

GUINEA

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Continue to protect and assist Sierra Leonean refugees; consolidate achievements for survivors of atrocities and sexual violence; relocate refugees away from dangerous zones and embark on voluntary repatriation as soon as conditions in Sierra Leone permit.
- Resume and complete voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees and determine the status of those who have chosen not to repatriate; help refugees integrate locally in Guinea and gradually reduce humanitarian assistance.
- Help refugees from Guinea-Bissau repatriate voluntarily and wind down humanitarian assistance for them.
- Assist government counterparts to build additional capacity to undertake status determination for individual asylum-seekers and encourage the adoption of a national law on refugees.
- Protect urban refugees and initiate income-generating activities for needy individuals.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND CONSTRAINTS

Sierra Leonean Refugees

The security situation in Sierra Leone was not stable enough to encourage voluntary repatriation of refugees to their homes. Instead, renewed fighting prompted the arrival of more than 3,900 refugees in Forecariah and Guéckédou, adding to an estimated 300,000 Sierra Leoneans who are protected and assisted by UNHCR in these areas. To verify their exact numbers, UNHCR decided to register refugees in the 11 largest camps in Guéckédou and in all sites in Forecariah in February. Many cases of double registration were detected, for example, Forecariah hosts 21,700 refugees instead

of the previous planning figure of 61,500. In Guéckédou, the total for the 11 camps was established at 120,800. It was estimated that only 66 per cent of the needs in Guéckédou could be met due to lack of funding.

More than 222,000 Sierra Leonean refugees received basic food supplies from WFP and a food-for-work project covered the needs of an additional 6,000 refugees. As a result, the global malnutrition rate among children under five was contained at 2.6 per cent. Basic health services continued to be available through specialised NGOs in the camp. Vaccination coverage against measles among children increased to 83 per cent. UNHCR funded 84 schools for 51,000 refugee children, provided incentives for more than 1,200 schoolteachers at the primary and secondary level and supported 65 school canteens. About 85 per cent of Sierra Leonean refugee children were attending school. In addition, more than 400 refugees attended vocational training courses with priority given to survivors of violence.

Some 2,700 heads of families were given loans to start income-generating activities in agriculture or small businesses, reducing their dependence on humanitarian assistance. Reimbursement rates of these loans have been around 90 per cent.

To improve security in the camps, UNHCR planned to relocate up to 65,000 Sierra Leoneans away from border areas. New settlements were identified for up to 30,000 people (close to 20,000 were already moved in 1999) but relocation was subsequently suspended in early 2000 due to the need to improve basic infrastructure and roads, and because refugees as well as donor governments were at the time optimistic about repatriation to Sierra Leone.

UNHCR recorded 35 survivors of violence and 589 unaccompanied children during the first semester. Some 520 children were placed in foster families (20 per cent in Guinean households) and about 160 families were helped to

reunite. Close to 3,000 extremely vulnerable individuals were also identified, including 2,000 Sierra Leoneans and 1,000 Liberians. Survivors of violence received medical and psycho-social attention adapted to each individual's needs as well as help with vocational training and micro-credits for income-generating activities. A total of 23 credit groups comprising 77 survivors of violence (92 per cent women) were funded. Victims of sexual violence participated in theatre groups, choirs and conferences.

A protection workshop was organised for 170 officials from the local authorities in Guékédou (military and civilian), NGOs and UNHCR. Meetings on protection and refugee rights and responsibilities were also organised in 20 camps for 900 refugees from various refugee committees.

The majority of the trucks used in Guinea are in very poor condition with high maintenance costs. However, budgetary restrictions will not allow UNHCR to replace them in the near future. The harsh living and working conditions of staff in field locations in Guinea has left a large number of posts unfilled for long periods, leading to disruptions in certain activities.

Liberian Refugees

Following the official reopening of the border between Guinea and Liberia in April, UNHCR was able to assist 5,157 Liberian refugees to repatriate voluntarily. Of these, 1,673 received repatriation packages (containing food, domestic items and agricultural tools) and returned in six UNHCR-organised convoys, 2,957 received repatriation packages but no transport and 527 returned on their own. This fell short of the initial planning figure of 30,000, but additional movements are expected at the end of the rainy season in October. Meanwhile, new fighting broke out in Lofa county, a major returnee area.

Since repatriation was delayed, there were also delays in the screening process and in securing the commitment of the Guinean authorities for local integration of Liberian refugees. Status determination did not take place, and a

local integration project was put on hold until voluntary repatriation has been completed. A survey among 18,000 refugees indicated that 32 per cent preferred to repatriate to Liberia, whereas 34 per cent preferred to remain in Guinea (the remaining 34 per cent were undecided).

UNHCR's assistance could not be reduced at the pace initially planned, as the refugees' basic needs still had to be met. However, the agency's involvement in education and health continued to decrease. UNHCR organised French classes and elaborated an enrolment test for refugee children who were supposed to begin attending Guinean schools as of the 1999-2000 school year. An extensive information campaign on repatriation and local integration was also conducted for teachers and students. Unfortunately, the Government remained reluctant to integrate the refugees and only those having obtained individual refugee status were allowed to sit for the entry exams (Liberian refugees in Guinea were generally accepted on a *prima facie* basis). Only 400 out of more than 8,300 refugee students are currently attending Guinean schools and many uncertainties therefore remain regarding this issue.

Some 1,350 vulnerable refugees continued to receive medical assistance from UNHCR. Other forms of assistance were provided to extremely vulnerable and socially fragile refugees on an ad hoc basis. To boost self-sufficiency in food, UNHCR had planned to assist 5,000 families (six per cent Guineans) with rice cultivation. An initial assessment revealed that up to 6,300 heads of households would like to participate in the project. However, in order not to deter voluntary repatriation, the project was suspended when repatriation resumed. Nevertheless, refugees who had already begun to cultivate their plots continued to benefit from the technical advice of agricultural experts from *Inspection Régionale de l'Agriculture et de l'Elevage en Région Forestière* (IRAEF).

A three-year environmental project was launched together with a specialised NGO. The project, is expected to minimise the impact of refugee camps on the environment and entails tree-planting and other forms of reha-

bilitation. However, implementation was delayed due to changes in the management of the project.

UNHCR organised several seminars on refugee rights and other protection-related issues for officials and the resident population in refugee hosting areas. This is part of a campaign to increase awareness about refugees and prepare the ground for local integration. More than 500 refugees participated in this campaign. In preparation for the anticipated handover of school infrastructures to the Government, the Office and the local authorities in N'zérékoré worked together to identify infrastructures in need of rehabilitation. A seminar on peace education was conducted in April, drawing the attention of refugee teachers in Guéckédou.

For increased safety, some 9,400 Liberian refugees were transferred from the Daro region to the newly established camp at Kouankan. They are now less prone to attacks by rebel forces as the distance to the border has increased considerably. These refugees originate mainly from volatile Lofa county in Liberia and since they are in no position to repatriate they still depend on UNHCR for basic humanitarian assistance.

Refugees from Guinea-Bissau

The long-awaited voluntary repatriation of refugees from Guinea-Bissau from Boké camp took place in June 2000, following a UNHCR-sponsored visit by Guinean and Guinea-Bissau authorities. Out of 1,775 refugees, some 468 persons were flown back home. Each head of family received a repatriation grant of FCFA 30,000 and each returnee received FCFA 15,000. In addition, a small grant was distributed for internal transportation costs in Guinea-Bissau. The camp at Boké is now empty (the remaining 1,300 refugees were believed to have returned on their own or left for other destinations) and humanitarian assistance to refugees from Guinea-Bissau ceased on 20 June.

Urban Refugees

The enactment of a national law on refugees by the National Assembly in April was a very posi-

tive development for refugees and asylum-seekers in Guinea. The legislation is based on principles contained in the 1951 Convention on Refugees as well as the 1969 OAU Convention. Furthermore, it takes into account recommendations of the special OAU/UNHCR consultative meeting held in Guinea in March, which called for strict respect for the principle of *non refoulement*.

UNHCR continued to assist the authorities to improve their capacity to deal with refugee issues, including refugee status determination, by providing training on refugee law to government administrators. The National Eligibility Committee processed more than 400 applications during the reporting period. The Office also conducted training on international protection, solutions strategies and how to deal with separated children for the police, military, *préfets* and *sous-préfets* at both central and provincial levels.

Of an estimated 1,000 urban refugees, 300 were identified to be medical evacuees and transferred to urban transit centres. Refugees whose medical treatment was coming to an end, or who did not fulfil the criteria for admission to urban transit centres were returned to camps. A social study of 130 urban refugee families benefiting from monthly allowances will enable UNHCR to envisage concrete suitable solutions, such as voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement. A total of 150 refugees attended vocational training courses and 25 others were studying at the University of Conakry on DAFI sponsored scholarships.

REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY - DECEMBER

Sierra Leonean Refugees

UNHCR will continue to protect and assist Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea until voluntary repatriation becomes feasible. The political and security situation in Sierra Leone will be closely monitored for this purpose. Security permitting, it is estimated that up to 5,500 Sierra Leoneans will be assisted to return in 2000. Other objectives are to:

- Reinforce support to Sierra Leonean survivors of violence and sexual aggression;
- Relocate Sierra Leonean refugees residing in Forécariah from dangerous border zones to safer areas;
- As of 1 September, support the “Brooking Process” through activities geared towards confidence and capacity-building, including support for regular monitoring of the border by the local authorities; and
- Establish new offices in Ouende Kenema and Kissidougou (closer to the Sierra Leonean border) for smooth running of cross-border activities.

Liberian Refugees

UNHCR will complete voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees before the end of the year.

The Office will monitor the situation in Lofa county and remain on high alert for possible new influxes. As Liberian refugees are screened and their status is determined, UNHCR will gradually wind down assistance to them. In addition, UNHCR:

- Pursue discussions with the Government on local integration of Liberian refugees;
- Increase its support to the Government for refugee status determination of individual refugees and general capacity-building;
- Promote self-sufficiency among urban refugees through income-generating activities instead of extending general assistance to them; and
- Intensify implementation of environment-related projects.

FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available*	Total Funds Obligated
AB and TF.	28 438 514	29,381,558	13,553,264	13 376 889
SP	3 492 000	3,100,000	0	0
TOTAL	31 930 514	32,481,558	13,553,264	13 376 889

*Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the region/country, opening balance and adjustments.

