

Liberia



Main objectives

In 2005, UNHCR aimed to seek durable solutions through the coordinated use of voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement; pursue local integration for Sierra Leonean and urban refugees of various nationalities; provide care and maintenance assistance with a special emphasis on activities geared towards self-sufficiency for Ivorian refugees; strengthen the capacity of government counterparts and local NGOs; ensure that the voluntary return of Liberian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their counties of origin takes place in conditions of safety and dignity with a special emphasis on the specific needs of the most vulnerable.

Impact

- In 2005, some 3,500 Sierra Leonean refugees remaining in Liberia enjoyed international protection.
- As in previous years, UNHCR continued to pursue durable solutions for the 150 urban refugees of various nationalities residing in Monrovia and its suburbs. UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of three

of them to their respective countries of origin (Sudan and Iraq).

- Some 12,500 Ivorian refugees were identified in towns and villages along the border; some 6,600 of them underwent a verification process and were registered (using the Project Profile software) and almost 3,300 among this number, aged seven years and above, received ID cards.
- UNHCR continued to facilitate the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of Liberian refugees and IDPs.
- Working alongside other UN agencies and NGOs, UNHCR assisted some 260,000 IDPs to resettle in their communities of origin.

Working environment

The context

The peaceful elections in October and November 2005 marked a turning point in the history of Liberia after a quarter of a century of civil strife. The inauguration of a democratically elected government brought to an end the two-year term of the National Transitional

Government created under the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in Accra in 2003. The new Government promised to tackle corruption, restore basic social services and to resuscitate the war-ravaged economy. The National Transitional Government had already begun the process of reforming the security sector, including the restructuring of the army. However, responsibility for security still rests with the 15,000-strong peacekeeping forces of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), who are deployed in all 15 counties of Liberia.

Constraints

Developments in the subregion continued to threaten Liberia's new-found stability, particularly the political and military situation in Côte d'Ivoire. Former combatants from Liberia were reportedly recruited to fight for armed groups in Côte d'Ivoire. In Sierra Leone, the 11,000-strong United Nations peacekeeping force finally scaled down its operations and handed over its responsibilities to the democratically elected Government of Sierra Leone. This posed new challenges, notably in the context of the indictment of former president Charles Taylor, as his supporters warned that such a move would threaten the peace process.

Humanitarian agencies returned to a socio-economic environment ravaged by 14 years of war. Infrastructure still lay in ruins, including electricity and water supply systems. Roads were in a state of disrepair. Unemployment stood at 85 per cent. The country's external debt amounted to USD 3 billion. Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was estimated to have contracted by 30 per cent due to the prolonged conflict; important economic sectors, mining and forestry in particular, were seriously damaged by war.

Funding

Funding was available to respond to the needs of Ivorian and Sierra Leonean refugees. Return and reintegration of Liberian refugees also drew high support from the donor community. UNHCR received 70 per cent of earmarked contributions, enabling activities to be smoothly implemented throughout the year.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

UNHCR helped some 37,900 Liberians to return from various asylum countries. It is estimated that 150,000 refugees returned of their own accord during the period under review. At the same time, UNHCR implemented multi-sectoral community empowerment projects (CEP) encompassing water, sanitation, education, crop production, shelter, and income generation. Through the CEP concept, communities were encouraged to actively participate in the planning and implementation of programmes in their localities.

IDPs who were previously hosted in various camps in Bong, Montserrado and Margibi counties received UNHCR assistance to return home, including cash grants for transportation, logistical support and distribution of non-food items. Periodic monitoring was provided to ensure their access to community facilities and support.

Ivorian refugees in camps (some 1,200 in Nimba county and 400 in Maryland county) were provided with protection and basic assistance. In view of the substantial risk that the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire might intensify, country-specific contingency plans were drawn up. Urban refugees were also provided with information on the situation in their respective countries of origin to

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Returnees (IDPs)		260,000	260,000	-	-
IDPs		237,000	54,000	-	-
Returnees	From Côte d'Ivoire	33,000	13,600	-	-
	From Guinea	29,600	18,600	-	-
	From Sierra Leone	6,200	4,200	-	-
	From Ghana	1,200	1,200	-	-
Refugees	Côte d'Ivoire	6,600	1,200	48	49
	Sierra Leone	3,500	3,500	45	49



In Liberia, UNHCR contributed to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of areas of return of refugees and IDPs through community empowerment projects. These projects included fixing water pumps like the one shown here. *UNHCR / E. Compte Verdaguer*

enable them to make informed decisions on whether to repatriate.

Local integration as a durable solution option for the remaining 3,500 Sierra Leonean refugees did not proceed as planned, as the authorities of the National Transitional Government were unwilling to initiate discussions due to its time limited mandate. Sierra Leonean refugees nevertheless had access to basic social services, including health, education and legal assistance. In addition, some 2,900 Sierra Leoneans received identity cards. In 2005, 11 Sierra Leoneans were resettled in third countries.

Activities and assistance

Community services: Community empowerment remained the cornerstone of the return and reintegration programme. Gender mainstreaming and community development workshops targeting implementing partners and community leaders were held in Gbarnga, while various training workshops were held on leadership skills and other topics for women in Lofa county. In

Voinjama, a special community-based organization initiative started in November. This aimed not only to offer recreational activities for some 1,500 children (including 500 girls) in Zorzor, Foya and Kolahun districts but also to tackle reproductive health issues.

As co-chair of the sexual and gender-based violence inter-agency coordination meetings held at national and county levels, UNHCR participated in the development of a national strategy for Liberia organized by the Ministry of Gender. During the designated 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women, special programmes were launched in all UNHCR areas of operation. Material assistance such as clothes and small loans were provided to survivors of violence. A referral system for the reporting of cases was put in place both in the camps and the local communities.

As a measure to encourage refugees to return to Liberia, mass information programmes continued: a monthly publication of the UNHCR's *Liberian Bulletin* provided updated information to refugees in the neighbouring countries of asylum; radio programmes in local

languages highlighting Liberia's recovery efforts were implemented in collaboration with the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC); and drama performances were organized in camps in Guinea and Sierra Leone to engage and inform refugees on situations in the various counties of Liberia.

Peace education activities in the return communities played a major role in schools, benefiting teachers, youth groups, religious leaders, town chiefs and ordinary community members. Training-of-trainers sessions on peace education were organized.

Crop production: As part of the support to the return and reintegration programme, most of the agriculture CEPs were implemented in Lofa, Montserrado and Grand Gedeh counties. Seeds and tools were distributed in all the main counties of return and targeted community backyard gardening; fast-growing rice and vegetable production was introduced. Thirty per cent of refugee returnee women participated in agriculture and farming activities. Ivorian refugee farmers and some host community members received assorted farming tools and rice seedlings.

Domestic needs and household support: To help them settle back into their old communities, returnees and IDPs received standard non-food packages at all UNHCR transit facilities (blankets, plastic mats, kitchen sets, jerry cans, plastic sheets, plastic rolls, soap, buckets, mosquito nets and sanitary materials).

Education: 80 public schools were rehabilitated. Students received materials and supplies, while some 2,800 teachers benefited from teaching materials. In Grand Gedeh county, some 1,000 Ivorian refugee students received primary education and were provided with educational supplies including notebooks, textbooks and uniforms.

Food: As part of the continuing collaboration with WFP, ready meals were provided to all returnees at all UNHCR transit facilities. All returnees were provided with basic food rations for a period of four months by WFP. The needs of women, children and groups with special needs were prioritized.

Forestry: To accompany Liberia's ongoing general recovery programmes for returnees, and given the potential adverse environmental impacts of these activities related to the above, UNHCR implemented an overall environmental project in the country. The strategy focused on establishing adequate practical procedures and guidelines and required training on environmental issues in line with the existing national guidelines of the Liberian Environmental Protection Agency and Forest Development Authority. These activities were implemented with

the direct involvement of the communities. Environmental training demonstration centres were opened in Lofa, Nimba and Grand Cape Mount counties. Environmental awareness training programmes were also established in schools in these counties. In general, implementation of the training and awareness activities radically increased the awareness of refugees, returnees, IDPs and local host communities regarding vital environmental issues.

Health and nutrition: Shortly after their return, refugees and IDPs were medically screened, and received treatment and vaccination as appropriate. For health workers, 12 capacity-building workshops covered topics such as reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, drugs management (including cold chain maintenance) standard precautions and treatment of sexually-transmitted infections. Standard treatment protocols were distributed. Measles immunization reached an average 86 per cent coverage following the national mass immunization campaign partly supported by UNHCR in July 2005. Secondary health care facilities were few, and often rudimentary, but some patients (mainly women and children) were referred using the nine UNHCR ambulances.

Refugees living with Liberian families at border villages continued to access existing local facilities supported by UNHCR through community projects.

HIV/AIDS committees were consolidated in all areas. Training-of-trainers workshops on HIV/AIDS were held for community leaders and NGO workers so that they could conduct awareness-raising campaigns. Health information, education and communication materials were distributed.

Income generation: Vulnerable Sierra Leonean refugees were given microcredit amounting to USD 200 per person. A total of 250 refugees who benefited from this programme were assisted to establish small businesses and thereby reduce dependence. UNHCR also supported a microfinance programme, which benefited over 300 Liberian returnees and host community members in Margibi and Montserrado counties. This programme contributed to the rapid reintegration of the beneficiaries.

Legal assistance: Liberia's asylum regime remained flexible. As a signatory to all international and regional instruments on refugees, Liberia had its own national legislation on asylum-seekers and refugees. UNHCR continued to protect and assist all refugees and asylum-seekers in Liberia. In collaboration with its partners, UNHCR facilitated the reunification and the placement of 36 separated and unaccompanied children with immediate family members, or with relatives or foster parents. A number of 54 human rights promotion and awareness discussion sessions were held in six counties.

Livestock: UNHCR, together with FAO, set up animal husbandry projects, notably in Bong and Lofa counties.

Operational support (to agencies): A decade of civil war has caused a severe skills shortage. Capacity-building workshops were held for both national and international partners to strengthen their management, operational and reporting skills. In Bong county, support was provided to the Ministry of Gender to mobilize women's groups to fully participate in the electoral process. Subsequently, 13 women ran for the House of Representative positions, while three ran for Senator positions.

Sanitation: Latrines and baths in transit centres and refugee camps were built or rehabilitated. Some 10,000 refugees, returnees, and IDPs directly benefited from higher hygiene standards, improving their health status. In parallel to the establishment of sanitation facilities, 14 hygiene promotion workshops were conducted in villages to train local communities.

Shelter and infrastructure: Repatriation preparedness projects focused largely on infrastructural rehabilitation involving community-based construction activities. Bridges with culverts were constructed in Nimba, Lofa, Grand Gedeh and Margibi counties. Transit facilities and way stations were constructed in Lofa, Nimba, Margibi, Grand Gedeh and Maryland counties. All existing transit facilities were maintained; 128 kms of road were reconditioned.

UNHCR supported the construction of over 1,000 shelter units for some 5,000 refugees, returnees and IDPs in Lofa, Nimba, Grand Gedeh, Margibi and Maryland counties. New settlement and housing plans were developed, accompanied by training workshops of communities and members. UNHCR collaborated with UN-Habitat to conduct research, involving local communities, into low-cost building materials. Shelter committees were set up to assess how existing traditional construction technology could be utilized for the benefit of both returnees and local communities.

Transport and logistics: Liberian returnees and IDPs received a travel grant at all UNHCR transit facilities. Seventy-five trucks were used to transport beneficiaries to their final destinations. These trucks also transported construction materials to various project sites, which contributed to the timely implementation of the CEPs. Special consideration was given to all vulnerable people during transport from country of asylum to final destination. Due to the bad road conditions, trucks were fitted with mattresses when necessary. Child protection agencies travelled with repatriation convoys.

Water: Through the construction and/or rehabilitation of hand pump wells, some 83,000 refugees, IDPs and

local host communities benefited from water services meeting UNHCR standards. Workshops were held on management and maintenance of the wells.

Organization and implementation

Management

UNHCR's operations in Liberia were managed by 51 international and 174 national staff members, six international and four national UNVs, four consultants and two secondees. The programme was run from seven different locations including the representation in Monrovia, two sub-offices in Voinjama and Saclepea, and four field offices in Tubmanburg, Gbarnga, Zwedru and Harper.

Working with others

UNHCR's programme in Liberia was implemented in collaboration with 32 operational partners, including one governmental body, the LRRRC.

In addition to its regular monthly operational meetings involving heads of offices, sectoral experts and heads of sections, UNHCR organized monthly coordination meetings of implementing partners in Monrovia. UNHCR and NGOs also conducted a number of workshops and awareness-raising campaigns for refugees, returnees and IDPs on a wide range of topics (including women and children protection, female genital mutilation, health, environment, education, water and sanitation issues, and refugee rights). National NGOs also sent participants to international meetings such as ExCom, workshops and other UNHCR forums.

UNHCR actively participated in the activities of the UN Country Team and was also an active member of the IDP Coordinating Committee. In October 2005, UNHCR, in collaboration with three key UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, and WFP), developed a joint action plan for community-based recovery and restoration of social services in Liberia. The plan, which later included FAO, provides an integrated framework for harmonizing programme interventions and supports the transition from relief and humanitarian interventions to longer-term goals based on recovery and development objectives. Under this agreement, agencies will jointly mobilize resources, monitor and evaluate their programmes and implement projects to restore basic services, strengthen protection, human rights and the rule of law and support the empowerment of communities.

Overall assessment

UNHCR's operations were largely implemented as planned, despite numerous challenges and constraints. At the local level, UNHCR offices worked closely with local authorities to implement a variety of multisectoral community empowerment projects.

In 2005, work began on strengthening the police, the legal system, and local government structures such as land/property dispute resolution committees, which will need to be accelerated in 2006. The success of these programmes in 2005, as measured in terms of sustainability of returns, was highly dependent on the security situation (proximity or otherwise of UNMIL troops) and the restoration of civil society, for which some sound foundations were laid by UNHCR's community empowerment projects.

Offices

Monrovia
 Gbarnga
 Harper
 Saclepea
 Tubmanburg
 Voinjama
 Zwedru

Partners

Government agency

Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission

NGOs

African Concern International
 Africa Humanitarian Action
 American Refugee Committee
 Caritas-Liberia
 Community Action Programme
 Concerned Christian Community
 Danish Refugee Council
 Development Education Network Liberia
 Environmental Foundation for Africa
 Hope International Mission
 International Medical Corp
 International Rescue Committee
 Liberia National Red Cross Society
 Liberians United to Serve Humanity
 Medical Emergency Relief International
 Medical Emergency Relief and Cooperative International
 Norwegian Refugee Council
 Peace Winds Japan
 Women in Progress for Community Services
 World Vision International
 Search for Common Ground
 ZOA Refugee Care

Others

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
 Environmental Protection Agency
 Food and Agriculture Organization
 Forest Development Agency
 IOM
 UN-HABITAT
 UNICEF
 UNV
 WFP

Budget, income and expenditure (USD)
Annual programme budget

Final budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
46,380,006	31,207,521	14,834,060	46,041,581	46,041,581

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	Prior years' projects
	Annual programme budget	Annual and supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	10,337,306	0
Community services	952,173	30,640
Crop production	127,973	17,796
Domestic needs and household support	3,547,001	0
Education	384,576	45,762
Food	5,455	10,664
Forestry	131,914	0
Health and nutrition	738,434	49,868
Income generation	99,830	0
Livestock	5,792	0
Legal assistance	1,991,188	0
Operational support (to agencies)	5,120,909	57,830
Sanitation	132,765	14,173
Shelter and infrastructure	1,027,144	11,191
Transport and logistics	9,213,086	21,022
Water	227,027	6,514
Instalments with implementing partners	6,128,200	(265,460)
Sub-total operational activities	40,170,773	0
Programme support	5,870,808	0
Total expenditure	46,041,581	0
Cancellation on prior years' expenditure		(172,315)
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	16,876,019	
Reporting received	(10,747,819)	
Balance	6,128,200	
Prior years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1st January		530,416
Reporting received		(265,460)
Refunded to UNHCR		(127,897)
Adjustments		(10,600)
Balance		126,459