

Sierra Leone



Operational highlights

- More than 13,000 Liberian refugees were assisted to return by UNHCR and nearly 4,000 repatriated spontaneously.
- More than 300 Liberian refugees were resettled in third countries.
- Some 50 unaccompanied minors and separated children were reunited with their families.
- UNHCR cleaned up approximately 150 hectares of land at Tobanda and Bandajuma camps and returned it to local residents for agricultural use.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Liberia	8,700	8,700	49	46
	Various	60	60	-	-
Asylum-seekers	Nigeria	210	210	11	10
	Various	20	20	-	-
Returnees (refugees)	Various	360	290	-	-
Total		9,350	9,280		

Working environment

In September, Sierra Leone witnessed its first transition from one civilian government to another after peaceful presidential and parliamentary elections, which were won by the opposition. The United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), which helps the Government to protect human rights and attain the Millennium Development Goals, had its mandate extended for a final nine months, until September 2008. The UN Peace Building Fund allocated USD 35 million to address critical peacebuilding priorities.

Though the economy grew by seven per cent in 2007, living conditions for the majority of Sierra Leoneans did not improve significantly. Refugees found it difficult to become self-reliant, hindering their local integration.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

In 2007, UNHCR aimed to complete the voluntary repatriation of some 12,000 Liberian refugees, consolidate refugee camps and transfer infrastructure to the Government for use by host communities. Other priorities were to promote the local integration of the refugees remaining in the country; develop durable solutions for urban refugees; build the capacity of the Government to manage asylum-seekers; and conduct refugee status determination.

Protection and solutions

Several years of lobbying by UNHCR bore fruit when Parliament passed a Refugee Bill in May. Following the President's approval, it came into force in the last quarter of the year. The new law names the National Commission for Social Action (NACSA) as UNHCR's formal interlocutor on refugee matters, a responsibility it had discharged effectively for several years without an official mandate. In 2007, NACSA supported UNHCR as it organized the voluntary repatriation of Liberians and assumed full management of all eight refugee camps in the country. The Commission also worked with UNHCR on a strategy for the self-reliance of the residual population of refugees to aid their local integration.

Activities and assistance

Community services: More than 500 survivors of sexual and gender-based violence received counselling and support, including temporary accommodation in women's centres. Some 200 urban refugees participated in workshops and received information on

how to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. Literacy programmes benefited some 700 adult camp-based refugees. All refugee women of reproductive age, including those who opted for voluntary repatriation, were given sanitary kits.

Crop production: In urban areas, 25 refugees were supported with livelihood activities such as gardening. In addition, 40 refugees benefited from complementary self-reliance support in small trading.

Domestic needs and household support: Refugees received non-food items, including some 2,600 plastic sheets, 1,600 kitchen sets, 10,000 blankets, 7,000 sleeping mats, 1,800 lanterns, 2,000 jerry cans and 7,000 plastic buckets. In addition, UNHCR provided more than 10,000 travel bags for the repatriating refugees.

Education: Some 2,500 children between the ages of 5 and 11 were enrolled in primary schools. That was approximately 70 per cent of UNHCR's enrolment target for this age group. Some 1,300 children enrolled in primary schools (40 per cent of them girls) received assistance in uniforms, school fees and books until mid-2007.

Food: June marked the end of general food distribution. Until then, all refugees were given monthly food supplies; refugees with specific needs received a full ration (2,100 Kcal) and others a half ration. Some 600 pregnant women, nearly 100 urban refugees with specific needs and some 50 medical cases benefited from supplementary feeding. All repatriating refugees received three cooked meals a day.

Forestry: More than 150 hectares of land were cleaned from non-degradable waste at Tobanda and Bandajuma camps to guarantee a safe environment and to use the land in forestry in the future.

Health and nutrition: Clinics in all camps provided free primary medical services. More than 500 refugees were referred to governmental hospitals in Bo, Kenema and Freetown for secondary medical care. Eighty individuals living with HIV and AIDS received nutritional care and were helped to start small-scale businesses to supplement their household needs. All repatriating refugees were medically screened for travel. Each individual was issued with a medical history form indicating specific medical concerns.

Legal assistance: The authorities respected the rights of refugees, including their right to freedom of movement, and no cases of *refoulement* were reported. The status of the residual refugee population was verified after the end of the voluntary repatriation programme; the registration software *proGres* accurately reflected the profile of all remaining Liberian refugees.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR covered the operational, management and staffing costs of various implementing partners. Vehicles and other assets were loaned to implementing partners under right-of-use agreements. Implementing and operational partners also received technical support, expertise and training in key policy and operational areas.

Sanitation: Each family in the refugee camps had access to an individual family latrine (some 900 drop-holes in total). Furthermore, some 130 latrines were constructed in host communities. UNHCR also rehabilitated more than 300 showers and constructed 60 new ones for vulnerable camp refugees. There was no outbreak of any disease in refugee-hosting areas during the year.

Shelter and infrastructure: Tool kits were given to refugees to encourage upkeep of their shelters. UNHCR rehabilitated 140 shelters that had been damaged and another 250 for refugees with specific needs. Nearly 800 abandoned camp shelters were removed and their sites cleaned. Shelter packages (tool kits, construction materials, etc.) were provided to 20 refugee families who had opted for local integration.

Transport and logistics: More than 80 trucks and some 20 light vehicles transported repatriating refugees and their personal effects, while ambulances carried vulnerable refugees. At the end of the repatriation, 20 trucks were redeployed to UNHCR operations in Liberia, Senegal and Tanzania.

Water: UNHCR distributed an average of 25 litres of potable water per person per day to camp residents. All dispensing points were regularly chlorinated and the water was tested monthly. Following an assessment of water needs in hosting communities, new projects were designed for implementation in 2008.

Constraints

The Government has not been able to fulfil its assurances that all refugees would be given access to cultivable land. Many refugees in urban areas rejected opportunities for local integration, focusing instead on the prospect of resettlement. Though the Refugee Bill formally embraces local integration as a durable solution for refugees, it does not contain provisions for the granting of residence or citizenship.

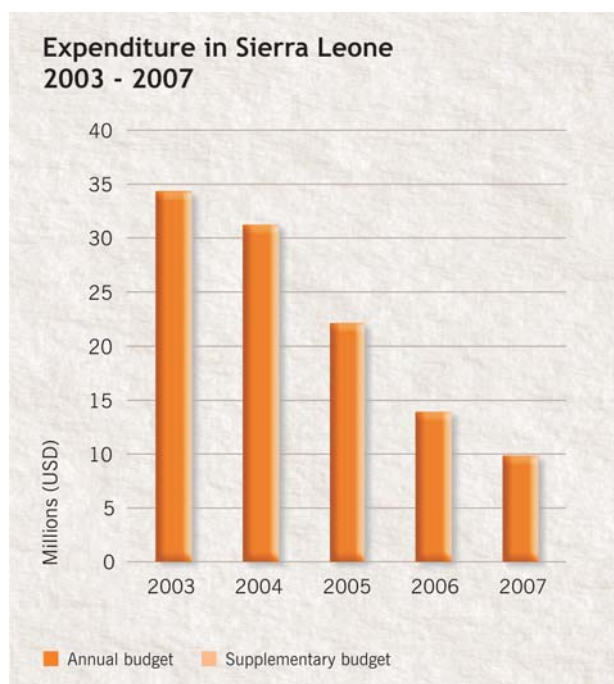


A. Mahečić

Health clinic for Liberian refugees in Tobanda camp, Kenema.

Financial information

Sierra Leone operations received 23 per cent of earmarked funding against the budget of USD 10.3 million in 2007. The remaining requirements were covered by unearmarked contributions. The local integration initiative and the environmental rehabilitation of two camps, which were not originally budgeted for, were funded by appropriations under the care and maintenance programme.



Organization and implementation

Management

UNHCR phased down its presence in Sierra Leone in 2007. By mid-year, staffing was reduced by 25 per cent. With the end of large-scale organized repatriation, the Kailahun and Zimmi way stations were closed. The Field Office in Bo was closed at the end of the year and the UNHCR presence was reorganized around offices in Freetown and Kenema.

Budget, income and expenditure (USD)					
	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available	Total expenditure
Annual budget	10,355,762	2,390,631	7,412,977	9,803,608	9,802,607

Note: Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

Working with others

The number of implementing partners was reduced from 13 to 6, in line with the reduced scope of the refugee operations in Sierra Leone. Some operational partners continued to deliver health services in camps. Meanwhile, WFP moved from providing individual monthly food supplies to food-for-work in order to support local integration.

Overall assessment

The high turnout of refugees opting for voluntary repatriation was due also due to a successful mass-information campaign. With the Refugee Law receiving presidential approval, UNHCR began to build NACSA's capacity to manage refugee status determination. The Office supported the Government and the Environmental Foundation for Africa to rapidly assess needs in refugee-hosting areas to prepare for local integration, camp clean up and environmental rehabilitation. Community empowerment projects were implemented in 13 communities to rehabilitate schools, construct latrines and upgrade playing fields.

Partners	
Implementing partners	
Government agencies: National Commission for Social Action	
NGOs: Caritas Kenema Office, Environmental Fund for Africa, International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, Network Movement for Justice and Development	
Operational partners	
NGOs: Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) - Belgium	
Others: FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, World Bank, WFP, WHO	

Financial Report (USD)		
Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Previous years' projects
	Annual budget	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	3,611,546	0
Community services	391,743	139,516
Crop production	24,990	0
Domestic needs and household support	255,758	0
Education	66,865	94,804
Food	22,242	3,587
Forestry	40,607	0
Health and nutrition	595,786	127,350
Income generation	0	46,146
Legal assistance	164,996	4,229
Operational support (to agencies)	1,153,050	334,407
Sanitation	155,926	21,136
Shelter and infrastructure	163,050	74,751
Transport and logistics	627,726	217,202
Water	59,126	20,780
Instalments with implementing partners	46,304	(1,083,906)
Sub-total operational activities	7,379,715	0
Programme support	2,422,892	0
Total expenditure	9,802,607	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure		(76,657)
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	2,298,270	
Reporting received	(2,251,966)	
Balance	46,304	
Previous years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1st January		1,233,029
Reporting received		(1,083,906)
Refunded to UNHCR		(55,746)
Adjustments		(1,340)
Balance		92,037