



The WHALE:
Wisdom we Have
Acquired from the
Liberia Experience

*Report of a regional
lessons-learned workshop,
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Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit

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Introduction

1. Between 1997 and 2000, some 380,000 Liberian refugees returned to their country of origin, primarily from the neighbouring countries of Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. To support this process, UNHCR launched a \$40 million assistance programme, intended to facilitate the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of the refugees.

2. As well as providing transport and other forms of direct assistance to around 160,000 of the returning refugees, the programme entailed the establishment of a multi-sector and community-based rehabilitation programme in returnee-populated areas of Liberia, including the implementation of 150 Quick Impact Projects (QIPs).

3. As a means of reviewing and identifying lessons learned from the Liberia repatriation and reintegration operation, the Programme Section of UNHCR's Monrovia Branch Office launched an initiative known as The WHALE: 'Wisdom we Have Acquired from the Liberia Experience'.

4. Involving well over 200 stakeholders, including UNHCR, UN and NGO personnel, national and local government officials, as well as returnees and other community members, The WHALE has been undertaken in three principal phases:

WHALE I: Three field-based workshops (in Harper, Zwedru and Gbarnga), during which participants completed an extensive questionnaire, assessing the repatriation and reintegration programme.

WHALE II: A national workshop in Monrovia, involving UNHCR's key UN, NGO and governmental partners.

WHALE III: A regional workshop in Monrovia, involving UNHCR staff from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, as well as the Regional Directorate in Abidjan. The head of UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit acted as facilitator and rapporteur for the event.

5. This report provides a summary of the discussions that took place during WHALE III, supplemented by insights gained from the rapporteur's involvement with previous repatriation and reintegration operations. The report should ideally be read in conjunction with two documents prepared by the Programme Section of UNHCR's Monrovia Branch Office:

UNHCR Liberia repatriation and reintegration programme, 1997-2000: review of programme activities

UNHCR Liberia repatriation and reintegration programme, 1997-2000: WHALE review workshops I and 2, and notes for WHALE III

6. Both documents, as well as this report, can be accessed on the Evaluation and Policy Analysis page of the UNHCR website, www.unhcr.org.

The operational environment

7. According to one of the WHALE III workshop participants, the Liberian repatriation and reintegration programme took place “in less than ideal circumstances.” This must be considered as something of understatement, as the operational environment for the Liberia programme was amongst the most challenging that UNHCR has ever encountered.

8. Today, as in the four-year implementation period of the repatriation and reintegration programme, Liberia remains politically unstable, insecure and subject to sporadic outbreaks of fighting. A massive amount of economic and infrastructural devastation took place during the armed conflict that gripped the country from 1990 until 1997. The capital city of Monrovia, its population swollen by the earlier influxes of displaced people from rural areas, is still deprived of the most rudimentary public services. The ability (and arguably the willingness) of the state to promote rehabilitation and development, especially at the local level, is minimal.

9. In comparison with many other countries emerging from crisis and armed conflict, the international community’s interest in Liberia has generally been weak. Indeed, the level of interest has waned significantly during the period of the repatriation and reintegration programme, largely as a result of donor state displeasure with the conduct of the Liberian government and its apparent involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict.

10. Reflecting this international trend, UNHCR has unfortunately devoted less resources, attention and publicity to the Liberia operation than it has given to repatriation and reintegration programmes elsewhere in the world. A good example of this tendency is to be found in the organization’s failure to implement a 1997 proposal from the Programme and Technical Support Section, entailing the appointment of a senior-level reintegration coordinator in Monrovia, supported by a team of technical specialists.

11. In essence, this major repatriation and reintegration programme has been undertaken by a regular branch office structure, without any of the special staffing arrangements witnessed in similar or smaller operations elsewhere in the world. Moreover, while implementing the repatriation and reintegration programme for Liberian returnees, the Branch Office has also been required to manage a care-and-maintenance programme for Sierra Leonean refugees, a population which peaked at around 90,000 and which currently numbers around 70,000., of whom 35,000 are accommodated in fully serviced camps.

Impact of the programme

12. Given the difficulties posed by the operational environment, what has UNHCR’s Liberian operation been able to achieve? To answer this question, The WHALE III workshop drew a clear distinction between *outputs* and *impact*. It is, of course, relatively easy to quantify UNHCR’s total expenditure in Liberia and to quantify the number of refugees it transported to their homes, the amount of food and other assistance items that were distributed and the number of Quick Impact Projects that were implemented. But what difference did this activity actually make for the returnees and other members of Liberian society?

13. Addressing this issue, workshop participants (who, as UNHCR staff members, have to be considered a potentially partial source) pointed to a number of ways in which the programme has had a positive impact. These include:

- Facilitating and promoting the voluntary return of Liberian refugees through the provision of transport and other forms of repatriation assistance, especially those (such as the elderly, the young and the infirm) who were unwilling or unable to travel independently from their country of asylum;
- Reinforcing the physical and psychological security of returnees and other Liberian citizens through the establishment of a visible and operational United Nations presence in returnee-populated areas;
- Empowering the less powerful members of society, especially women and girls, through the introduction of participatory and gender-sensitive reintegration activities;
- Limiting the protection problems encountered by returnees by assisting in the establishment of a legal framework for the repatriation and reintegration process, and by encouraging relevant employees of the state, the judiciary and security forces to act in accordance with refugee protection and human rights principles;
- Providing the population with essential services (education, health, water and sanitation, for example) that the Liberian authorities and local communities were unable to provide themselves;
- Enhancing the level of food security and the level of economic activity in returnee-populated areas by boosting agricultural productivity, facilitating the establishment of small-scale enterprises and by creating the conditions (especially the repair and reconstruction of roads) needed for local marketing systems to revive;
- Providing a short-term boost to the local economy through local expenditures, as well as the payment of wages to workers engaged on QIPs and other programme activities;
- Creating an enabling environment in which returnees, their communities, the authorities and other local actors were able to develop some of the capacity required to undertake reintegration and rehabilitation activities;
- Conserving scarce international humanitarian resources by enabling expensive care-and-maintenance programmes in countries of asylum to be phased down, and replaced by a much less costly reintegration programme in Liberia.

14. Asked to identify any negative or unintended consequences of the programme, workshop participants were generally (and understandably) less forthcoming.

15. According to some speakers, the UNHCR programme had fostered a degree of dependency amongst returnees and other local actors. Other participants queried this analysis, pointing out that the level of support provided by the organization was so modest that no-one could depend on it to meet even their most basic needs.

16. At the same time, there was a broad consensus that returnees and others had developed unrealistic expectations of UNHCR, that the Liberian authorities had to some extent been relieved of their obligations by the UNHCR programme, and that greater efforts could have been made to explain the limited scope and scale of the organization's involvement with respect to repatriation and reintegration. In future programmes of this type, it was recommended, UNHCR should conduct a more extensive information programme to disseminate this message, both in countries of asylum and in countries of origin.

Key lessons learned

17. The stated objective of The WHALE was to identify lessons learned and examples of good practice from UNHCR's experience in Liberia, so as to enhance the organization's capacity for the planning, programming and implementation of effective repatriation and reintegration operations. The remaining sections of this report are devoted to such issues.

The rationale for UNHCR's involvement

18. Given the current discussion concerning the scope of UNHCR's mandate and operational activities, The WHALE III workshop questioned the rationale for UNHCR's involvement in the Liberian reintegration programme. Was this not a task that could and should have been undertaken by other agencies, especially those with greater expertise in the development sector?

19. Workshop participants overwhelmingly rejected this suggestion. On one hand, it was pointed out that UNHCR has a mandate for *protection and solutions*. By means of its presence and activities in Liberia, the organization was fulfilling both elements of its mandate: first, ensuring that returnees were not subject to persecution, discrimination or harassment; and second, that they were reconnected with the social and economic systems of their own country and community. As one workshop participant argued, it would have been irresponsible for UNHCR *not* to have established a reintegration programme in Liberia, or at least to have ensured that this task was undertaken by other actors..

20. In addition to mandate considerations, the workshop agreed that UNHCR's involvement in the reintegration process was based on some very pragmatic considerations. The organization was familiar with the refugees, having worked with them since the beginning of the 1990s, when Liberians began to leave their own country in large numbers. It already had a substantial presence in the border areas of neighbouring states, and its logistical and communications network now penetrated into Liberia itself as a result of the organized repatriation programme. UNHCR's ability to raise funds and establish an operation quickly also gave the organization a comparative advantage over other agencies, especially those in the UN system.

21. Two other issues were raised in support of UNHCR's involvement in the reintegration process. On one hand, workshop participants felt that returning refugees would always be regarded as 'UNHCR business' by other agencies, especially in the immediate aftermath of a repatriation movement. On the other hand, doubts were raised with regard to the notion that UNHCR's involvement in the reintegration process constituted a shift from the humanitarian to the development sector. Development agencies, especially UNDP, rarely undertake the inexpensive, small-scale and short-term rehabilitation projects established by UNHCR and its implementing partners.

The scope of UNHCR involvement

22. Having agreed upon the rationale for UNHCR's involvement in reintegration activities, the workshop asked how long that involvement should continue. In this respect, there was a broad consensus that the 18-month time limit on UNHCR reintegration programmes, as specified in the organization's recent 'Action 1 parameters', was unrealistic.

23. A number of WHALE III participants felt that the new parameter should be extended by a modest amount of time, arguing that substantial reintegration achievements could be made in a two-year period. Other speakers, however, pointed out that the original two-year schedule for the Liberia programme had eventually been extended to four years, so that the organization could meet its basic programme objectives. Reintegration programmes in other countries which have been devastated by war and which have experienced high levels of displacement are likely to require a similar commitment on the part of UNHCR.

24. Taking up this theme, one workshop participant argued that if the 18-month parameter had been applied in Liberia, UNHCR would have been left with "a seriously compromised programme." All of the organization's efforts would have been designed to attain quick - rather than sustainable - impact.

25. The level of community participation in the identification, design, implementation and quality control of projects would have been minimal. UNHCR's microfinance activities, which had proved to be a successful means of promoting livelihoods among women in returnee-populated areas, would not have been possible. And the programme's impact in terms of local capacity-building would have been more limited.

Engaging other agencies

26. Participants at The WHALE III workshop were unanimous in recognizing the need for UNHCR's short-term reintegration activities to be linked to longer-term rehabilitation and development programmes of other agencies. In war-torn countries such as Liberia, where the authorities have so few resources and such little operational capacity, these linkages are essential if reintegration projects are to be sustained and their recurrent costs met. Without such linkages, moreover, there is a very real risk that the positive impact of UNHCR's reintegration activities will come to an end almost as soon as the organization has withdrawn its presence and brought its programme to an end.

27. Discussing this issue, the workshop agreed that UNHCR should not establish reintegration projects with the intention of 'handing them over' to other agencies at some point in the future. Rather, a proactive approach was required, bringing other organizations on board from the beginning of a reintegration programme - an approach that would provide UNHCR with a clear exit strategy.

28. Although a number of linkages had been established in relation to the Liberia reintegration programme, workshop participants agreed that this task had been undertaken in an ad hoc, rather than a systematic manner. The task of forging such links also seems to have started at the implementation - rather than the planning - stage of the programme.

29. While this situation can to some extent be ascribed to the weak presence of other agencies in the early days of the reintegration programme, the scarcity of development funding for Liberia and the absence of a strong coordinating mechanism for UN and other agencies in Liberia, it also represents a weakness on the part of UNHCR.

30. As noted earlier, when the Liberia programme was about to begin, a proposal was made to appoint a senior-level reintegration coordinator, "with the incumbent being in charge of the coordination of reintegration activities at country level." The proposal, made by a headquarters mission to Liberia in May 1997, went on to state that "the reintegration coordinator should help in the preparation of a reintegration strategy and will be in charge of relations with development agencies and lending institutions." The Liberian experience suggests that the creation of such a post and the development of a clear strategy should be a standard feature of UNHCR's reintegration programmes.

31. Finally, it would be a mistake to believe that the sustainability of UNHCR's reintegration efforts is entirely dependent on the organization's ability to forge linkages with other agencies. Indeed, it could be argued that projects that continue to require external inputs cannot really be considered to have attained sustainability. As later sections of this report suggest, the search for 'upward' linkages to donor states and development agencies must be complemented by 'downward' linkages to returnees and their communities, community-based organizations and the local authorities.

32. The current discussion concerning UNHCR's mandate and the scope of the organization's involvement in reintegration programmes seems likely to place a new degree of importance on the issue of partnerships and linkages. In this respect, a more detailed review of the impediments to collaboration in Liberia would provide some valuable insights that could inform the reintegration planning process elsewhere in the world.

Planning

33. Planning for any UNHCR repatriation and reintegration programme has to be based upon informed assumptions related to issues such as when and at what pace the refugees will return; what reception they will receive from the resident population; what capacity the local authorities will have to implement or sustain reintegration activities; and the extent to which the country's political and economic

situation is likely to become more or less stable as the repatriation and reintegration process proceeds.

34. Participants in The WHALE III workshop agreed that planning for the Liberia programme had generally been based on a 'best case scenario', in which security and the economy steadily improved, adequate donor state funding became available, a growing number of other actors contributed to the reintegration process, and the country's borders were kept open. In the event, such assumptions proved to be optimistic, with the result that both the timeframe and the budget of the programme had to be expanded.

35. An important lesson can be learned from this experience. Rather than planning on the basis of a single set of assumptions, there is a need for UNHCR to identify the different scenarios that might emerge in any situation and to draw up a plan that is relevant to each of those scenarios. As UNHCR staff members from Freetown explained to the workshop, this 'multi-scenario planning' approach is currently being employed in Sierra Leone, where UNHCR is confronted with a particularly volatile and unpredictable operational environment.

36. More generally, workshop participants agreed that systematic planning must be accompanied by a high degree of flexibility, enabling UNHCR to respond effectively to unanticipated developments. Indeed, when asked to identify the key strengths of the Liberia programme, a number of participants pointed to the fact that it had been "innovative", "open-minded" and "creative".

Participation

37. UNHCR has espoused the principle of community participation since it first began to undertake multi-sectoral reintegration programmes at the beginning of the 1990s. The WHALE III workshop endorsed this approach, recognizing the need for communities to be involved in the identification, design, implementation, maintenance and quality control of any reintegration project. Projects undertaken in this way, it was argued, were more likely to meet the priority needs of the population, to prove sustainable and to create an enabling environment for other local initiatives.

38. Some workshop participants argued that it was inadequate to think in terms of community *participation*, and that UNHCR should ideally strive for community *ownership*. Ideally, it was suggested, local communities and community-based organizations should be able to sign project agreements directly with UNHCR, rather than having to work with and through a UNHCR implementing partner. Workshop participants also expressed the opinion that UNHCR should be prepared to reconsider and withdraw from any reintegration project if it clearly lacks a sense of ownership by the community.

39. While the value of a community-based approach was expressed the need for caution in relation to this issue.

40. First, the principle of community participation is too often diluted in practice. Participation, the workshop agreed, means a lot more than asking a community to provide sand, stones, water and their labour for a reintegration

project. True participation empowers a community, enabling it to make decisions about the allocation, use and maintenance of reintegration resources provided by UNHCR. A useful example of such empowerment is to be seen in UNHCR's efforts to promote income-generating activities in areas where infrastructural projects have been established, thereby providing the community with the resources required to maintain the project and meet its recurrent costs.

41. Second, the notion of 'community' must also be deconstructed if the notion of participation is to be operationalized. 'Community leaders' can be found in any population. But all too frequently they are adult males, unwilling or unable to represent the interests of women, girls, boys and other social groups. Special efforts must therefore be made to gain access to these often disempowered groups and to listen to their views.

42. Third, effective participation is an inherently time-consuming process, which may well delay the implementation of a reintegration project. In situations of urgent need, it may be justified to prioritize rapid implementation over extensive consultation and participation.

43. Fourth, the involvement of the local population in UNHCR's reintegration activities should begin as quickly as possible. Some kind of 'community' can usually be found in any returnee location, even in the earliest days of a repatriation movement. Every effort should be made to understand the composition and dynamics of the community as it grows and develops.

44. Every effort should also be made to apply the principle of community involvement to UNHCR's assistance programmes in countries of asylum. It is unrealistic to expect returnees to actively participate in reintegration activities if they have been disempowered throughout their time in exile.

45. Fifth and finally, the workshop agreed that UNHCR should recognize its own weakness in relation to community participation. On one hand, the organization generally lacks staff members with experience and expertise in this area. On the other hand, it relies to a large extent on implementing partners and may lack the capacity to monitor their activities and modus operandi in a systematic manner. In this respect, the selection and training of implementing partners is evidently of central importance.

Partnership with local authorities

46. While The WHALE III workshop looked at the issue of UNHCR's relationship with the local authorities in returnee-populated areas, this issue appeared to generate less interest than the issue of community participation. A reflection, perhaps, of the very weak state of local government in Liberia, which was described by one participant as "almost non-existent."

47. At the same time, the workshop agreed on the importance of engaging with and reinforcing the capacity of the local authorities, so as to put UNHCR's reintegration activities on an official and sustainable footing.

48. According to a number of speakers, it would be a grave mistake to discount the whole of the local government structure in any country, however weak it appears

to be. While institutional capacity might be very limited, there are likely to be individual officials with knowledge, information, ideas and enthusiasm that can add substantially to the effectiveness of a UNHCR reintegration programme.

49. Other speakers drew attention to the fact that a UNHCR reintegration programme actually provides an opportunity to build local government capacity. Local authorities should, it was argued, be involved in the identification and design of reintegration projects. And project agreements should be developed and signed at the most local level possible, before making their way up through the administrative hierarchy to the capital city.

50. In Liberia as in other parts of the world, the local authorities would appear to be in some senses intimidated by UNHCR and its implementing partners. This is hardly surprising in view of the enormous differential that exists in terms of their operational capacity and access to resources.

51. A consequence of this imbalance is that local authorities have little sense of the authority they actually possess. Eager to see any kind of rehabilitation or reconstruction take place, they may be reluctant to question any project proposal presented by UNHCR or an implementing partner, and they may also be hesitant in making any counterproposals. In such situations - and the workshop agreed that this had happened in Liberia - projects tend to be excessively 'driven' by UNHCR and its implementing partners, rather than being 'owned' by the community and local authorities.

52. A reintegration project proposal should evidently not be accepted and implemented simply because it has been proposed by the local authority. As noted earlier, what is a priority for the local authority may not necessarily be a priority for many members of the community. At the same time, an approach which excludes local government or simply uses it as a rubber-stamp is inconsistent with UNHCR's commitment to the capacity-building dimension of its reintegration programmes.

Implementation

53. In this segment of WHALE III, workshop participants were asked to consider a wide variety of topics: the structure of the UNHCR operation and the division of authority between different elements of that structure; the effectiveness of UNHCR's logistics, communications and procurement networks; the way in which the repatriation and reintegration programme was staffed, and the working conditions experienced by UNHCR personnel; the administration of the programme and the issues of monitoring and evaluation.

54. While time did not permit a full analysis of all of these topics, a number of key issues emerged from the discussion.

55. Participants generally agreed that the Liberia programme had been over-centralized, with decision-making authority concentrated in Monrovia, rather than being devolved to the field. Indeed, the workshop identified this to be one of the key weaknesses of the operation.

56. While it was to some extent conditioned by external constraints (such as the absence of banking facilities in the main returnee areas), there was a consensus that

future reintegration programmes should adopt a decentralized approach, enabling decisions on project identification and resource allocation to be taken as close as possible to the point of delivery.

57. Human resource issues occupied much of the discussion on the implementation of the Liberia programme. First, participants pointed out that UNHCR generally lacked appropriate skills in areas such as participatory planning and microfinance, which are important features of most reintegration programmes.

58. The workshop also took note of the problems that can arise when the same small team of staff members is supposed to deal simultaneously with the logistics of a repatriation movement and the establishment of a reintegration programme. In this respect, additional and more specialized staff would have been an important asset to the programme. On a related issue, workshop participants noted the general absence of any UNHCR checklist or manual to provide some basic guidance to staff engaged on a reintegration programme.

59. Second, the workshop heard of the problems that had been created for UNHCR staff as a result of constant changes to the closure date of the organization's field offices in Liberia. No-one, it was pointed out, should be expected to live with such uncertainty, nor should they be expected to perform effectively when they have to work in such circumstances.

60. Third, speaking from recent experience in Sierra Leone, UNHCR staff from Freetown stressed the need for a stable complement of staff if a repatriation and reintegration programme is to be effectively managed. While the Sierra Leone operation had been reinforced by the deployment of an emergency team, the Freetown contingent was adamant that "this is not a solution".

Protection

61. The protection problems that arose in the course of the Liberia repatriation and reintegration programme were generally less serious than might have been expected, given the exceptionally brutal nature of the armed conflict that the country has experienced in recent years.

62. According to workshop participants, some returning refugees were subjected to harassment and theft at checkpoints, and a number were placed under arrest. Problems also occurred in relation to the reacquisition of property which people had left behind when they became refugees. But large-scale violations of returnee rights were not recorded.

63. It is impossible to determine the extent to which UNHCR's activities in Liberia contributed to this relatively satisfactory state of affairs. Unsurprisingly perhaps, staff members who worked on the programme believe that the contribution was a significant one. In this respect, they point to a number of factors:

- The establishment of a bilateral agreement between UNHCR and the Liberian government, which provided a legal framework for the repatriation;

- The issuing of an official government declaration on the rights of returnees, which was proposed and in large part drafted by UNHCR;
- The provision of training in refugee protection and human rights principles to the police, border guards and the judiciary;
- The visible and operational presence of UNHCR and its implementing partners in areas of return, and the returnee protection monitoring activities undertaken by UNHCR;
- The establishment of linkages between UNHCR, local NGO and national human rights organizations, which can continue to monitor the situation in returnee areas now that UNHCR's presence has been reduced.

64. Finally, and in the words of one of the workshop participants, "reintegration programmes provide a platform for returnee protection." On one hand, he argued, UNHCR's involvement in the provision of assistance and other tangible resources supported its advocacy and training efforts and made its interventions with the authorities more effective.

65. On the other hand, he pointed out that the kind of assistance provided by UNHCR in Liberia was itself a form of protection. "Legal rights are meaningless," he said, "if you do not have food, water, education, health care and other basic needs." A useful corrective to those commentators who make a strict distinction between 'protection' and 'assistance', and who believe that UNHCR should confine its activities to the former.

Repatriation

66. Participants in the field-based workshops that constituted WHALE I gave UNHCR consistently higher marks for its performance in the repatriation process than its performance in the area of reintegration.

67. This is not very surprising, as the movement of people from one location and country to another is an inherently more straightforward process than promoting the successful of reintegration of refugees who have lived outside their own country for up to a decade.

68. In the Liberian context, the task of repatriation was facilitated by the fact that its principal implementing partner - GTZ - functioned in a particularly effective manner. The lessons to be learned from the repatriation component of the Liberia programme are thus relatively few in number, and can be summarized as follows.

- In order to avoid frustration amongst refugee populations, the time lag between registration for repatriation and the actual departure date should be kept to a minimum.
- The food provided to returning refugees - sufficient for a two-month period - was inadequate, even for those who went back to Liberia at the right point in the agricultural cycle. Donor state pressures to limit such assistance should consequently be resisted.

- Effective coordination between UNHCR offices in countries of asylum and countries of origin is essential in the context of repatriation programmes. Regular cross-border visits are required so that staff members are familiar with the situation and the UNHCR programme on the other side of the frontier.
- In the Liberia programme, the statistics compiled in countries of origin were never consistent with those compiled in the country of origin. Dedicated human resources are required to prevent such discrepancies and to put every UNHCR repatriation programme on a sound statistical footing.
- When UNHCR is planning a reintegration programme, the process of needs assessment and community participation can begin amongst refugees in their country of asylum. At the same time, UNHCR should target information programmes at those refugees, with the intention of ensuring that they do not have unrealistic expectations of what UNHCR will provide when they have returned to their country of origin.
- Repatriation may be deterred when the facilities or services in the country of asylum are better than those in the country of origin. Some of the Liberian refugees in Cote d'Ivoire, for example, are known to have delayed their return because of the relatively good education their children were receiving in that country. It was for this reason that the Liberian reintegration programme gave a high priority to the rehabilitation of schools in areas of return.

The future

69. While the purpose of WHALE III was primarily to look back at the experience and wisdom acquired from the Liberia programme, workshop participants pointed out that there was also a need to look to the future.

70. First, while large numbers of Liberian refugees have returned to their own country, significant numbers remain in exile, living primarily in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. With the repatriation and reintegration programme over, their future remains unclear and should be addressed in a coordinated manner.

71. Second, while UNHCR's Liberia reintegration *programme* may be over, the reintegration *process* has a considerable way to go, given the continued poverty and insecurity of the country.

72. On one hand, UNHCR must continue to develop mechanisms that will allow the organization to monitor the protection and general welfare of returnees and their communities. At the same time, the agency has a responsibility to encourage other agencies to support the reintegration process, and to examine the longer-term impact of its activities in the country. In this respect, a review of the reintegration projects implemented by UNHCR and its partners could usefully be carried out in the second quarter of 2002.

73. Finally, participants in the WHALE III workshop were acutely aware of the fact that other UNHCR repatriation and reintegration programmes will take place in the near future, not least, it is to be hoped, in the neighbouring country of Sierra Leone. By making effective use of the wisdom acquired from the Liberia experience, UNHCR has an opportunity to undertake such programmes in a manner that has greater impact on the welfare of returnees and their communities.