



Working environment

The context

The return home of more than 160,000 Liberian refugees from Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Sierra Leone by mid-2007 marked the end of UNHCR's massive voluntary repatriation operation for this group. Since then, the Office has focused on developing partnerships with the Government of Liberia, UN agencies, NGOs and others to sustain the community-based reintegration of the returnees. In April 2008, it signed a tripartite agreement with the Governments of Ghana and Liberia to repatriate some 12,000 Liberian refugees from Ghana by end of November 2008; by the end of August 2008 more than half that number had returned.

With peace restored and an elected Government installed since January 2006, Liberia has made impressive progress toward stability. Efforts to address domestic political tensions and the pursuit of liberal economic policies have resulted in an inflow of foreign capital, raising hopes that the Government's USD 1.6 billion Poverty Reduction Strategy will be successful.

Notwithstanding its achievements, Liberia remains confronted by enormous challenges, and peace is fragile. Unemployment is extremely high (at an estimated 85 per cent) and continuing ethnic and land disputes threaten stability. The country's basic infrastructure is dilapidated, and the great majority of social services depend on international support and operate well below pre-war capacity.

The United Nations has allocated resources from the UN Peacebuilding Fund to fill gaps during the transition from conflict to reconstruction. The money will support initiatives to promote the peaceful resolution of disputes and the re-establishment of essential administrative services, besides being available to respond to any emerging needs.

The two Peacebuilding Fund projects UNHCR will implement in 2009 reflect the strategic progression of its activities and protection agenda in Liberia. Both the Community Empowerment: Peace, Human Rights, and Civic Participation Education and Strengthening the Rule of Law through Legal Access and Information programmes seek to ensure the sustainable re-integration of Liberians. Both are aimed at areas of highest return and refugee-hosting communities.

Though the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has been reduced in size, its mission has been extended to 2011. The Government is working with international partners to reform the national security system, for instance by rebuilding the armed forces and the national police service.

UNHCR has strongly supported the Liberian Government's policy of allowing some Sierra Leonean refugees to integrate locally, and thereby become permanent residents or citizens of Liberia. The gesture is within the framework of an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)-endorsed Regional Local Integration (RLI) initiative for Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in West Africa.

The needs

The Government of Liberia and humanitarian and development organizations (UN agencies, NGOs and others) have made participatory assessments of the current situation in Liberia to chart the country's needs. Major gaps remain in combating sexual and gender-based violence, the application of the rule of law and the availability of health services. Multi-sectoral investments are required to facilitate the integration of Sierra Leonean refugees into local communities and support the self-sufficiency of Ivorian refugees.

Main objectives

- Assist the Government of Liberia in the development and maintenance of an international refugee protection regime.
- Ensure international standards of protection for refugees by mainstreaming age, gender and diversity considerations, measures to prevent sexual and gender-based violence as well as HIV and AIDS, and environmental safeguards into all assistance activities.
- Promote the reintegration of returnees in urban areas while strengthening partnerships within the UN Country Team and other national and international stakeholders.

- Promote the self-reliance of Ivorian refugees while seeking durable solutions for them.
- Facilitate the economic, social and legal integration of Sierra Leonean refugees.
- Promote local understanding of rule of law mechanisms and enhance the capacity to prevent and resolve potential conflicts in peaceful manner.

Key targets

- In close coordination with the Government and the UN Country Team, UNHCR disengages gradually from reintegration programmes for Liberian returnees.
- The Government is able to carry out refugee status determination (RSD) with UNHCR's technical support.
- Necessary amendments of laws relevant to refugees are presented to Liberia's legislature.
- All refugee children born in Liberia are given birth certificates.
- Ivorian refugees become more self-sufficient with UNHCR support.
- Sierra Leonean refugees are integrated into local communities, and provided legal and community-based social assistance.
- Liberians still in exile are able to return with UNHCR support.
- Urban returnees are reintegrating, supported by UNHCR.
- Peacebuilding initiatives (rule of law and community empowerment) improve access to and understanding of justice mechanisms, reduce violence, and promote community development and cohesion.

Strategy and activities

The repatriation of the Ivorian refugees in Liberia is not expected until after the forthcoming presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire in November 2008. In 2009, UNHCR will concentrate on promoting community-based refugee self-reliance, providing

Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2009		Dec 2009	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Côte d'Ivoire	15,000	2,000	15,000	2,000
	Sierra Leone	1,500	1,500	1,000	1,000
	Various	20	20	10	10
Asylum-seekers	Various	100	-	50	-
Total		16,620	3,520	16,060	3,010



Liberian refugees returning home from Sierra Leone, with the help of UNHCR.

UNHCR/S. Brownell

individual assistance to people with specific needs, monitoring protection and conducting an exhaustive refugee verification and birth registration programme.

The ongoing local integration initiative will continue, ensuring that social services infrastructure, shelter, and economic opportunities are available in areas where Sierra Leonean refugees are locally integrating. The legal status of Sierra Leoneans will be regularized through access to residence permits or nationality.

With the support of the UN Peacebuilding Fund, UNHCR will train some 15,000 Liberians and refugees in conflict resolution through community-based peace education workshops. The fund will also support projects to provide access to and understanding of the rule of law by training community legal advisers in rural areas, and through radio programmes and town hall meetings.

Constraints

In a post-conflict nation, there are a number of challenges to UNHCR operations. Major constraints include the inability of the Government to take on responsibilities in key areas under UNHCR's mandate. The limited presence of UN agencies in the field is another constraint. Logistical challenges are presented by widely dispersed populations of concern and poor road conditions. Furthermore, the lack of sufficient funding for multi-sectoral needs (legal and social) related to the local integration of Sierra Leonean refugees hinders the achievement of objectives in this area.

Organization and implementation

UNHCR presence	
Number of offices	4
Total staff	73
International	6
National	61
UNVs	6

Coordination

Strong partnerships and collaboration with all stakeholders are increasingly important in light of the resources available for the 2009 strategy. The phasing-down of most of UNHCR Liberia's programme, coupled with the remaining needs in the country, call for increased advocacy and the pooling of resources with partners.

Financial information

UNHCR's resource requirements in Liberia have reflected the constantly evolving operational demands and shifting focus of UNHCR operations over several years. Financial needs surged as Liberia moved towards peace and stability and UNHCR operations expanded. This trend continued in 2005 with the launch of full-scale repatriation and sustainable reintegration operations. The year 2006 witnessed a modest increase in the need for resources with the launch of key programme components, such as the rule of law - under

the Protection Core Group (PCG) - and with the expansion of social service facilities in counties where large numbers of returnees settled. As of 2007, resource requirements began to decline with the completion of IDP return and the scaling down of organized repatriation. This trend will continue in 2009 as UNHCR prepares for disengagement by handing over operations to development partners.

Partners

Implementing partners

Government agencies: Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Gender and Development

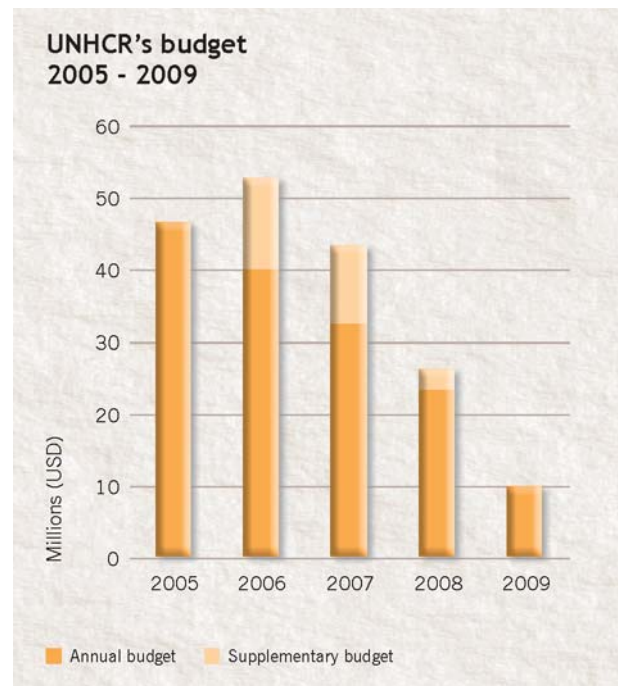
NGOs: Caritas Cape Palmas, Christian Children's Fund, Logistics and Services Liberia, Special Emergency Activity to Restore Children's Hope, Sustainable Liberia Initiatives Inc., Justice and Peace Commission, The Carter Center

Operational partners

Government agencies: Ministry of Internal Affairs

NGOs: Danish Refugee Council, American Refugee Committee, American Bar Association

Others: AU, ILO, UNFPA, WFP



Budget (USD)

Activities and services	2008			2009
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget IDPs	Total	Annual budget
Protection, monitoring and coordination	6,249,762	334,000	6,583,762	2,113,632
Community services	400,000	0	400,000	279,346
Crop production	300,000	0	300,000	95,000
Domestic needs	50,000	0	50,000	0
Education	390,000	60,000	450,000	642,300
Food	20,000	0	20,000	0
Forestry	0	0	0	50,000
Health	1,650,000	987,477	2,637,477	623,845
Income generation	600,000	310,653	910,653	610,000
Legal assistance	1,000,000	1,017,790	2,017,790	816,464
Operational support (to agencies)	1,250,000	340,000	1,590,000	581,222
Sanitation	150,000	0	150,000	69,440
Shelter and infrastructure	380,000	0	380,000	1,088,509
Transport and logistics	4,000,000	0	4,000,000	816,720
Water	350,000	0	350,000	39,100
Total operations	16,789,762	3,049,920	19,839,682	7,825,578
Programme support	3,837,699	0	3,837,699	2,127,635
Total	20,627,460	3,049,920	23,677,380	9,953,213

Note: Supplementary programme budgets exclude 7 per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.