

Sierra Leone



Working environment

The context

Barring a few isolated clashes between supporters of rival parties, a peaceful atmosphere prevailed during Sierra Leone's presidential and parliamentary elections in August 2007. A second round of polling in September saw Ernest Bai Koroma of the All Peoples Congress elected President. Both the national Electoral Commission and international observers deemed the polls free and fair.

Despite the successful conclusion of the election, the second since the end of the civil war in 2001, Sierra Leone faces major challenges in development and good governance. Up to 70 per cent of the country's

5.7 million people live below the poverty line. The United Nations, through its integrated office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), supports human rights, peace and governance in the country and assists its military and police.

Refugees enjoy a favourable protection environment in Sierra Leone, which is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. After several years of intense lobbying by UNHCR, Parliament passed a national refugee bill in May 2007. The National Commission for Social Action (NACSA) will continue as UNHCR's interlocutor on refugee matters, a responsibility it has discharged effectively and professionally, though without an official mandate, for several years. NACSA is taking over the management of all refugee camps and will lead local integration efforts for residual groups of Liberian refugees.

The needs

UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of close to 30,000 Liberian refugees between October 2004 and June 2007. Now, with the aid of the Government, it is implementing a comprehensive local integration strategy for the Liberians remaining in the country. These include 12,000 camp-based refugees and another 5,000 refugees in urban areas. UNHCR's food aid and educational and health services in the camps have been phased out; the focus now is on the local integration of refugees with the support of the community and targeted assistance to promote self-reliance. The Government has worked hard to gain the cooperation of community leaders and local populations for this effort.

In 2008 and 2009, UNHCR will dedicate most of its resources to the local integration programme. In urban areas, efforts will be made to explain to refugees that their chances of resettlement are limited. In coordination with other offices in West Africa, UNHCR will promote broader use of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) free-movement protocols and will coordinate standards of assistance for urban refugees and asylum-seekers. In light of Sierra Leone's adoption of the refugee bill, UNHCR will improve the training of those government officials responsible for the reception of asylum-seekers and refugee status determination.

Total requirements
2008: USD 6,575,657
2009: USD 4,000,742

Main objectives

- Promote and support local integration for up to 17,000 Liberian refugees.
- Adopt and implement durable solutions for refugees with specific needs.
- Enhance and strengthen national capacity to assume full responsibility for the protection of refugees.

Key Targets for 2008 and 2009

- Liberian refugees unable to repatriate voluntarily are assisted to integrate locally.
- All locally integrating refugees receive identity documents from the Government and benefit from UNHCR's community programmes.
- Refugee-affected areas are rehabilitated, and host communities are helped to integrate refugees.
- Eight refugee camps are transformed into Sierra Leonean villages. Infrastructure and services are handed over to the local authorities and/or line ministries.
- The Sierra Leone authorities, their capacity enhanced with UNHCR's help, conduct refugee status determination and implement national refugee law.
- Standards of assistance for urban refugees are streamlined.
- Adequate durable solutions are found for all refugees.

Strategy and activities

The main goal of the programme is to smooth the local integration of the remaining Liberian refugees and improve their self-reliance. The Office will achieve this aim through various means including legal support, small-business grants and skills training. It will also advocate for refugees' right to work and engage in other income-generating activities, and to use national health and education services. Up to 17,000 Liberian refugees, and an estimated 25,000 local people in eight refugee-hosting communities in the southern and eastern regions, including the towns of Bo, Kenema, and Freetown, will benefit from the programme in 2008.

At the governmental level, UNHCR will help the Sierra Leonean authorities assume full responsibility for the

Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2008		Dec 2008		Dec 2009	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Liberia	17,000	17,000	14,150	14,150	10,950	10,950
	Various	100	100	150	150	200	200
Asylum-seekers	Nigeria	100	100	-	-	-	-
	Various	50	50	70	70	70	70
Returnees (refugees)		50	-	100	-	100	-
Total		17,300	17,250	14,470	14,370	11,320	11,220

protection and management of refugees. Building national capacity will also facilitate the transition from relief to development. UNHCR will continue to sensitize refugees to the very limited prospects for third-country resettlement and promote other durable solutions, particularly local integration.

Constraints

Sierra Leone is next to last among the countries on the UN's Human Development Index, with a particularly high youth-unemployment rate.

Many urban refugees reject all opportunities for local integration, focusing entirely on remote prospects of third-country resettlement. UNHCR is concerned that such resistance may impair not only their own but other refugees' prospects for local integration.

Although Parliament has passed the refugee bill and the Government formally embraces local integration as a durable solution for refugees, the bill does not contain specific provisions on residence or citizenship rights for refugees.

Organization and implementation

UNHCR presence

	2008	2009
Number of offices	2	2
Total staff	55	39
International	9	4
National	46	35

Coordination

UNHCR's main government counterpart in refugee issues is NACSA. As the Office scales down its operations in the country, the number of implementing partners will be reduced. But the local integration programme offers an opportunity to build new partnerships. Indeed, a Task Force involving the Government, the UN Country Team and non-governmental organizations has been established to coordinate the efforts of operational partners.



UNHCR/A. Maheic

Liberian refugee teacher in Tobanda camp, Kenema.

Partners

Implementing partners

Government agencies: National Commission for Social Action (NACSA).

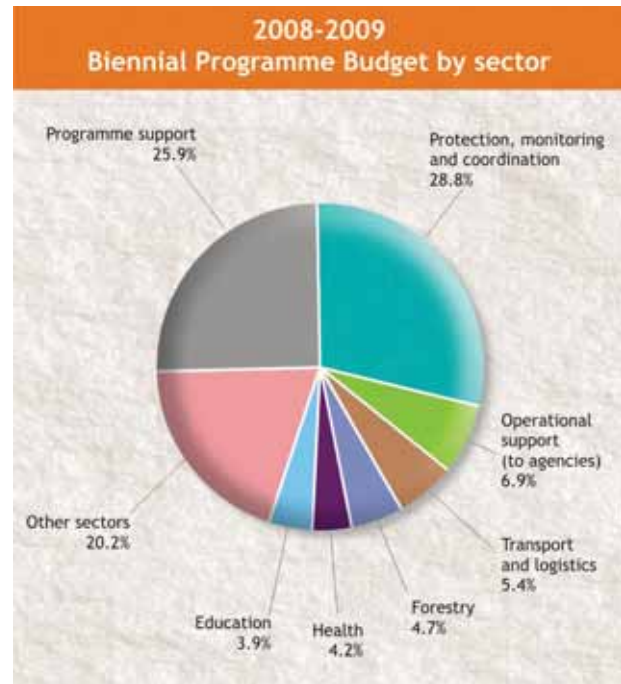
NGOs: Caritas, Caritas Kenema Office, International Rescue Committee, Network Movement for Justice and Development.

Others: UNV, WFP.

Operational partners

NGOs: IMC, MSF-Belgium.

Others: IOM, IFRC, ICRC, UN Country Team.



Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme Budget		
	2007	2008	2009
Protection, monitoring and coordination	3,938,186	1,835,698	1,210,670
Community services	434,357	90,000	70,000
Crop production	0	190,000	150,000
Domestic needs	172,500	100,000	0
Education	214,142	260,000	150,000
Food	16,071	90,000	20,000
Forestry	100,000	320,000	180,000
Health	810,715	290,000	150,000
Income generation	0	100,000	50,000
Legal assistance	104,286	150,000	120,000
Operational support (to agencies)	1,420,786	430,000	300,000
Sanitation	48,929	160,000	70,000
Shelter and other infrastructure	185,714	270,000	110,000
Transport and logistics	1,801,786	320,000	250,000
Water	60,714	220,000	180,000
Total operations	9,308,186	4,825,698	3,010,670
Programme support	2,663,510	1,749,959	990,072
Total	11,971,696	6,575,657	4,000,742