

Sierra Leone

AT A GLANCE

Main Objectives and Activities

Assess the protection requirements of those Liberian refugees who did not wish to repatriate; facilitate the local integration of Liberian refugees in need of international protection and identify resettlement opportunities; assess how national and local socio-economic, political and security factors will affect the needs of Sierra Leonean returnees; compile Returnee District Area Profiles taking into account the security needs of potential returnees to those districts; facilitate and later promote the voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees and help them settle back into their communities of origin; in the context of the Brookings process, establish operational linkages and mechanisms which best ensure a smooth transition from emergency relief to longer-term reconstruction and recovery.

Impact

- In 2000, UNHCR undertook screening of 1,872 Liberian households including new applications, in order to determine the need of those who did not participate in the voluntary repatriation programme.
- Limited assistance in the form of health care, educational support and targeted individual assistance for vulnerable persons was provided to Liberian refugees. Three Liberian refugee families in need of international protection were resettled in a third country.
- Following the renewed conflict in Sierra Leone in May, UNHCR revised its voluntary repatriation plan for Sierra Leonean refugees, reducing its planning figure from 170,000 to 50,000 people.



Persons of Concern				
Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Sierra Leone (IDPs)	300,000	-	-	-
Sierra Leone (Returned IDPs)	200,000	-	-	-
Sierra Leone (Returnees)	40,900	24,900	-	-
Liberia (Refugees)	6,500	6,500	-	-

Income and Expenditure (USD)					
Annual Programme, Trust Funds and Supplementary Programme Budgets					
	Revised Budget	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
AB/TF	941,439	879,376	431,354	1,310,730	832,471
SB	9,380,111	3,966,962	2,697,173	6,664,135	6,664,135
Total	10,321,550	4,846,338	3,128,527	7,974,865	7,496,606

¹Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

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

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

- A total of 40,900 people returned to Sierra Leone in 2000. Out of these, the Office provided basic assistance for some 24,900 upon return since September. Most returned spontaneously from troubled Guinea, but were unable to return to their (rebel-controlled) areas of origin. Some 10,000 returnees were accommodated in host communities while plans were underway to establish temporary settlements and identify other possible host communities.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

The return of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) leaders to Freetown and the formation of a Government of National Unity in late 1999 raised high hopes. Soon after, however, peace-keepers were kidnapped and hostilities resumed in May, resulting in further displacement of Sierra Leonean people. The arrest and imprisonment of most of the RUF leaders in Freetown marked the end of the Lomé peace agreement signed in July 1999. The ensuing situation in Sierra Leone could be described as one of “no war, no peace”. The signing of a cease-fire agreement in Abuja in November did not bring an end to this situation, but opened a door for the possible resumption of peace negotiations.

With increasing attacks on villages along its borders, the Guinean Government made public statements in September, blaming Sierra Leonean refugees for the deterioration of the security situation. This triggered a mass movement of Sierra Leonean refugees. Although

the situation in Sierra Leone was not conducive to their safe and dignified return, some 24,900 people opted to return to Sierra Leone from September onwards. Most were unable to return to their places of origin, which were still under rebel control, and to which humanitarian organisations had virtually no access. These returnees were thus in the same situation as internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Constraints

The main constraint faced by the Office during 2000 was the fragile security situation that prevailed in Sierra Leone and in its neighbouring country, Guinea. On the one hand, the insecurity in Sierra Leone prevented UNHCR from promoting the voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees; on the other hand, the deterioration of security in Guinea made it necessary for UNHCR to assist emergency return movements from the country. The lack of access to rebel-held areas prevented effective returnee monitoring and the compilation of the Returnee District Area Profiles. There was hardly any information about the situation of those who had returned spontaneously to those areas. UNHCR



was only able to provide protection and assistance to returnees located in safe areas under the control of the Government such as the Lungi and Pujehun Districts. A concentration of returnees in a limited number of safe areas put a considerable burden on resources in those areas which were already particularly over-stretched with the presence of IDPs.

The assessment of the protection requirements of the remaining Liberian refugees was affected by frequent staff changes, the use of non-UNHCR staff to conduct interviews, the temporary evacuation of staff in May and the emergency repatriation operation from Guinea.

Funding

The security situation inevitably led to delays in the implementation of programmes. The funds received, however, were sufficient to undertake the activities required.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

Following the completion of the organised voluntary repatriation programme in December 1999, UNHCR undertook a review of those Liberian refugees who remained in Sierra Leone. A total of 1,872 households were interviewed in 2000. It was found that approximately 65 per cent of these might have a continued need for international protection in Sierra Leone or justified humanitarian grounds to remain in the country; only about ten per cent were considered to be economically self-sufficient and locally integrated. An estimated 40 per cent could be counselled for voluntary repatriation. In 2000, only the most vulnerable Liberian refugees were provided with assistance. Three Liberian refugee households and one Sudanese refugee family were resettled in a third country. In addition, ten people of other nationalities approached UNHCR during the year to apply for asylum; seven applications were rejected, and at year's end three were still pending.

As a result of the deteriorating security situation in May, UNHCR reduced its overall planning figure for voluntary repatriation from 170,000 to 50,000. Meanwhile, a series of events which had taken place in Guinea since September jeopardised the protection of Sierra Leonean refugees and thus led to a major turn in UNHCR's strategy and position with regard to their repatriation. The appalling conditions under which Sierra Leonean refugees were fleeing Guinea made it necessary for the Office to provide assistance to returnees upon arrival. In addition, although the conditions for repatriation in

safety and dignity had not yet been met, the Office eventually began organising emergency repatriation movements by ship from Guinea in December. In doing so, information campaigns were carried out prior to departure, to enable refugees to make informed decisions on their return based on the current situation in Sierra Leone. UNHCR established a safe and orderly departure and an adequate reception capacity upon arrival, ensuring assistance to vulnerable persons. UNHCR could not facilitate or promote voluntary repatriation from other countries of asylum, while some 7,500 reportedly returned from Liberia spontaneously during 2000.

In co-operation with the Government, the Office established two transit facilities near Freetown with the capacity to accommodate some 1,500 people. While others waited in transit centres for the completion of camps and the identification of host communities in the southern region, some 10,000 returnees from the northern area were temporarily located in host communities in the Lungi peninsula. Accommodating returning refugees in host communities was favoured over the construction of camps; this approach effectively put a time limit on UNHCR's involvement in returnee assistance. UNHCR initiated systematic monitoring of returnees in co-ordination with government counterparts, implementing partners and other NGOs. By building partnerships with other relevant agencies, the Office worked towards harmonising returnee and IDP protection monitoring within the IDP assistance structures established by the Government, maximising resources and information sharing, and raising the overall standards of protection for all.

As part of the Brookings Process, a high-level inter-agency mission (UNDP, World Bank and UNHCR) took place in February. As a result of this mission, five gaps in linking humanitarian assistance and development were identified (political will and security; reintegration; communication and governance; partnership and co-ordination; and the so-called sub-regional dimension). As a follow-up to the mission, the "Brookings Menu" was formulated by the agencies in Sierra Leone. This was a list of activities in need of further attention from the international community. The deterioration of the security situation since May, however, made it difficult for Sierra Leone to function as a test case.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: An assessment was made of the situation of women and children in post-war Sierra Leone which provided the basis for UNHCR's policy

vis-à-vis these groups. In Daru, Jimmy Bargbo and Kenema, social and economic reintegration projects were implemented for 150 women returnees and IDPs. Activities included trauma healing and skills training in soap-making and tie-dyeing. Three peace and counselling workshops were organised for 185 persons. Some 400 returnee and IDP women and girls who experienced sexual abuse and other forms of violence were assisted with counselling services. Of these, 100 IDP girls also benefited from scholarships. The special funds enhanced the strengthening of the Sexual and Gender Based Violence project in Sierra Leone. Working in close co-operation with child protection agencies, UNHCR ensured the identification, registration, interim care, tracing, and family reunification of separated minors. In 2000, 50 returnee children were reunited with their families and 150 children were taken into care. Returnee child protection mechanisms were put in place at the port in Freetown. Counselling services and micro-credit schemes were provided for 125 Liberian refugees in Blama, Bo and Kenema. In Freetown, UNHCR also gave food rations to 23 vulnerable Liberian refugee families on a monthly basis. Other assistance was also given to extremely vulnerable individuals on a monthly basis, including medical care and micro-credit. A workshop was organised on basic business management and organisational skills.

Crop Production: In partnership with other organisations, farming tools and seedlings were distributed to over 1,000 refugee and returnee families during the planting season in Pujehun and Kailahun districts. Liberian refugees residing in Kenema who did not voluntarily repatriate were provided with some agricultural training and 580 sickles and hoes, 240 bushels of seed rice, 240 bundles of cassava cuttings and 400 bags of potato vines. A significant improvement in food production was seen in the project areas. In Kenema and Pujehun districts, over 120 hectares of farmland were rehabilitated and cultivated. Additionally, up to 100 returning farming families benefited from a Quick Impact Project providing two metric tons of rice seed.

Domestic Needs/ Household Support: Non-food items comprising a total of 3,455 kitchen sets, 6,625 blankets, 6,625 mats, 6,625 cakes of soap and 1,985 jerry cans were distributed to some 3,500 Sierra Leonean returnee families in host communities in Lungi. Those who were residing in transit centres were provided with blankets, mats and soap. UNHCR provided living allowances to ten vulnerable refugees in Freetown.

Education: Thirty Liberian refugees were enrolled in vocational, technical and tertiary institutions. A particular concern, which came to light during the individual

screening exercise, was the large proportion of Liberian refugee children not in school, as a result of the discontinuation of primary and secondary education assistance in 1998. As soon as the results of the screening exercise are available, some educational assistance will be provided, targeting the children of vulnerable families. In collaboration with its implementing partner, UNHCR constructed five schools for 1,200 returnee pupils and one inspector's office in the Kailahun district. In Kenema and Pujehun districts, three primary schools were constructed for a total of 680 pupils. A secondary school was rehabilitated in Pujehun district for 300 pupils. Vocational skills training was provided to 150 returnees from Liberia and Guinea in Zimmi. In Lungi peninsula, eight schools were rehabilitated and 141 teachers received training.

Food: Food assistance provided by WFP for Liberian refugees was discontinued in December 1999 when the repatriation came to an end. Since then, UNHCR provided supplementary food assistance to 51 vulnerable Liberian refugee families in Freetown. In Kenema, 550 out of 2,611 Liberian refugees were identified as vulnerable and were provided with food assistance. In Kenema and Blama, 2,779 Liberian refugees received 162 bags of bulgar wheat, 157 bags of maize meal and 89 gallons of vegetable oil. In the transit centres, an implementing partner provided cooked meals for 10,000 Sierra Leonean returnees on a daily basis and supplementary feeding for the vulnerable, especially malnourished children and the elderly. In the Lungi peninsula, dry rations were distributed by WFP to some 10,000 returnees.

Forestry: In September, an environmental programme was initiated in Kenema and Pujehun districts. Targeting 2,523 returnees, the programme assisted returnee communities to integrate environmental intervention in their subsistence activities, through training in agroforestry, reforestation and energy conservation. UNHCR aimed to control the use of firewood in the displaced and resettlement camps in Kenema and Pujehun districts, as well as providing training in clay-stove production and agroforestry practices.

Health/Nutrition: All registered Liberian refugees residing in Freetown and the western area were entitled to primary health care. Some 150 vulnerable refugees received drugs and treatment for malaria and other diseases, particularly those affecting babies and young children. While a number of NGOs were instrumental in providing health care delivery services for the returnees and IDPs both in the camps and in host communities, UNHCR funded the provision of medical services in Waterloo and Jui transit camps for 10,000 returnees. Three primary health centres were

rehabilitated in Pujehun and Kenema Districts for 1,350 returnees from Guinea and Liberia.

Income Generation: In order to encourage self reliance, 691 Liberian refugees were assisted with micro-credit for the establishment of small business schemes. Of these recipients, 51 were classified as vulnerable persons. The scheme in Freetown was less successful than expected, with non-repayment of loans leading to significant difficulties in the operation of the revolving loan scheme. Other income-generating activities included soap-making, tie-dyeing and agriculture for 150 Liberian refugees in Kenema. Those beneficiaries in Kenema (mainly women and vulnerable persons) set up small-scale businesses and began to repay their loans. Micro-credit assistance to 2,500 returnees was also implemented in Freetown and Kenema, through training, counselling and related services.

Legal Assistance: UNHCR hired and trained local lawyers to screen Liberian refugees. The screening exercise yielded information on the specific protection needs of vulnerable categories, including single-parent households, children and adolescents, survivors of violence and families with a disabled or chronically ill member. UNHCR also hired registration clerks to facilitate the registration and verification of returnees from Guinea. A joint OCHA/UNHCR project (the Sierra Leone Information System, aimed at improving the collection and management of relief and development data) could not be launched as planned. At year's end, it was expected that the project would commence in early 2001.

Operational Support (to Agencies): Despite some delays, UNHCR succeeded in providing its implementing partners with the necessary resources and equipment to implement programme activities (three partners assisting Liberian refugees and 13 partners assisting returning Sierra Leonean refugees).

Sanitation: UNHCR provided sanitation services, toilet construction and the fumigation of shelters in the Jui and Waterloo transit centres. Health workers in these transit centres were trained to oversee overall sanitary conditions.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: Tools and plastic sheeting were provided for the construction of shelter by the returnees in Lungi. A former refugee site, Waterloo camp, was rehabilitated to accommodate 500 returnees. Another transit centre was constructed in Jui with capacity for 1,000 returnees.

Transport/Logistics: Implementing partners received assistance with transport and logistics for project

implementation and services for Liberian refugees. Distribution centres in Blama and Kenema were assisted with the rental of vehicles to transport tools and seeds. In Freetown, a fleet of 12 trucks was established, together with a workshop for the repair and maintenance of all UNHCR vehicles. Contrary to earlier plans, UNHCR played an active role in the transportation of returnees. Some of the 24,900 returnees from Guinea who arrived since September (including over 1,500 whose transportation by sea was provided by UNHCR) benefited from assistance with transport from the port to transit centres, or from transit centres to settlements.

Water: In order to provide safe drinking water in the transit centres and the resettlement camps for Sierra Leonean returnees, new boreholes were constructed and existing ones overhauled as necessary. Water was provided for some 59,000 people. UNHCR provided a community-based emergency response (such as hygiene education and the rehabilitation of existing water points) to 45,000 displaced people in Kaffu Bullom Chiefdom (returnees and IDPs) and over 8,000 in Daru.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

A total 53 staff were employed by UNHCR in Sierra Leone in 2000. This included eleven international staff (including one JPO and one UNV) and 42 national staff. The office in Sierra Leone also benefited from the support of numerous staff on mission and five staff members from the Emergency Response Team in December. UNHCR ran two offices in Sierra Leone: the main one in Freetown and another in Kenema. Other offices in main returnee areas could not be opened as planned on account of the security situation.

Co-ordination with other offices in the region was mainly ensured through the Regional Directorate for West and Central Africa in Abidjan and the Repatriation and Reintegration cell meetings comprising staff from offices in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone as well as the Regional Directorate.

Working with Others

UNHCR's programmes were implemented in co-operation with 16 partners, six of which were national organisations, including a government agency – the National Commission for Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Resettlement (NCRRR). UNHCR supported NCRRR with funds for 15 staff and for logistics.

Through a partnership with UNIFEM, a gender advisor was deployed to Sierra Leone to assist in preparation for a Sierra Leone Women's Initiative. Women's Forum Secretariats were established in accessible country areas to facilitate outreach activities for returnee women and adolescent girls.

UNHCR also worked closely with other UN agencies in the preparation of the UN Consolidated Appeal for Sierra Leone. The process ruled out the duplication of effort by facilitating the clarification of common goals and objectives applicable to an agreed set of scenarios. UNHCR also closely co-operated with various agencies in the context of the Brookings process.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

General political instability and delays in screening affected efforts to hasten the local integration of Liberian refugees. When the screening process is concluded in 2001, the Office will continue to assist Liberian refugees in need of international protection until the cessation clause can be applied. The results of the screening exercise will be utilised to persuade the Government to follow its obligations as a party to international and regional refugee instruments by creating national legislation and structures to address refugee

issues. In addition, contingency plans are being prepared for possible new arrivals as a result of the continuing instability in Lofa county in Liberia.

Due to the unforeseen return of some 24,900 Sierra Leonean refugees triggered by events in Guinea in September, resources were re-directed to respond to the emergency situation. Assistance given by UNHCR and its partners contributed to alleviating the plight of refugees returning under much less than ideal circumstances. Responsibility for returnees hosted in settlements will be assumed by the Government in due course and efforts aimed at reinforcing the capacity of the NCRRR are geared towards that objective. The Office is maintaining its assistance for those who are returning from Guinea, but will gradually reduce it in the hope that most of the returnees will be able to achieve a certain level of self-sufficiency and eventually return to their places of origin. The Office closely co-operated and collaborated with relevant government bodies and other agencies working both in the humanitarian and developmental contexts in its pursuit to ensure the transition from humanitarian assistance to long-term development.



Offices

Freetown
Kenema

Partners

Government Agencies

National Commission for Reconstruction Resettlement and Rehabilitation

NGOs

American Refugee Committee
Family Home Movement
Forum for African Women Educationalists
Initiative pour une Afrique solidaire
International Islamic Youth League
International Medical Corps
Kenema Diocese Development Office
Médecins Sans Frontières (Belgium)
Methodist Church of Sierra Leone
Norwegian Refugee Council
OXFAM
Sierra Leone Red Cross
The Environmental Foundation for Africa

Other

Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
Food and Agriculture Organisation

Financial Report (USD)						
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects			Prior Years' Projects		
	AB/TF	SB	Total	notes		notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	186,431	727,679	914,110			0
Community Services	20,071	8,663	28,734			47,891
Crop Production	4,754	57,640	62,394			0
Domestic Needs / Household Support	975	312,707	313,682			981
Education	19,772	169,994	189,766			7,990
Food	0	1,576	1,576			2,016
Forestry	0	47,897	47,897			0
Health / Nutrition	5,818	144,749	150,567			35,962
Income Generation	3,755	1,731	5,486			0
Legal Assistance	26,384	21,577	47,961			50
Operational Support (to Agencies)	24,456	324,305	348,761			81,757
Sanitation	0	135	135			1,808
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	0	170,616	170,616			3,493
Transport / Logistics	13,378	976,907	990,285			54,051
Water	0	129,354	129,354			30
Instalments with Implementing Partners	23,488	1,457,835	1,481,323			(187,117)
Combined Projects	19,655	0	19,655			(19,655)
Sub-total Operational	348,937	4,553,365	4,902,302			29,257
Programme Support	448,879	332,424	781,303			56,088
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	797,816	4,885,789	5,683,605	(3)		85,345 (6)
Unliquidated Obligations	34,656	1,778,346	1,813,002	(3)		0 (6)
Total	832,472	6,664,135	7,496,607	(1) (3)		85,345

Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	90,599	2,209,698	2,300,297			41,094
Reporting Received	67,111	751,863	818,974			228,211
Balance	23,488	1,457,835	1,481,323			(187,117)
Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0			346,467
Refunded to UNHCR	0	0	1,481,323			2,550
Currency Adjustment	0	0	0			(3,711)
Outstanding 31 December	23,488	1,457,835	1,481,323			153,089

Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0			237,462 (6)
New Obligations	832,472	6,664,134	7,496,606	(1)		0
Disbursements	797,816	4,885,788	5,683,604	(3)		85,345 (6)
Cancellations	0	0	0			136,181 (6)
Outstanding 31 December	34,656	1,778,346	1,813,002	(3)		15,936 (6)

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(6) Schedule 6