. Although the reallocation of resources addressed some of the more critical deficits, gaps persisted, particularly in assistance to urban refugees and the education, water and sanitation sectors.

Operations

UNHCR's operations in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are described in separate chapters.

In 2006, UNHCR's office in Benin addressed the needs of more than 19,600 refugees in Benin itself, Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo. UNHCR's assistance programmes focused on repatriation, local integration and self-reliance, although socio-economic conditions made self-reliance difficult to achieve. In an effort to encourage refugee independence, UNHCR gave priority to education, apprenticeships, vocational training, scholarships and micro-credit programmes. The voluntary repatriation of Togolese refugees and the resettlement of those with special needs remained a challenge.

Despite the Government of Togo's establishment of a plan for the return for Togolese refugees and hopes for peace arising from political dialogue in the country, UNHCR had to assist Togolese refugees in **Benin** throughout 2006 as voluntary repatriation was still not an option for many of them. The Office provided protection and material assistance in the food, water and sanitation, shelter, health and education sectors to



UNHCR/J. Leduc

Togolese refugees in Comé camp, Benin.

more than 9,000 Togolese refugees in Comé and Agamé camps.

In the first quarter of 2006 the situation remained tense between the host community and refugees. At Agamé, tensions peaked in February with two days of violent clashes and looting, which caused significant damage to camp infrastructure. To encourage good relations and prepare for the local integration of those who will opt not to return home, UNHCR rehabilitated local houses, administrative and medical facilities, water points and the electrical system in Agamé camp. The extension of a local school and the construction of a town market also helped ease tensions between the two communities.

In the aftermath of the February events, the camp population declined and an estimated 2,400 refugees returned spontaneously to Togo. Comé camp was closed in August 2006. Significant progress was made in registering the Togolese refugees with Project Profile, which improved refugee protection through the issuance of electronic identity cards. Other programmes such as vocational training, income-generating projects and scholarships for primary and secondary education continued.

The Office in Benin protected and assisted some 2,500 other refugees, mainly from central Africa, as well as more than 1,300 asylum-seekers. All refugees with HIV and/or AIDS received free treatment and HIV and AIDS sensitization campaigns were organized on a weekly

basis. Two community centres were opened. Refugees were also trained in the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and the special protection needs of women. All refugee children could avail themselves of primary and secondary education and training in professional skills. Nineteen university scholarships were granted to students under the DAFI scholarship scheme.

In 2006, of 582 asylum-seekers, 182 were granted refugee status. UNHCR assisted some 113 refugees to return to the Republic of the Congo (ROC), Burundi and Chad, while 48 others were resettled in Canada, the United States, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands.

In 2006, **Burkina Faso** hosted some 500 refugees and over 700 asylum-seekers from central African countries. The international protection objectives in the initial plan could not be met. Indeed, the long-term vacancy of the post of head of the National Refugee Commission delayed work on issues related to refugees and asylum-seekers.

The National Eligibility Committee was not operational in 2006, when 305 new asylum-seekers arrived in the country. The long wait increased the vulnerability of the asylum-seekers, who consequently needed more assistance.

In 2006, UNHCR's operations in **Cameroon** protected and assisted more than 11,700 urban refugees, mainly from central Africa, and some 23,400 rural refugees

from Nigeria and the Central African Republic. In addition to the urban refugees, at the end of 2006 there were over 4,100 asylum-seekers awaiting refugee status determination.

The Law on Refugees adopted by Parliament in 2005 is still awaiting regulation. UNHCR is in charge of refugee status determination and issuing certificates for asylum-seekers and refugees. In 2006, the cases of over 6,400 refugees were processed, with 1,415 recognized as refugees. The year saw a reduction in the average amount of time required for status determination – from 12 months to six – and the transfer of all refugee files to the *ProGres* registration database.

After the repatriation of more than 50 per cent of the Nigerian refugee population, some 2,900 people opted to remain in **Cameroon**. UNHCR rehabilitated and/or reconstructed 12 schools for both refugees and the host community. Even though the refugees are socially integrated, the legal aspects of their local integration are still unclear. UNHCR tried to persuade the Government to issue the refugees with identity cards, as they have no documents other than ration cards given in 2003.

Due to the deteriorating situation in the CAR and following reports indicating an increase in refugee arrivals in eastern Cameroon, UNHCR and the Cameroonian Government carried out a joint mission in July to assess the situation along the border. The Office then launched an emergency assistance project under which some 20,400 refugees were registered.

In 2006, UNHCR continued to assist urban refugees, stressing the self-reliance and improved welfare of those with special needs, including regular treatment for those living with HIV and AIDS. The economic aspect of local integration remains a concern as employment opportunities are very limited in Cameroon. Consequently, UNHCR has been strengthening its microcredit programme, though reimbursement rates have been low. In order to improve the situation, a partnership agreement was signed with a microcredit cooperative to reinforce the monitoring of UNHCR's loan programme.

The Gambia hosted some 13,500 refugees, mainly from Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone and central African countries. UNHCR assisted the Government to provide protection, and decided not to close its office in Banjul due to the sudden influx of over 6,000 refugees from Senegal.

The Senegalese refugees settled mainly among Gambian families in more than 43 villages along the Senegal border. They were helped by emergency interventions in food, water, shelter, health and sanitation. In September, the Office conducted registration exercises for the Senegalese refugees and in November WFP began monthly food distributions.

UNHCR also assisted refugee women with sanitary materials; sponsored the education of refugee children in primary and secondary schools; and granted small loans to some 100 refugees. The Refugee Counselling Centre provided free training in information technology skills and 36 students graduated in 2006.

Frequent changes of personnel in UNHCR's government counterpart in the Gambia resulted in a serious absence of institutional memory of the national partner. As a result, planned training in international protection could not be implemented and the draft Refugee Bill could not be enacted. The Gambia Immigration Department was given financial support to print 1,000 refugee identity cards, most of which were distributed to refugees.

UNHCR worked closely with the Government authorities in the handling of over 300 Gambian immigrants returned from Spain and Morocco. The Office monitored the treatment of such returnees.

In 2006 **Guinea Bissau** hosted some 7,800 mostly rural refugees from the Casamance region of Senegal and from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. The Office is phasing down assistance to refugees as it encourages them to become more self-reliant. Refugee committees in rural and urban areas were involved in self-sufficiency activities. Education and vocational apprenticeships in agricultural microcredit schemes and livestock farming were granted to 442 refugees. Refugees had access to public health services and similar services in the camps.

Under the repatriation programme, 23 refugees returned to Liberia. UNHCR continued to advocate for the Government's adoption of the Refugee Law. With the Office's support, the authorities processed the asylum applications of 386 people, of whom 215 were granted refugee status.

In **Mali**, UNHCR aimed to help a total of some 10,500 refugees living in urban and rural areas become self-sufficient. The largest group of refugees in the country consists of 6,000 Mauritians, with the rest mostly from Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and various central African countries. In 2006 UNHCR helped build the legal protection capacity of the *Commission Nationale Chargée des Réfugiés* as well as of the local police force in the border areas with Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. Local integration of refugees continued in Faragouaran site. During the agricultural season refugees farmed eight hectares of maize, peanuts and other crops.

The office in Bamako received almost 2,000 asylum-seekers, processed 111 applications and granted refugee status to 48 people. There is a difference between the number of asylum-seekers and the number of processed applications because many asylum-seekers left the country before their claims were looked at, most likely heading north as migrants. Forty-five refugees were resettled in Canada, Sweden

and the United States of America. Education grants were given to 266 refugees. Activities to generate awareness of sexual and gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS reached a large audience. Four refugees from Liberia and four from Angola were repatriated.

In 2006 **Niger** hosted 317 refugees and 20 asylum-seekers. Owing to the low number of applications the National Eligibility Committee only met once in the year. During this session ten asylum applications were examined, and four asylum-seekers were granted refugee status. An appeals committee was officially created in March 2006 but was not functional due to the lack of properly trained members. UNHCR subsidized medical care and provided primary and secondary education to refugees and asylum-seekers. HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns were organized for the refugee population and sanitary napkins were provided to women. During the year, one refugee was repatriated to Côte d'Ivoire and four families were resettled in the United States, the Netherlands and Canada.

In **Nigeria**, UNHCR worked closely with the Government to protect and assist some 10,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in Lagos and Ogun State. It also tried to ensure the smooth reintegration of some 10,400 Nigerian returnees from Cameroon in Taraba State.

UNHCR's operations in 2006 focused on finding durable solutions for refugees, mainly through voluntary repatriation and local integration of the remaining refugee population. The Office's core activities were protection and building the capacity of the local authorities to conduct refugee status determination.

In 2006, some 900 Liberians and seven Sierra Leonean refugees returned home, and more than 1,600 Sierra Leonean refugees were assisted to integrate locally. A total of 172 refugees were resettled in Canada and the United States. In addition, UNHCR launched a local settlement initiative for refugees living in Oru camp, which involved relocation from the camp. Two-thirds of the refugees in the camp had been relocated by the end of 2006.

UNHCR and nine other UN Agencies signed an agreement in October 2006 for joint intervention in Taraba State, in line with Millennium Development Goals and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy. The aim is to deter recurring ethnic conflict in the state by fostering peace and reconciliation, in part by providing assistance to both returnees and the host community.

Under the cooperation framework between UNHCR and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Office sought the application of the latter's Protocol on Free Movement, Right of Residence and Establishment, in the context of the protection and local integration of refugees, IDPs and returnees. Such

efforts are an attempt to mitigate irregular movements in West Africa. In 2006, UNHCR and ECOWAS signed an agreement on the creation and training of the regional body's emergency response team, which would coordinate the sub-regional response in cross-border emergencies.

UNHCR's office in Senegal coordinated operations in Guinea Bissau, the Gambia, Mali, and Senegal. **Senegal** hosted over 23,200 refugees, mostly from Mauritania, and 2,400 asylum-seekers. UNHCR focused on strengthening refugees' self-reliance with the support of local partners. These activities included skills training, income-generating activities, access to health care and education. Nineteen refugees repatriated and 300 others, mainly Mauritians, Ivorians and Liberians, were resettled in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Despite repeated efforts, little progress was made towards a solution to the protracted situation of Mauritanian refugees in Mali and Senegal. The Office explored the possibility of a census to profile this population, but, owing to election-related issues, the Senegalese authorities did not accept the proposal.

Illegal immigration was of concern to UNHCR, particularly mixed influxes, since it could have a negative impact on asylum. The Office was also concerned by the humanitarian consequences of the escalation of violence in Casamance. The Senegalese armed forces' deployment along the southern border resulted in regular clashes with the Casamance Democratic Movement, and ended prospects for the repatriation of Senegalese refugees in the near future.

In 2006, **Togo** hosted 6,000 refugees, about 5,000 of whom were rural refugees from Ghana who have integrated locally in northern Togo, and 400 asylum-seekers. UNHCR assisted the urban refugees and asylum-seekers with primary and secondary education and vocational training. About 75 per cent of students passed their exams and ten vocational training graduates found jobs. Eighteen refugees repatriated and 59 asylum-seekers were granted refugee status.

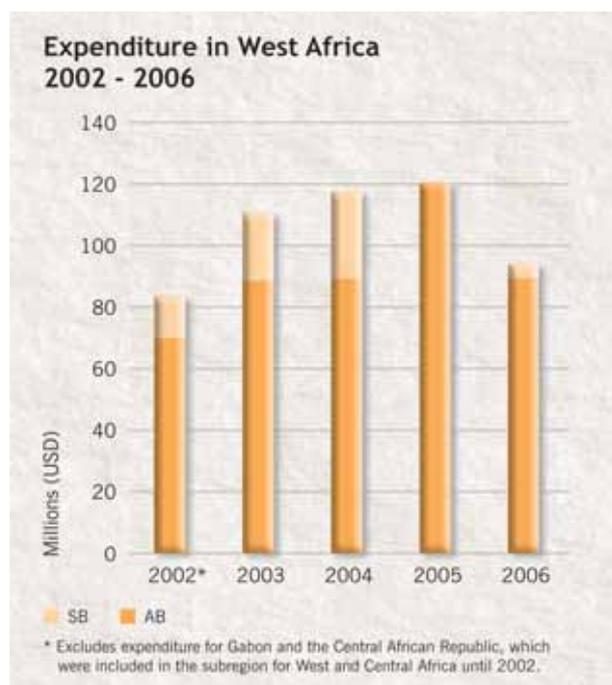
UNHCR also trained government officials in the protection of refugees, IDPs and returnees. The Office helped strengthen the capacity of the Togolese authorities and their newly established *Haut Commissariat aux Rapatriés et à l'Action Humanitaire*, the office in charge of IDPs and returnees. UNHCR reinforced its partnership with the European Union (EU) in Togo to ensure that some areas of return will benefit from the EU development programmes. The Government also launched many initiatives to promote the return of refugees, and UNHCR registered 2,400 Togolese returnees. A reintegration programme initiated for the returnee population included income-generating activities and grants to help with apprenticeships and housing.

Financial information

Donor interest in the West Africa sub-regional activities continued, despite the capping of UNHCR's global budget in 2006. The subsequent reduction in programming capacity led UNHCR to prioritize its protection and assistance activities. The voluntary repatriation programme for Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries remained well-supported.

UNHCR's supplementary expenditures in West Africa grew steadily from 2002-2004, dropping off in 2005. Beginning in 2002 and through 2003, UNHCR provided emergency assistance to Liberian returnees from Côte d'Ivoire, transferred Liberian refugees from the Kouankan camp to a camp in Albadaria in Guinea, and supported Ivorian refugees in Guinea. In 2004, supplementary programmes focused on the repatriation and return of Liberian refugees and IDPs. Expenditures under the annual subregional programme increased in 2005 as the above-mentioned activities were mainstreamed into annual programmes. In 2006,

UNHCR carried out two supplementary programmes to protect and assist Liberian and Ivorian IDPs.



Budget and expenditure (USD)

Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	AB	SB ¹	Total	AB	SB	Total
Benin	2,896,651	0	2,896,651	2,001,788	0	2,001,788
Cameroon	2,406,807	0	2,406,807	1,925,848	0	1,925,848
Côte d'Ivoire	9,226,671	1,148,236	10,374,907	7,520,823	407,986	7,928,810
Gambia	881,749	0	881,749	654,465	0	654,465
Ghana	11,226,703	0	11,226,703	8,993,309	0	8,993,309
Guinea	14,461,680	0	14,461,680	11,609,762	0	11,609,762
Liberia	39,962,706	12,886,542	52,849,248	34,099,419	4,443,181	38,542,600
Nigeria	4,077,843	0	4,077,843	3,317,197	0	3,317,197
Senegal	2,282,252	0	2,282,252	1,456,221	0	1,456,221
Sierra Leone	17,056,087	0	17,056,087	14,072,996	0	14,072,996
Togo	80,898	0	80,898	63,514	0	63,514
Regional activities ²	4,000,678	0	4,000,678	3,526,903	0	3,526,903
Total	108,560,725	14,034,778	122,595,503	89,242,244	4,851,167	94,093,411

¹ Does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

² Includes local settlement, emergency assistance, voluntary repatriation, care and maintenance for Togolese refugees, resettlement assistance for urban refugees, regional stockpile of non-food items, and scholarships for refugee students.

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)

Earmarking	Donor	AB	SB
West Africa	Australia	57,520	0
	Canada	1,363,636	0
	Denmark	2,987,769	0
	Finland	1,913,265	0
	Greece	64,103	0
	Ireland	592,417	0

Earmarking	Donor	AB	SB
	Japan	1,000,000	0
	Luxembourg	658,762	0
	Monaco	40,000	0
	Norway	39,936	0
	South Africa	54,913	0
	Sweden	7,537,688	0
	United Kingdom	313,714	0
	United States	150,000	0
	USA for UNHCR	2,080	0
Sub-total		16,775,804	0
Benin			
	United Kingdom	24,905	0
	United States	225,000	0
Sub-total		249,905	0
Cameroon			
	Norway	19,968	0
	United Kingdom	166,327	0
Sub-total		186,295	0
Côte d'Ivoire			
	CERF	1,000,000	745,100
	Germany	275,677	0
	Ireland	253,807	0
	United States	1,450,000	0
Sub-total		2,979,484	745,100
Gambia			
	Norway	19,968	0
Sub-total		19,968	0
Ghana			
	Norway	19,968	0
	United Kingdom	664,872	0
	United States	1,634,342	0
Sub-total		2,319,182	0
Guinea			
	CERF	263,220	0
	European Commission	685,917	0
	France	241,838	0
	Germany	206,918	0
	Luxembourg	241,838	0
	United Kingdom	380,952	0
	United States	2,300,000	0
Sub-total		4,320,684	0

Earmarking	Donor	AB	SB
Liberia			
	Canada	0	446,429
	Denmark	0	2,296,820
	European Commission	4,498,715	346,981
	France	386,941	0
	Germany	914,524	0
	International Olympic Committee	0	22,000
	Ireland	0	350,665
	Japan	3,000,000	2,146,703
	Norway	19,968	1,474,926
	Private donors in Italy	683	0
	Spain	937,893	0
	<i>Stichting Vluchteling (Netherlands)</i>	315,581	0
	Switzerland	1,200,625	842357.72
	United Kingdom	952,381	1519744.35
	United States	11,999,044	3450000
	USA for UNHCR	7,608	0
Sub-total		24,233,962	12,896,626
Nigeria	Brookings Institution (USA)	28,580	0
	Norway	19,968	0
	United States	165,473	0
Sub-total		214,021	0
Senegal			
	United States	34,543	0
Sub-total		34,543	0
Sierra Leone			
	European Commission	245,969	0
	Germany	184,960	0
	Japan	2,500,000	0
	Norway	19,968	0
	United States	2,600,000	0
Sub-total		5,550,897	0
Total		56,884,745	13,641,726