

Sierra Leone



Main objectives

In 2005, UNHCR aimed to provide international protection and basic humanitarian assistance to Liberian refugees, and facilitate the repatriation of Liberian refugees in safety and dignity; facilitate local integration or resettlement for Liberian refugees who arrived in Sierra Leone during the 1990s and were unwilling to repatriate; enhance Government capacity to handle refugee issues and help develop national refugee legislation; pursue the reintegration of Sierra Leonean refugees in collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone and other partners, prepare UNHCR's phase out and the effective handover of reintegration activities to development actors.

Impact

- Some 272,000 Sierra Leonean returnees benefited from a fourth and final year of UNHCR-led reintegration support consisting of 700 community empowerment projects (CEPs) implemented in Kenema, Kono, Kailahun and Pujehun districts.
- Plans for longer-term development in returnee areas were elaborated by the National Commission for

Social Action (NaCSA), UN agencies, operational partners and donors.

- Some 13,200 names were deleted from the list of beneficiaries after verification of the physical presence of refugees in all the camps. Basic assistance to the remaining 34,200 camp refugees in Sierra Leone was further streamlined as a result of this exercise.
- UNHCR started a process of dialogue, profiling, registration using the *proGres* software application, and counselling of the 12,500 Liberian refugees registered in urban areas, in order to revisit the long-term options for this group.
- In all, some 4,200 Liberian refugees were assisted to repatriate while another 2,000 individuals returned spontaneously.
- Plans for the consolidation of Liberian refugee camps were not implemented as none of the camp populations diminished sufficiently to do so.
- Some 1,100 refugees who had lived in Sierra Leone since the 1990s were resettled in third countries, namely Australia, Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States.

Working environment

The context

As planned, the UNAMSIL peacekeeping mission completed its withdrawal on 31 December and the transition to United Nations Integrated Office for Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) was peaceful. While the draft Refugee Protection Bill was not put before Parliament as expected, the asylum policy and practice remained of a generous disposition. The capacity of the Government to coordinate and push forward the recovery process at the district level continued to improve with the support of UN-led Transitional Support Teams (TST), whereby joint district programming teams were set up in each returnee district. These helped ensure the systematic involvement of government structures, working in partnership with UNHCR and the TST, in targeting available assistance and in planning the follow-up to UNHCR's programme. The overall security situation remained stable in 2005 and UNHCR experienced a favourable working environment throughout the year.

Constraints

The declaration of improved security allowing for return of Liberian refugees to Lofa County in Liberia came months later than for the other counties. In addition, operational problems, such as the late completion of the reception centre in Foya, further delayed the start of repatriation of these refugees. UNHCR and GTZ also had to implement initial road rehabilitation on parts of the Kailahun-Foya axis, while the Government of Sierra Leone later repaired additional sections. A key section of this road inside Liberia was then rendered impassable during the rainy season: As a result, movements were suspended from July to December.

When repatriation movements started in late March, many refugees had already begun farming in and around the camps and their enthusiasm for voluntary return largely evaporated. Resources made available through the WFP food pipeline were inadequate and necessitated a reduction of the food ration by 25 per cent.

Funding

In a context of limited resources, UNHCR reduced the scope and diversity of its programmes and cut back operational support to its implementing partners. Camp schools received only 50 per cent of the planned provision of supplies and furniture, and only 41 per cent of the teachers were offered training, as compared with the target of 80 per cent in established refugee programmes. Tree planting and awareness campaigns on environmental issues were also discontinued due to funding constraints.

As part of the collaborative efforts of UNHCR, UNDP and the TST, UNDP raised USD four million to further develop community empowerment projects in Sierra Leone.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

Repatriation of Liberian refugees continued in 2005, but at a slower pace than expected. Over the course of the year, some 6,200 Liberian refugees repatriated voluntarily in safety and dignity (over 4,200 were assisted, some 2,000 returned spontaneously), 63 per cent short of the initial target of 13,000. Transport arrangements allowed refugees to take their belongings and vulnerable refugees benefited from appropriate follow-up and care.

The verification exercise conducted by UNHCR in refugee camps not only helped revise the number of refugees eligible for assistance but also updated information on refugees with special needs living in the camps. It also gave UNHCR an accurate evaluation of repatriation intentions. Overall, the permanent presence of Sierra Leonean police personnel in each refugee camp, trained in refugee protection principles and UNHCR's Code of Conduct, resulted in a stable security situation throughout the year.

In 2005, group resettlement was completed and gave way to individual resettlement. Of the 454 cases processed (1,375 persons), 78 per cent were accepted and

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Liberia	60,000	46,700	51	51
Asylum-seekers	Liberia	100	100	2	0

departed to third countries, nine per cent were rejected and 13 per cent were still awaiting a decision at the end of the year.

Activities and assistance

Community services: Under its reintegration programme, UNHCR and partners implemented Community Empowerment Projects for children (4 projects), women (26), youth (12) and capacity building for community committees (4). Altogether, these efforts resulted in an increasingly stable and self-supporting environment for the beneficiaries. These projects also focused on SGBV through awareness-raising sessions (111 in total), radio discussions and workshops for close to 7,000 participants. Two psychosocial centres for refugee women, youth, and children and nine SGBV action centres were constructed. As a result, a total of 371 SGBV cases identified through these structures were addressed, as appropriate, through counselling, medical treatment or training to reduce vulnerability. In camps, membership of women in refugee committees reached 50 per cent, with a female community leader automatically appointed for every male leader. Efforts to prevent SGBV resulted in a substantial reduction in the number of SGBV incidents as compared to previous years. The involvement of young community mobilizers, trained in SGBV prevention and response, helped achieve positive results. Unfortunately, the provision of sanitary kits to refugee women was disrupted for almost six months due to delays in procurement and clearance procedures.

Crop production: In this sector, a total of 63 CEPs (such as rice mills, stores, drying floors, women's farm groups) were implemented in returnee areas, while 21 cooperatives representing 735 members were reactivated through training in small-scale entrepreneurship and material assistance. Agricultural inputs, mainly seeds and tools, were procured and distributed to 16,000 camp refugees and 12,000 farmers from 96 nearby host communities.

Domestic needs and household support: Refugees in camps received non-food items in an effort to help maintain basic living standards. Households with special needs received kitchen sets, blankets, buckets, mats, and hurricane lamps. For the repair of rain-damaged shelters, 9,500 plastic sheets were distributed. Refugees received soap each month.

Education: The construction or rehabilitation of 21 schools and the distribution of textbooks and supplies benefited over 30,000 children in returnee communities. Some 270 adolescents attended programmes in six vocational training centres and 435 adults received literacy training. In the refugee camps, over 8,300 children were enrolled at primary level (grades 1-6) but only 58

per cent successfully completed the academic year. Secondary school students had access to distance learning and 235 took the West Africa Exams Council examinations. A further 29 e-learners in various professional courses completed their course work in 2005. UNHCR provided financial assistance to some 2,600 urban refugee students to help meet the costs of uniforms and school fees (63 per cent at primary school, 37 per cent at secondary school). The peace education programme was extended to Freetown and 25 volunteers were trained as facilitators to promote and foster peaceful co-existence in the communities.

Food: Refugees received a standard monthly ration of 2,100 kilocalories per person per day until May, when the WFP food ration was reduced to 1,660 kcal/p/d. The standard ration was still given to 1,500 extremely vulnerable camp-based refugees. Liberian refugees opting for assisted repatriation received an additional one-month food ration from WFP as well as meals in way stations (Blama, Zimmi and Kailahun).

Forestry: Efforts to protect the environment consisted of tree planting and training in environmental protection in and around the camps. However, as a result of funding constraints, this programme was generally limited to the removal of hazards and general tidying of vacated land, making it safe and ready for future use.

Health and nutrition: Health standards were maintained at a satisfactory level in all refugee camps through the continuing presence of primary health care facilities as well as an efficient system of medical referral from camps to government clinics. A mass vaccination campaign was conducted for all children under 15 in response to an outbreak of measles. The prevention of HIV/AIDS through the dissemination of information and the distribution of condoms remained a priority. The supplementary feeding programme offered to pregnant refugee women resulted in a fall in the number of babies with low birth weight (down to four per cent). Access to primary health care services was facilitated for urban refugees by a community health officer and through direct support to selected clinics in Freetown.

Income generation: In the refugee camps, 2,300 Liberians benefited from various skills training courses such as soap making or weaving. The Adolescent Initiative Project started in four camps in the Bo area (Bandajuma, Gondama, Jimmi Bagbo and Taiama), targeted school drop-outs, separated children and young mothers. A total of 145 adolescents were given a start-up kit upon receiving their certification in December.

Legal assistance: With UNHCR funding, NACSA implemented 19 workshops on legal literacy aiming to help communities find a balance between state jurisdiction



Sierra Leonean villagers wish Liberian returnees a safe journey home. UNHCR / R. Goldstein-Rodriguez

and local customs. A lawyer provided legal services to refugees and followed up 28 cases referred to court, including 11 related to allegations of sexual abuse. While a majority of the cases remained inconclusive due to lack of evidence and/or interference by family members, the referral of cases to court was in itself an achievement, since perpetrators of sexual violence had previously rarely been brought to justice.

Livestock: UNHCR contributed to the restocking of livestock and building of cattle barns in 23 returnee communities, as well as in villages in the vicinity of refugee camps.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR covered various components of the operational, management and staffing costs for the implementing partners involved in refugee programmes. Vehicles and other assets were made available under right of use agreements, and technical support, expertise and training was provided to implementing and operational partners on key policy or operational matters.

Sanitation: Some 350 projects were implemented in 150 returnee communities. In the refugee camps, 88 per cent of shelters had accompanying family latrines (eight or nine persons per latrine). Volunteers, on

average one per 325 refugees, worked with the community to develop awareness on hygiene and environmental issues and organized cleaning of camps by the residents on a monthly basis. Unlike previous years, there were no confirmed or suspected cases of Lassa fever, indicating an overall improvement of hygiene conditions in the refugee camps.

Shelter and infrastructure: Four community and youth centres were built in Kenema District, benefiting an estimated 5,000 people. In the camps, over 1,300 shelters were rehabilitated (including 700 for vulnerable refugees).

Transport and logistics: The UNHCR fleet of over 50 trucks, 400 light vehicles and motorbikes was involved in multifaceted camp assistance, reintegration support and repatriation activities. Logistics operations were constrained by poor road conditions, protracted customs and port clearance procedures, as well as various new taxes, tariffs and licence fees proposed by various authorities. UNHCR supported the cost of partial rehabilitation of the two major repatriation routes on the Kailahun and Zimmi axis, and contributed to the rehabilitation of the airstrip in Kenema to allow landing of the flights operated by WFP.

Water: Over 120 water projects were completed in returnee areas (boreholes, hand-dug wells, hand pumps, gravity water systems). Training in water management was extended to 113 community caretakers and attendants. A satisfactory average supply of potable water, 29 litres per person per day, was made available in all the camps. The water points, supplying about 90 persons each, are all situated less than 200 metres from the furthest refugee shelter.

Organization and implementation

Management

UNHCR maintained six offices located in Freetown, Kenema, Bo, Kailahun, Koidu and Zimmi. As planned, the Koidu office was closed at year's end, with a minimal monitoring presence maintained while the reintegration projects came to a conclusion. The number of staff in Sierra Leone was 176, made up of 43 internationals and 133 nationals.

Working with others

UNHCR worked with 17 implementing partners and five operational partners. The European Commission supported water, agricultural, environmental and sanitation programmes in refugee camps and host communities, greatly enhancing the harmonious co-existence of the two populations.

Overall assessment

Despite reduced funding, UNHCR managed to push forward the three main components of its programme in Sierra Leone: the logistics and mass information needed for voluntary repatriation; multi-faceted assistance to camp and non-camp refugees; and the sustainability of coordinated reintegration support. The Government, the UN and NGO partners got a firmer grip on reintegration issues and raised significant levels of funding for the continuation of the community empowerment approach. The final year of the reintegration programme reached remote areas and placed emphasis on women, children and vulnerable groups while developing local management capacities. An important step forward was the verification of the physical presence of refugees in the camps. The enhanced database allowed for better

planning and monitoring, and the number of beneficiaries receiving food, in particular, was determined with much greater accuracy. Another notable achievement was the start of the dialogue, profiling and counselling process for refugees in urban areas, as it paved the way for a new approach to the search for durable solutions in 2006. The level of repatriation to Liberia was disappointing, owing in part to logistical constraints, but the peaceful Liberian elections promised an improvement in 2006.

Offices

Freetown

Bo
Kailahun
Kenema
Koidu
Zimmi

Partners

Government agencies

National Commission for Social Action
Sierra Leone Roads Authority

NGOs

African Development and Emergency Organization
American Refugee Committee
Arch Diocesan Development Office
Bo/Pujehun Development Associates
Caritas Kenema
Catholic Relief Services
Christian Children's Fund
Environmental Foundation for Africa
International Rescue Committee
Lutheran World Federation
Network Movement for Justice and Development
OXFAM International
Peace Winds Japan
Sierra Leone Red Cross Society
Talking Drum Studio
World Vision International

Others

ACF
CARE International
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
German Agro Action
MSF Belgium
MSF France
WFP

Budget, income and expenditure (USD)
Annual programme budget

Final budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
23,488,763	9,291,297	12,820,769	22,112,066	22,112,066

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	5,460,518	0
Community services	906,402	422,838
Crop production	146,527	0
Domestic needs and household support	91,818	0
Education	702,748	430,313
Food	106,822	(20,969)
Forestry	28,119	19,223
Health and nutrition	423,505	277,350
Income generation	78,030	45,880
Legal assistance	378,969	65,827
Livestock	17,287	0
Operational support (to agencies)	3,272,001	516,676
Sanitation	300,346	18,865
Shelter and infrastructure	251,554	182,055
Transport and logistics	3,222,643	(89,418)
Water	660,407	158,960
Instalments with implementing partners	2,927,557	(2,027,600)
Sub-total operational activities	18,975,253	0
Programme support	3,136,813	0
Total expenditure	22,112,066	0
Cancellation on prior years' expenditure		(628,624)
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	10,112,523	
Reporting received	(7,184,966)	
Balance	2,927,557	
Prior years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1st January		2,473,430
Reporting received		(2,027,600)
Refunded to UNHCR		(200,219)
Adjustments		81,662
Balance		327,273