

# Sierra Leone



## Working environment

### The context

Though the overall socio-economic and political environment in the country has remained calm, there have been disturbances over high fuel prices, low wages, the campaign for the 2007 presidential elections, and discontent with the Peacebuilding Commission and Special Court for Sierra Leone proceedings. On the positive side, the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) peacekeeping force at the end of 2005 and its replacement by the civilian United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) was smooth. UNIOSIL is mandated to help the Government enforce human rights, attain the Millennium Development Goals and conduct free and fair elections in 2007.

Sierra Leone continues to offer a favourable protection environment for refugees. The Government and UNHCR work closely together to ensure the smooth running of refugee programmes. However, these efforts suffered a setback in June 2006, when a group of former Liberian combatants and refugees demanding resettlement stormed into the UNHCR compound in Freetown and destroyed vehicles and office equipment. Efforts to establish a dialogue with this group have been extremely difficult as its members refuse to discuss any solutions besides resettlement in a third country.

Civilian authorities have been deployed throughout the country and more than 543,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees have returned home. In this context, a UNHCR-led reintegration programme has carried out over 2,000 small to medium-sized quick-impact projects over the last four years. Plans are now under way for longer-term development in returnee areas.

## The needs

Based on a survey of the intentions of camp-based Liberian refugees conducted in mid-2006, UNHCR plans to repatriate up to 15,000 in 2007. For residual groups unable or unwilling to return, the Office will advocate local integration. As recommended by a joint UNHCR-WFP food needs assessment mission in July 2006, food, education and health services to refugee camps will be phased out progressively. The closure of camps, handover of infrastructure to local communities and environmental management are crucial elements for successful local integration. The phasing down of UNHCR's operations will start with the closure of way stations after the end of organized repatriation in June 2007.

Given that a draft law is before Parliament and should be promulgated by 2007, it is crucial that UNHCR help the Government assume responsibility for refugee status determination (RSD). UNHCR will train government officials to manage the reception of asylum-seekers and conduct RSD interviews.

**Total requirements: USD 11,971,696**

## Main objectives

- Complete the voluntary repatriation of 12,000 to 15,000 Liberian refugees by the end of June 2007.
- Consolidate refugee camps and transfer infrastructure to the Government for use by host communities.
- Promote the local integration of the residual group of Liberian refugees through self-reliance projects and advocate refugee access to land and national social services such as health care and education.
- Develop durable solutions for urban refugees while helping them gain access to their rights and avoid dependence on international assistance.
- Build the capacity of government authorities to manage the reception of asylum-seekers and conduct RSD in accordance with international standards.

## Key targets for 2007

- Up to 15,000 Liberian refugees return to their country of origin by the end of June 2007.
- The infrastructure of six vacated refugee camps is handed back to the Government.
- Two way stations and one field office are closed in the second half of the year.
- All Liberian refugees unable to return to their country of origin are assisted to settle locally through projects and services to foster their self-reliance.
- All urban refugees wishing to repatriate are assisted to do so.
- All urban refugees with specific skills who intend to settle locally are helped to avail of projects and services to facilitate their integration.
- All individual refugees who meet the criteria are resettled.
- A refugee law is adopted by Parliament.

## Strategy and activities

The repatriation of Liberian refugees will continue within the framework of the Tripartite Agreement signed by UNHCR and the Governments of Sierra Leone and Liberia. All refugees will continue to be informed of UNHCR's plans to phase out logistical support for organized returns to Liberia at the end of June 2007.

Local integration for the remaining refugees will require a comprehensive strategy to manage issues such as land ownership, the consolidation of camps and the willingness of the Government and host populations to continue to share resources, particularly agricultural land.

Refugees will be informed of the very limited prospects for resettlement. They will be advised to consider other viable solutions, such as local integration in Sierra Leone or repatriation to Liberia.

## Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2007		Dec 2007	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Liberia	38,500	25,830	23,300	13,890
	Various	30	20	50	30
Asylum-seekers	Various	30	20	70	30
Returnees (refugees)		50	30	50	30
<b>Total</b>		<b>38,610</b>	<b>25,900</b>	<b>23,470</b>	<b>13,980</b>



Voluntary repatriation to Liberia. Road conditions are a recurring constraint in the repatriation process, especially during the rainy season. UNHCR / R. Goldstein-Rodriguez

UNHCR will help the Government establish RSD mechanisms and adequate asylum procedures and improve refugee registration and documentation. At the same time, the Office will seek durable solutions for refugees such as repatriation or the granting of citizenship or residence permits.

## Refugees from Liberia

UNHCR will provide refugees (including those awaiting return or opting to remain in Sierra Leone) with basic domestic and shelter items, as well as with water, sanitation, health and other essential services in 2007. Where possible, UNHCR will shift resources to local integration activities and will handover camps and their infrastructure to local authorities. The Office will facilitate the local integration of the remaining refugees through legal support and income-generating activities. It will also advocate for their access to land and national social services such as health care and education.

## Urban refugees

Some 12,000 urban refugees, mostly Liberians, have been profiled in the *ProGres* database. UNHCR will make special efforts to overcome the reluctance of this group to consider any solution other than resettlement in a third country. Repatriation and/or local integration will be promoted. UNHCR will extend all possible support, such as skills training or small business grants, to those refugees with a genuine willingness to increase their self-reliance and integrate into the host community.

## Constraints

If the assisted repatriation to Liberia is not completed as planned, the shift towards local integration of residual groups, consolidation of camps and handover of infrastructure will be delayed. Additional resources may then be required for basic assistance to camp-based refugees.

Many urban refugees continue to hope that they will be resettled in a third country, despite the Office's repeated message that this is not a viable option except for a very small number of refugees with compelling protection needs. In the context of voluntary repatriation to Liberia and local integration of remaining refugees in Sierra Leone, this hope creates an impediment to implementing appropriate durable solutions.

While the Government and development agencies are ready to accelerate economic recovery, the working environment is still very complex due to major constraints such as high youth unemployment, illiteracy, poor road conditions and inadequate health services.

## Organization and implementation

### UNHCR presence

Number of offices	5
Total staff	109
International	21
National	82
UNVs	6

## Coordination

While coordinating its activities with its main government counterpart, the National Commission for Social Action, UNHCR will continue working with international and national NGOs and other members of the UN Country Team. Under the Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development project, which runs from mid-2004 to mid-2007, the European Commission is funding international NGOs to support both refugees in camps as well as host communities within a five-kilometre radius of the camps.

## Partners

### Implementing partners

**Government:** National Commission for Social Action.

**NGOs:** Bo Pujehun Development Associates, Caritas Kenema Office.

**Others:** *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, WFP.*

### Operational partners

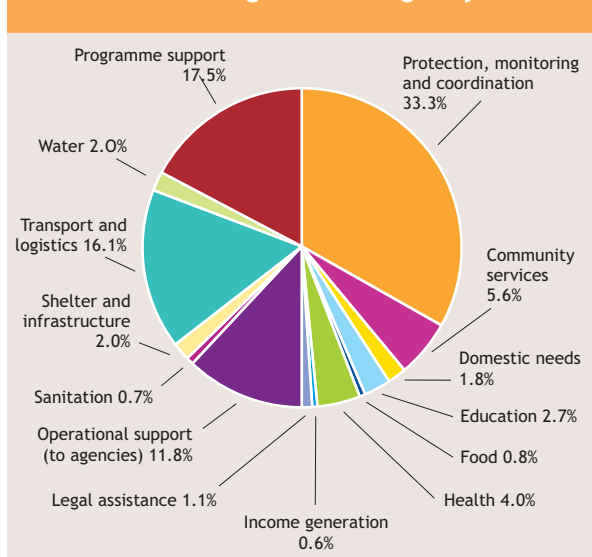
**NGOs:** German Agro Action, Cooperative Assistance Relief Everywhere, International Committee of the Red Cross.

**Others:** *Coopération française.*

## Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme Budget	
	2006	2007
Protection, monitoring and coordination	5,760,373	3,938,186
Community services	964,504	434,357
Domestic needs	314,769	172,500
Education	464,787	214,142
Food	136,128	16,071
Forestry	0	100,000
Health	697,733	810,715
Income generation	97,046	0
Legal assistance	190,004	104,286
Operational support (to agencies)	2,040,557	1,420,786
Sanitation	121,985	48,929
Shelter and infrastructure	342,592	185,714
Transport and logistics	2,776,331	1,801,786
Water	353,564	60,714
<b>Total operations</b>	<b>14,260,373</b>	<b>9,308,186</b>
Programme support	3,020,832	2,663,510
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,281,205</b>	<b>11,971,696</b>

### 2006 Annual Programme Budget by sector



### 2007 Annual Programme Budget by sector

