



From emergency evacuation to
community empowerment

*Review of the repatriation and
reintegration programme
in Sierra Leone*

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Summary and recommendations

Summary

This report deals with the repatriation and reintegration assistance provided for some 272,000 Sierra Leonean refugees who returned to their country of origin from Guinea and Liberia between the years 2000 and 2004. Despite numerous adverse factors, including a lack of security in countries of asylum and origin during the initial phase, a simultaneous influx into Sierra Leone of new refugees from Liberia, as well as a lack of resources allocated to the operation and a shortage of staff on the part of UNHCR, the operation must be considered a success. Returnees visited in all major areas of return unanimously expressed their satisfaction at being back home and their appreciation of the aid operation which had helped them along the way.

A principle reason for this positive outcome is the remarkable collaborative effort undertaken by the UN system and its partners in assisting the Sierra Leone Government to establish peace and security in the country and to provide coordinated emergency assistance measures enabling both internally displaced persons and returning refugees to resume their livelihood in areas which had been seriously destroyed by the war. This was made possible by a good leadership team which closed the gap between the UN military, humanitarian and development operations and allowed for joint strategies and the sharing of resources.

UNHCR played a significant role in this process by initiating the establishment of a joint information management system, and by strengthening interagency cooperation through the 4Rs concept which provides an institutional framework to facilitate the transition from relief to development. In keeping with this innovative approach, a team of UN staff administered by UNDP have been posted in UNHCR field offices with the task of assisting the local authorities in planning and managing the transition process. UNHCR also introduced a community centred approach in its reintegration programme similar to the one which is to be adopted by UNDP and the World Bank in their longer term development programmes.

Protection

The repatriation began in late 2000-2001 as an emergency evacuation when Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea had to flee their country of asylum following an armed incursion into part of its territory. At that time large areas of Sierra Leone were still under the control of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). When spontaneous repatriation into RUF held areas in the East of the country led to human rights violations against the returnees UNHCR successfully responded by intervening directly with RUF commanders, collaborating with advocacy NGOs as well as organising protection monitoring missions into RUF held territory and setting up mass information campaigns to warn returnees against using unsafe routes.

In order to ensure that repatriation to areas of origin could take place in safety and dignity UNHCR, the Government and OCHA agreed on joint procedures and a common set of criteria to declare chiefdoms safe for the return of refugees and IDPs. This joint declaration was a prerequisite for the commencement of repatriation and reintegration measures in these areas. The system worked well and with the rapid improvement of security in the whole country in the course of 2001 the repatriation operation could be completed without incidents. UNHCR was instrumental in providing refugees with information on conditions in the country of origin and in enabling them to participate in the electoral process upon return.

The protection problems encountered stemmed principally from the lasting consequences of the civil war and its effect on vulnerable individuals. The latter included unaccompanied minors (UAMs), abductees and former child combatants, as well as women who had been victims of abuse or had been forcibly associated with fighting forces. While efforts were made to provide special reception facilities and counselling for them, the degree of support made available to vulnerable individuals in general was exceedingly limited, largely due to the lack of facilities and resources in the country of origin.

However, there were also certain short-comings in the aid operation. The scarcity of funds allocated to the operation, the limited levels of assistance and the lack of capable implementing partners compounded the vulnerability of beneficiaries. The operation was also hindered by the lack of a comprehensive register of UAMs in countries of asylum and the delay in agreeing on reception arrangements for some of the vulnerable cases. UNHCR noted with regret that despite its advocacy with the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration the assistance criteria of the DDR Programme did not adequately address the needs of women associated with fighting forces and virtually excluded returning refugees who had been former combatants as well as Liberian asylum seekers who had participated in the Sierra Leone war.

The repatriation operation

The logistics of the operation were difficult. Depending on conditions, return took place by land, air or sea, and many refugees had to travel for days across roads in abysmal states of repair. UNHCR disposed of a limited number of second hand trucks and at one stage had to be helped out by military trucks supplied by UNAMSIL forces. In the course of the time it became clear that the purchase of a new trucking fleet would have been more efficient and costs effective. That the logistics of the operation could nevertheless be successfully completed is in no small measure due to the fact that UNHCR was able to entrust the transport sector in the three countries concerned to a singly competent implementing partner. This facilitated convoy management, cross-border traffic and vehicle maintenance.

UNHCR and the government agreed that assistance entitlement should be identical for returning IDPs and refugees since many came from the same rural communities. While this is fair in principle, in practice it meant that food and non-food entitlements for refugees had to be lowered in order to bring them in line with those for IDPs. It resulted in rural refugees returning home with a two months food ration to tide them over till the next harvest. Food aid was subsequently increased but there

are reports that returnees were forced to rely on 'bush yam' to feed themselves once supplies ran out. Establishing identical parameters for refugees and IDPs should not result in entitlements that are significantly lower than those UNHCR would normally endorse.

Like in many previous repatriation operations, the lack of a reliable and up to date refugee registration system in countries of asylum led to difficulties in controlling the operation and opened the door to benefit fraud by recyclers and refugees in possession of multiple ration cards. While the deteriorating security situation in both Guinea and Liberia would have made a census of refugee camps prior to repatriation impossible, the situation is another reminder of the fact that an adequate investment in registration measures is vital and may lead to enhanced credibility and financial savings.

Reintegration assistance

In view of the destruction wrought by the war in areas of return UNHCR and its partners aimed from the outset at rapidly re-establishing some basic services in the water, health and education sectors. The programme was initially centralised and driven by Implementing Partners in accordance with their own priorities and specialisations. From 2003 onwards UNHCR introduced an altogether different approach which aimed to enable local communities to decide for themselves how they preferred to utilise the funding envelope made available to them by UNHCR, subject to them providing unskilled labour and local raw materials free of charge for the project. In the course of 2003-2004 several hundred so called Community Empowerment Projects (CEPs) were implemented in all areas of return in a range of sectors, including agriculture, health, water, sanitation and community services. Over 100 of these were visited by the Evaluation Team (see Annex H).

The CEP concept has the advantage of maximising community involvement in decision making and implementation, and the majority of the projects seemed to have made a good start. However the concept is as yet at an experimental stage and requires a certain amount of fine tuning to become more effective. The following issues were found to need attention:

- more explicit targeting is required to ensure that CEPs benefit vulnerable or excluded groups;
- implementing partners may not have the technical competence to supervise the type of project chosen by the community;
- community sensitisation and mobilisation is a time consuming process and may result in delays;
- in rural areas where literacy and numeracy is low extensive capacity building measures are required to enable community members to run their CEPs;
- leaving the choice of CEPs to individual communities may result in a random selection of projects potentially at variance with more integrated regional development plans;

- weak governmental infrastructure may preclude adequate staffing or maintenance of CEPs by line ministries.

Despite the problem areas identified above there is no doubt that the UNHCR reintegration programme and the CEPs have had a sizeable impact in improving living conditions in returnee areas many of which are exceedingly remote and desperately poor.

Future outlook

The sustainability of the reintegration and rehabilitation efforts undertaken by the UN operation as a whole and UNHCR's programme in particular cannot be taken for granted in view of the highly fragile socio-economic circumstances of post-conflict Sierra Leone. The weakness or virtual absence of governmental infrastructure in the provincial areas as well as the continuing lack of commercial investment and the consequent lack of viable economic prospects for the population at large show that the transition from relief to the development is likely to be a lengthy and protracted process in which early gains can easily be nullified if long term commitments on the part of the government, donors and implementing partners are not assured.

This also applies to many CEPs established by UNHCR in returnee areas which require further monitoring and capacity building and cannot realistically be expected to succeed within the short time-frame dictated by UNHCR's impending withdrawal from Sierra Leone. In the circumstances the establishment of a transitional mechanism such as the 4Rs process is very much to be welcomed, and one would have expected it to address the sustainability of the UNHCR reintegration programme as a matter of priority. The Evaluation Team was, however, all the more surprised to find that interagency cooperation and the 4Rs process had played only a very limited role in the management, implementation or, indeed, the longer term planning of the UNHCR CEP programme.

It may be symptomatic that the UNHCR CEP guidelines make reference to interagency cooperation but do not clarify what the aim of this cooperation should be, what tasks should be undertaken to bring it about and how it should be organised. This may explain why there was, at the time of the Evaluation Team's field visit, no clarity how individual CEPs funded by UNHCR would fit into a wider development strategy for their chiefdom and how those CEPs requiring further support during the transitional phase would be taken in charge. The governmental structures that would normally be expected to address such issues were as yet not clearly designated or fully operational, and UNHCR's development partners in the UN system had not made any concrete plans on how to maintain or build upon the diverse legacy of UNHCR's reintegration programme in the interim.

In the circumstances there would seem to be a necessity for UNHCR, its development partners and the government to engage in a detailed review of the UNHCR reintegration programme with the aim of determining what additional capacity building and maintenance initiatives may be required to provide for its sustainability and how such action should be funded and implemented. This would also provide an opportunity to establish how future community development programmes by UNDP and the World Bank can best be build upon and consolidate

the projects established by UNHCR. Site visits to all projects would be indispensable to conduct such a review but the effort would be worth it. As witnessed by this Evaluation there are prior year projects which have not been subject to the necessary follow up and may, as a result, be abandoned while they could be usefully maintained.

For the purpose of future CEP programmes it would be opportune to utilise the 4R consultative process as a means to clarify the role of development actors, in particular UNDP and the World Bank, in the design, funding and implementation of these programmes. The experience in Sierra Leone shows that CEPs have longer term implications; they require an extended time frame to allow for community sensitisation, may need an extended period of monitoring and support after completion, and should be designed to fit into a larger local development framework. As such they are not really compatible with the short-term project cycle of UNHCR and it would seem to be unwise for them to be implemented by an agency which is under obligation to phase out its activities after a relatively brief time span.

In the circumstances it would seem to be preferable for development actors to take the lead in establishing CEPs. Failing that, CEPs should from the beginning be conceived as a joint exercise between UNHCR and development actors such as UNDP and the World Bank. In practice this would mean that both the staff recruited for the programme as well as the implementing partners would remain in the area beyond the phase-out of UNHCR and for as long as conditions require. Such an approach would put the transition from relief to development on a stronger footing than is currently the case and transform the 4Rs framework from a consultative process into a concrete implementation mechanism.

Management issues

The Sierra Leone repatriation suffered from a severe staffing shortage on the part of UNHCR, a situation that was not remedied until the final stages of the operation. Attempts to address staffing needs by transferring posts from countries of asylum to the country of origin as foreseen by the Special Area Concept proved unworkable in practice and led to delays in post creation. UNHCR has also on previous occasions found it difficult to bring about a rapid increase of staff in countries of origin to coincide with the beginning of repatriation operations, and there is a need to address this issue as a matter of principle.

While this Evaluation was not able to address issues of cost-effectiveness in any detail it seems that in a number of sectors, such as transport, registration and staffing, a substantial early investment of funds would have resulted in savings at a later stage. However, the overall funding shortage suffered by UNHCR especially in the year 2002, would not have made it possible to obtain savings in this manner.

UNHCR could do more to make use of the extensive lessons learned literature on repatriation and reintegration programmes which it has accumulated in recent years. It should be disseminated more widely, especially to staff in field postings, and relevant samples should be reviewed and discussed as a matter of routine in UNHCR planning, team building and training workshops. If the Sierra Leone operation has been managed successfully despite the many obstacles encountered

this may, however, be attributed at least in part to the assignment of highly experienced staff members who were able to fall back on lessons learned from previous operations in which they had participated themselves.

Recommendations

Protection

1. Whenever appropriate, relations between UNHCR and UN Peace Keeping Forces should be formalised through:
 - an agreement between UNHCR and the UN-Peace Keeping operation covering issues of common concern such as deployment strategies, trucks, flights, telecommunications, human rights initiatives and public information;
 - the appointment in the UNHCR Office of a focal point for relations with the UN peace-keeping counterpart and /or the secondment of a humanitarian officer to the UN-peace keeping operation to widen contacts and streamline day-to-day relations.
2. As part of the planning stage of voluntary repatriation operations priority should be given to establishing a comprehensive data base of UAMs and a mechanism to transfer it to the country of origin.
3. UNHCR should commission an evaluation of child protection measures implemented as part of its programmes in the Mano River countries; if possible, a joint evaluation with UNICEF should be considered.
4. UNHCR should establish a comprehensive gender action plan for all repatriation and reintegration operations, covering also the recruitment of an adequate number of female staff members by UNHCR and its partners, and the deployment of gender officers to mainstream gender concerns from the early stages of the operation; planning guidelines to this effect should be added to the *UNHCR Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities*.
5. UNHCR should seek to promote an interagency evaluation of the effectiveness of SGBV prevention measures in country programmes where these have been introduced.
6. UNHCR should seek to ensure that the assistance criteria of DDR programmes are designed to take account of the reintegration needs of all relevant categories of persons, including asylum seekers/refugees and returnees with an ex-combatant background, as well as women and children associated with fighting forces.

Repatriation

7. A cost-benefit analysis should be undertaken before deciding whether to use second hand trucks or purchase a new fleet.

8. Efforts should be made already at the planning stage to secure the cooperation of development actors in order to upgrade repatriation routes and crossing points.
9. To cope with contingencies, way stations should have twice the capacity of persons expected per convoy.
10. UNHCR should conduct a comparative study of assistance entitlements adopted in previous repatriation and reintegration operations with a view to establishing fair and objective criteria for the determination of assistance standards in future operations of this kind; these should be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval.
11. As a matter of principle UNHCR should seek to ensure that having the same assistance entitlements for IDPs and returnees does not result in lowering standards beneath those it would normally recommend.
12. No effort should be spared to introduce reliable refugee registration systems with ready access for cross-checking in countries of origin.
13. Repatriation arrangements for EVIs require attention at the planning stage; a transferable data base on such cases should be established in countries of asylum to facilitate follow up after repatriation; EVIs returning to countries with limited facilities should be provided with maximum assistance and counselling at the point of departure.
14. Information campaigns should provide vulnerable groups with details on the reception arrangements and conditions they are likely to encounter; in cases where the scope for such special arrangements is limited or even non-existent this should also be made explicit.
15. The number and location of spontaneous returnees should be included among the criteria used to decide upon the operational areas of UNHCR's reintegration programme.

Reintegration

16. Interagency information management systems should not remain a centralised planning tool but be designed in such a way as to make them into a useful field-oriented resource.
17. A detailed inter-agency review of UNHCR's Community Empowerment Projects should be undertaken in the latter half of 2005, with particular focus on assessing their sustainability.
18. Community Empowerment funds should not be apportioned only on a geographical basis; instead, part of these resources should be set aside specifically for the benefit of certain categories of persons such as women, youths and vulnerable groups.
19. Implementing partners of CEPs should either be allowed to specialise on a limited range of sectors or be supplied with additional funds to recruit technical expertise in key sectors. Micro-credit projects should only be implemented by specialised agencies.
20. Assistance programmes in refugee camps should include training and education programmes designed to facilitate repatriation and reintegration;

direct linkages should be established between refugee and returnee assistance projects benefiting the same group of beneficiaries.

21. In CEP projects close attention should be given from the outset to the training requirements of PMC (Project Management Committee) members; as a matter of principle, training should be provided before the project commences rather than after completion, even if this may require the project implementation period to be extended.
22. CEPs should be designed so that part of the proceeds can be used as financial remuneration for PMC members involved in the day to day management of business transactions.
23. Under its 2005 programme in Sierra Leone, UNHCR should aim to provide selected PMC members with additional training, through convening special workshops, enabling them to attend existing capacity building initiatives, and liaising with NaCSA and UNDP to provide for longer term coverage of training needs.
24. In implementing reintegration programmes priority should be given to implementing partners with the funding, capacity and intention to remain in the area after the phase-out of UNHCR
25. As part of its exit strategy from Sierra Leone, UNHCR, NaCSA and TST staff should engage in a comprehensive first hand review of UNHCR's reintegration projects to determine
 - which are in need of ongoing support (maintenance, capacity building, etc.) and how such support should be funded and supplied;
 - which are so successful they deserve to be strengthened and expanded;
 - when and under what conditions local government structures will be ready to assume sectoral responsibility for these projects and how they can best be assisted for this purpose;
 - which implementing partners are the most capable and qualified to continue operating as CEP partners for development agencies;
 - how future community development programmes by UNDP and the World Bank can best be build upon and consolidate the projects established by UNHCR.
26. Development actors should from the outset be involved in the design of CEP programmes in post-conflict situations and, if possible, take the lead in their establishment so as to ensure continuity over the longer term; to this effect, UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank and other concerned agencies should examine the creation of a joint implementing strategy.

Management issues

27. It is essential to agree on an adequate staffing table for the country of origin from the planning stage of the operation and to undertake all necessary

measures to create and fill the posts concerned in time for the arrival of UNHCR assisted returnees; transfers of posts under the Special Area Concept should only be envisaged in the final stages of the operation, not at the beginning.

28. In cases where a substantial early investment of funds may result in significant savings in the longer term, a special fund raising strategy should be devised and donors approached accordingly.
29. UNHCR planning, team building and training work-shops should, as a matter of routine, include a special session to review relevant lessons learned from previous operations; EPAU should be designated as focal point to provide the required documentation and, if needed, the resource persons for such sessions.
30. On completion of major repatriation and reintegration operations UNHCR Offices should be encouraged to conduct an internal, results-oriented review of all aspects of their work and produce an internal lessons learned report accordingly; external evaluations should be commissioned to conduct detailed reviews of critical issues, if appropriate in collaboration with other UN agencies.

Best practices

Protection

1. Resisting political pressure to facilitate premature repatriation, and to create 'safe corridors' in the absence of security enforcement back up and safety guarantees for refugees.
2. Establishing clear parameters for UNHCR's role in support of displaced returnees pending their relocation to areas of origin, with partner agencies assuming complementary roles in respect of other categories of IDPs.
3. Identifying host communities willing to accommodate displaced returnees and compensating them for their effort through development projects in collaboration with UN sister agencies.
4. Negotiating with Non-State Actors to provide protection and assistance to persons of concern to UNHCR in areas under their control.
5. Establishing partnerships with advocacy NGOs to promote protection in areas controlled by Non-State Actors.
6. Consulting with the government, donors and aid agencies concerned, to agree on common criteria for the safe return of IDPs and refugees and upholding these criteria in the face of political pressure.
7. Establishing a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF to address child protection issues as well as other issues of joint concern.
8. Introducing and observing SGBV prevention measures in the implementation of all operations.
9. Promoting the introduction of legislative measures and making funds available to the National Electoral Commission so as to ensure that returnees have access to the electoral process.

10. Promoting inclusion of refugees and returnees in the processes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and Special Courts, as part of return and reconciliation initiatives.

Repatriation

11. Appointing an implementing partner with the ability to cover transport and logistics in the entire area of operations.
12. Arranging overland transport with sufficient capacity to take all the refugees' personal effects.
13. Introducing a cash component as part of the returnee package.
14. Transporting returnees all the way to their final destination in areas declared safe for repatriation.
15. Establishing a comprehensive regional mass information strategy using culturally appropriate means of dissemination.

Reintegration

16. Introducing a joint interagency information management system from the start of the operation to ensure timely collection and transmission of data.
17. Assigning a team of UNDP administered staff to UNHCR field offices to assist local authorities and the UNCT in planning and managing the transition from relief to development.
18. Empowering returnee communities to decide on assistance priorities and to participate actively in their implementation.

Background

1. At a time when doubts about the effectiveness of the United Nations are frequently heard the events that have taken place in Sierra Leone in recent years provide valuable testimony of what the UN system is able to achieve when it acts in unison, under good leadership, with determined support from the international community and in tandem with a legitimate government bent on reconciliation and reconstruction. After a ten year civil war of unrestrained brutality, peace and security have been re-established in the entire country, 72,000 ex-combatants were demobilised, democratic elections were held and up to one million persons, including some 271,000 refugees, have been able to return to their former homes. While poverty is still rampant and numerous problems remain to be addressed the inhabitants of the country have, after years of tragedy and deprivation, at last been given genuine reason to hope for a better future.

The repatriation: successful accomplishment after a difficult start

2. The UNHCR repatriation and reintegration programme which is the subject of this document has made a significant contribution to the recovery process in Sierra Leone. The troubled early stages of the programme, however, reflect the turmoil and the sudden setbacks and reversals which characterised the situation in the country and the surrounding region throughout the 90ies. Refugees had started leaving in large numbers as of 1991 when Foday Sankoh and his Revolutionary United Front (RUF) staged a rebellion in Eastern Sierra Leone and unleashed wide spread civil unrest. Hopes for an end to the conflict rose in 1996 when a peace accord appeared to have been reached and democratic elections brought a new government to power headed by President al-Haji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the SLPP (Sierra Leone People's Party). Encouraged by these developments UNHCR and its partners in early 1997 engaged in detailed plans for the repatriation of the refugees when a military coup in May of that year plunged the country into renewed civil war.

3. In February 1998 the legitimate government was reinstated with the help of Nigerian troops attached to ECOMOG. At the request of the authorities UNHCR thereupon facilitated the return of several thousand civil servants with their families, and a new repatriation planning mission was despatched to the country. At this very time, however, the capital Freetown was itself attacked by the rebels who entered the city in January 1999, causing significant loss of life and property until they were dislodged by ECOMOG troops and civil defence forces. The scenes of devastation in the capital prompted the international community to engage itself more forcefully in the country. Following intense diplomatic activity a peace agreement between the conflicting parties was signed in Lomé in July 1999, to be backed up by a UN peace keeping mission (UNAMSIL) which was set up by the Security Council in October of the same year. In May 2000, however, there was yet another set-back. Five hundred UN peace keepers were taken hostage by the rebels and much of the country became inaccessible again. The Lomé agreement collapsed and the UN operation appeared to be in serious jeopardy until an intervention by British troops gave UNAMSIL the opportunity to seize the initiative once more.

4. Despite the difficult security situation which prevailed throughout 1999-2000 the Sierra Leone Government approached UNHCR with requests to start facilitating repatriation. Mindful of earlier premature repatriation efforts, UNHCR, however, maintained a principled stance that conditions in the country of origin were not yet conducive to facilitating voluntary repatriation as most of the country, including the main areas of origin of the refugees remained under rebel control while conditions in Guinea and Liberia remained conducive to asylum. In September 2000, however, the situation in the entire region deteriorated as the Parrot's Beak area of Guinea where many Sierra Leonean refugees had sought shelter was suddenly attacked by RUF and Liberian elements. As a result, UNHCR was obliged to relocate some 57,400 refugees to new sites further inland. Moreover, Sierra Leoneans in Guinea became targets of reprisals and many refugees were forced to return home despite the fact that the situation in their own country was not yet resolved.

5. The long expected return of Sierra Leonean refugees thus started not as a well planned and orderly movement following a resolution of the conflict but as an emergency evacuation to a country still at war. Refugees who attempted to return by themselves during between September 2000 and early 2001 faced human rights violations en route in Guinea (detention, robbery, extortion and assaults, including rape) as well as in rebel held areas of Sierra Leone (rape, robbery, enforced family separation and forced recruitment). Moreover, what should have been, for the refugees who had found shelter in the Parrot's Beak region of Guinea, a short journey home across the river which forms the border between the two countries turned into an arduous voyage by truck and boat via Conakry and Freetown. UNHCR staff in Sierra Leone were faced with a crisis situation, and returnees had to be accommodated in transit camps and with local communities pending the pacification of their home regions. At the same time UNHCR had to enter into negotiations with RUF commanders and conduct missions to rebel-held areas to ensure safe passage for those returnees who had crossed the border into territory under RUF control. In mid 2001 the returnee situation was complicated yet further when renewed fighting in Liberia forced Sierra Leonean refugees there into a similarly unplanned and sudden return home.

6. Fortunately the year 2001 also saw a significant and this time more lasting improvement of the security situation in Sierra Leone. In May 2001 a new peace agreement was hammered out in Abuja, by which time UNAMSIL had been significantly strengthened with a reinforced mandate, additional troops and a new command structure. The demobilisation of combatants was resumed and in January 2002 the government was able to declare officially an end to the civil war. Later that year the first violence free elections in Sierra Leone since independence confirmed the SLPP Government in power. With the pacification of formerly rebel held areas, returnees and displaced persons were able to return to their homes in increasing numbers. As a result the repatriation operation became a more orderly process, and by the end of the year 133,406 refugees had returned from Guinea, 60,945 from Liberia and 397 from other asylum countries in North and West Africa. At the end of 2001 UNHCR was also able to start relocating 10,000 of the up to 60,000 displaced returnees living in transit centres, temporary resettlement camps and host communities as their areas of origin were gradually declared safe, with the remainder being relocated in 2002.

7. The year 2002, however, also saw a new impediment with the influx into Eastern Sierra Leone of some 60,000 Liberian refugees whose needs placed a serious burden on the limited financial and staffing resources UNHCR had available for its programme in the country. Funds intended for the repatriation and transit camps built for the returnees had to be utilised for the newly arrived refugees instead, and the repatriation had to be suspended three times in the course of the year. Resources remained insufficient, and the Liberian refugees faced conditions of unacceptable hardship in the initial months after their arrival.

8. Security in Sierra Leone stabilised further in 2003 and UNHCR was able to move from the facilitation to the promotion stage of voluntary repatriation. Targeted efforts were made to persuade the remaining refugees to take advantage of UNHCR's organised return programme which ended officially on 30 June 2004. By the end of July 2004 when the last convoys had entered the country the cumulative total figure of returnees had reached 271,000 since September 2000. Notwithstanding the official completion date of the operation some 250 additional refugees were assisted to repatriate in the final months of 2004. At this stage some 12,000 Sierra Leonean refugees still remain outside the country, principally in The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea and Liberia. A screening exercise of these populations is due to be conducted with a view to ascertaining appropriate durable solutions for them.

Reintegration: a collective effort by the UN System and its partners

9. By the end of 2002, the UN operation in Sierra Leone had become a well-coordinated and mutually supportive enterprise where the progressive establishment of security by UN peace keepers went hand in hand with rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts undertaken by the Sierra Leonean authorities with the help of specialised UN Agencies, NGOs and bilateral donors. A lessons learned study published by Refugees International provides a valuable analysis of the circumstances which enabled the UN operation recover from its initial failings and to make a lasting and crucial contribution not only to the establishment of peace and security but also to the rehabilitation and reconstruction effort. As pointed out in the report, a significant step in this process was the appointment of an experienced senior official with three distinct responsibilities which together covered the gap between UN military, humanitarian and development operations.¹ This greatly facilitated communication, coordination and the sharing of resources.

10. The principal counterpart on the government side is the National Commission for Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Resettlement (NCRRR), later renamed National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA). From an early stage UNHCR invested in building the capacity of this agency because of its pivotal role in coordinating humanitarian assistance programmes and refugee operations. Its activities are based upon the National Recovery Strategy which was adopted in 2001 by the National Recovery Committee under the chairmanship of the Vice-President.

¹ See *UNAMSIL - A Peacekeeping Success: Lessons Learned*, Refugees International, Washington, October 2002. The official in question was Mr. Alan Doss; as DSRSG, Doss liaised with the UNAMSIL Forces Commander Lieutenant General Ishmael Opande, as UN Resident / Humanitarian Coordinator he chaired the UN Country Team and as Head of the UN Development Group he coordinated reconstruction and rehabilitation planning. The other DSRSG was Mr. Behrooz Sadry who had responsibility for Operations and Management. The operation was led by SRSG Ambassador Oluyemi Adenji.

To coordinate the implementation of the strategy, District Recovery Committees and Chiefdom Development Committees were formed at provincial level. The strategy also provides the basis for the UN Peace Building and Recovery Strategy for Sierra Leone adopted by the UN Country Team in 2002 and the subsequent UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF, 2003). Together, these documents establish the guidelines and priorities for the UN assistance operation in the country.

11. The tasks facing the UN Country Team in Sierra Leone were, and, despite many achievements, still remain, enormous. As noted in the UNDAF document, the war brought devastation to over 3,000 towns and villages and ruined the already limited water, health and education infrastructure in many areas. At the end of the war, 85% of the population lived in extreme poverty, life expectancy had fallen to 38 years, maternal mortality rates had risen to one of the highest in the world, and the country remained at the bottom of the Human Development Index. Added to this must be the seriously impaired transport and communications network, the weak governmental infrastructure, especially in rural areas, and the lack of opportunities for gainful employment.

12. It goes without saying that in these conditions the successful reintegration of returnees represents an arduous challenge. UNHCR and its partner agencies aimed from the outset to enhance the absorption capacity of areas of return by implementing a range of medium to small scale projects in a variety of sectors, with particular emphasis on health, water and education. Starting from 2001, some 1,500 projects of this type have been implemented whereby two distinct phases can be observed. In the first phase, between 2001 and 2002, the reintegration programme focused principally on activities prioritised by UNHCR's implementing partners in the field. In 2003 a new concept, known as Community Empowerment Projects (CEPS), was introduced in which communities were given the opportunity to select projects in accordance with their own priorities, on the understanding that they would contribute to their implementation by providing resources such as unskilled labour and local raw materials. UNHCR will have phased out of the Northern district of Kambia by the end of 2004 and intends to terminate its reintegration activities in the rest of the country by the end of 2005.

Scope and sources of this evaluation

13. The term of reference for this evaluation cover many aspects of the long and complex operation (see Annex A). In order to collect the necessary data the evaluators visited Sierra Leone from 9 to 30 August 2004. Most of the time was spent in field locations visiting over 100 different reintegration projects in the four Districts where UNHCR is operational, namely Kambia, Kailahun, Kono and Pujahun (see Annexes B and H). Numerous discussions were held with returnee communities and the visit to each District ended with a review meeting with UNHCR staff and implementing partners. In Freetown, meetings were conducted with selected donor and UN representatives. The Mission concluded with a one day Evaluation Workshop comprising UNHCR staff from Freetown and Field Offices in Sierra Leone as well as Conakry and Monrovia; implementing partners and fellow UN agencies were also represented.

14. Since the repatriation operation had been concluded by the time the mission took place most of the data gathered during the field visits concerned the

BACKGROUND

reintegration stage. The lessons learned from the earlier stages of the operation have been outlined in an internal document prepared by the UNHCR Office in Freetown which proved to be a valuable source of information on several of the terms of reference which this evaluation was asked to address. The observations of the document were discussed with staff members and were found to provide an accurate and detailed analysis of the events that occurred.

15. Wherever appropriate this report attempts to place its findings in the context of previous evaluation reports of repatriation and reintegration operations since similar issues are often involved. The reports which were found to be most relevant for the purpose of comparison were the review of the repatriation to Mali and Niger², the WHALE report on the Liberia experience³ and the evaluation report on reintegration in South East Asia⁴ which contains perhaps the finest analysis of the issues that commonly arise. Reference is also made to the *UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Handbook* (1996) and the recently issued *UNHCR Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities* (2004).

16. For easy reference, the discussion of each topic is followed by a brief summary statement of best practices and recommendations.

² Review of the Mali / Niger Repatriation and Reintegration Programme (Inspection and Evaluation Service, UNHCR, 1998).

³ The WHALE: Wisdom we have acquired from the Liberia experience, Report of a regional lessons-learned workshop, Monrovia, Liberia 26-27 April 2001 (UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, 2001)

⁴ Reintegration programmes for refugees in South-East Asia - Lessons learned from UNHCR's experience (UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, 2002).

Protection

17. The points raised hereunder are based in part on the internal evaluation document prepared by the UNHCR Office in Freetown which provides an instructive insight into the problems encountered and the measures taken. Account is also being taken of the views of returnees who were consulted on their experience of the repatriation process during meetings with returnee communities conducted as part of the field mission.

The emergency evacuation phase

18. As noted above, the UNHCR Office in Freetown resisted Government pressures to facilitate voluntary repatriation in the period 1999-2000 when most of the country was still under rebel control. However, once the emergencies started occurring in the neighbouring asylum countries (in Guinea September 2000 - early 2001, Liberia in 2001-2002), the return of the refugees became an inevitability. In the first three months of the Guinea emergency the UNHCR Office in Conakry did not want to be seen to legitimise repatriation in these circumstances and it focused its efforts instead on making asylum in the country tenable. The UNHCR Office in Sierra Leone, on the other hand, provided reception, in-country transportation and accommodation for the returnees who arrived spontaneously or on ships made available by the Sierra Leone Government. The lack of UNHCR's involvement at the port in Guinea meant, however, that return journeys were carried out in unsafe conditions, with overloaded ships, lack of crowd control and family separations as well as abuses committed against returnees upon embarkation at the port. Moreover, the lack of pre-arrival notification made it very difficult for UNHCR in Sierra Leone to meet the emergency needs of the returnees.

19. These circumstances show that repatriations under duress may present UNHCR with a serious dilemma which can only be resolved on a case-by-case basis, taking into account what action is in the best interests of the safety and well-being of the refugees. In the Guinean case safety conditions for repatriation improved considerable when UNHCR decided to take over responsibility for cross-border transportation in December 2000.

20. During this early period, 70% - 80% of the returnees were as yet unable to return to their former homes and became de facto IDPs upon their arrival. While Sierra Leonean IDPs were normally assisted through OCHA it was agreed from the beginning that UNHCR should assume responsibility for the displaced returnees. UNHCR and the government therefore had to rapidly identify temporary shelters for this group. Some 8,000 returnees were initially accommodated in three transit centres in Freetown before being moved to four newly constructed temporary settlement camps and two host communities further inland which together accommodated some 60,000 persons, pending their gradual relocation to areas of origin.⁵ The

⁵ The temporary settlement camps were subsequently converted to refugee camps in order to accommodate the Liberian refugee influx.

identification and sensitisation of host communities, though a relatively lengthy process, proved particularly beneficial and was facilitated by good inter-agency cooperation. FAO and UNDP agreed to provide resources for the local communities to compensate them for their efforts in housing and supporting the returnees.

21. While most returnees thus remained in government controlled areas some were found to be entering the country through RUF occupied Kono and Kailahun districts. To facilitate repatriation in these areas the Sierra Leone Government proposed the creation of 'safe repatriation corridors' in rebel-controlled territories. The UNHCR Office in Sierra Leone was reluctant to support this concept in view of the lack of security enforcement back up. UNAMSIL was at that stage not able to assign peacekeeping forces to Kailahun and Kono, despite the fact that UNHCR had advocated for these areas to be prioritised for deployment. The security of the returnees could therefore not be guaranteed. However, following a visit by the High Commissioner, the Sierra Leone media inaccurately reported that such safe corridors had in fact been created. When spontaneous returnees thus started using these routes in increasing numbers, UNHCR came to know of many cases of detention, abduction, forced recruitment, rape and robbery of returnees at the hands of the RUF, while Human Rights Watch stated that it had also documented a few cases of murder. A number of Liberian refugees and Guinean abductees were also found to facing life threatening situations in the same areas.

22. These circumstances prompted UNHCR to engage in direct negotiations with the RUF and to take the risk of conducting missions to rebel-held areas, while trying to avoid legitimising the organisation politically. RUF commanders were interested in attracting humanitarian assistance to their areas and therefore showed willingness to engage in cooperation with UNHCR which improved over the course of time as the frequency of missions increased. Every gesture of assistance (e.g. distribution of plastic sheeting for community buildings and high protein biscuits for children) improved UNHCR's negotiating power with local communities and RUF commanders.

23. In addition to intervening directly with the RUF to stop its fighters committing abuses, UNHCR also engaged in discreet information sharing with advocacy NGOs by notifying them of cases of abuse while taking care not to compromise the confidentiality of the persons involved. The NGOs subsequently made this information public, taking care not to cite UNHCR as one of its sources⁶. Thus further pressure could be exerted to persuade the RUF to change its tactics, without jeopardising its emerging relationship with UNHCR. Last but not least, UNHCR also undertook mass information campaigns to persuade refugees in Guinea not to use unsafe routes on their way back home.

24. Clearly, the early emergency phase of the repatriation faced UNHCR with the need to improvise solutions in situations of extreme pressure when even the safety and well-being of its own staff-members could not always be assured. It is, however, thanks to these initiatives that UNHCR was able to provide much needed protection and assistance to persons under its concern, and a considerable number of lives may have been saved.

⁶ See, for example, Human Rights Watch Report No "Safe Passage" Through Rebel-Held Sierra Leone, April 2001.

Best practice:

1. Resisting political pressure to facilitate premature repatriation, and to create 'safe corridors' in the absence of security enforcement back up and safety guarantees for refugees.
2. Establishing clear parameters for UNHCR's role in support of displaced returnees pending their relocation to areas of origin, with partner agencies assuming complementary roles in respect of other categories of IDPs.
3. Identifying host communities willing to accommodate displaced returnees and compensating them for their effort through development projects in collaboration with UN sister agencies.
4. Negotiating with Non-State Actors to provide protection and assistance to persons of concern to UNHCR in areas under their control.
5. Establishing partnerships with advocacy NGOs to promote protection in areas controlled by Non-State Actors.

Declaring areas of origin safe for return

25. Considering the fraught security situation in the country, determining the safety of areas of return was an activity of the highest priority in which UNHCR played a major role, together with the NCRRR and other agencies, in particular OCHA in its capacity as agency responsible for IDP assistance. The following criteria, applicable both to IDP operations run by OCHA and returnee operations undertaken by UNHCR, were adopted within the framework of the National Resettlement Strategy of the Sierra Leone government:

- absence of hostilities
- security maintenance by UNAMSIL
- ongoing disarmament
- law and order maintenance by the police
- unhindered access for humanitarian agencies and NCRRR staff
- sizeable spontaneous return of displaced persons (IDPs or refugees)
- presence of district and local administration.

26. Once UNHCR moved from facilitated to promoted repatriation an additional benchmark was added concerning the existence of basic humanitarian infrastructure in order to avoid mass return to devastated areas lacking in facilities such as shelter and access to drinking water.

27. The criteria proved essential in establishing continuously updated protection profiles of areas of return which were used in assessing and debating the safety of chiefdoms. The information was subsequently incorporated into mass information campaigns for refugees in countries of asylum. It should be noted, however, that the benchmarks did not take into account the risk of cross-border incursions which

turned out to be a very real threat along the Liberian border of Kailahun District until early 2004. With hindsight it was found that such a criterion should have been added from the beginning. However, the criterion of “absence of hostilities” was broad enough to accommodate the problem of cross border incursions, and the last remaining chiefdom, Kissi Tongi, was finally declared safe for return in early 2004 when the incursions ceased after the deployment of peacekeepers on the Liberian side of the border.

28. According to accounts obtained by this Evaluation, the system worked well, and there are no reports of UNHCR having at one stage promoted return to areas in which safety conditions proved to be unfit for repatriation. There were occasions, however, when UNHCR, with the support of OCHA, had to resist politically motivated pressures to declare areas safe prematurely.

29. It is greatly encouraging to note that during its extensive travel in the interior of Sierra Leone the Evaluation Mission did not encounter any evidence of insecurity or threats that might endanger returning refugees or IDPs. Numerous meetings with returnee communities confirmed that people were glad to have returned, felt safe and were hopeful to see better days ahead.

Best practice

6. Consulting with the government, donors and aid agencies concerned, to agree on common criteria for the safe return of IDPs and refugees and upholding these criteria in the face of political pressure.

Cooperation with UNAMSIL

30. The Sierra Leone experience showed once more that in certain circumstances cooperation with UN peace keepers can be of great benefit to UNHCR operations. This was particularly important in rebel-held areas where UNAMSIL provided accompanying patrols, logistical assistance and information on security. Moreover, the deployment of UNAMSIL troops in these areas encouraged the spontaneous return of displaced populations and proved to be indispensable for successful repatriation. Cooperation between UNHCR and UNAMSIL was greatly facilitated by the integrated nature of the UN operation mentioned above.

31. While the Code of Conduct for Humanitarian Agencies places limitations on active collaboration with armed forces it was found in Sierra Leone that the support provided to UNHCR by UNAMSIL was of truly life-saving nature. The fact that UNAMSIL forces were generally welcomed by the local population and won many hearts and minds by engaging in reconstruction efforts in addition to their military duties meant that UNHCR’s humanitarian work was not compromised by occasional reliance on the support of peace-keeping troops.

32. Even more could have been achieved if relations between UNHCR and UNAMSIL had been formalised through an agreement and if UNAMSIL’s deployment strategy had given greater priority to key areas of return.

Recommendation:

1. Whenever appropriate, relations between UNHCR and UN Peace Keeping Forces should be formalised through:
 - an agreement between UNHCR and the UN-Peace Keeping operation covering issues of common concern such as deployment strategies, trucks, flights, telecommunications, human rights initiatives and public information;
 - the appointment in the UNHCR Office of a focal point for relations with the UN peace-keeping counterpart and /or the secondment of a humanitarian officer to the UN-peace keeping operation to widen contacts and streamline day-to-day relations.

Child protection issues

33. The issues relating to child protection are very wide ranging and complex, and include not only family tracing for unaccompanied minors (UAMs) but also the reintegration of child soldiers and of girls abused as 'bush brides' during the war, as well as measures to address psychological traumas resulting from abuse and to protect children from sexual and gender based violence. Of no less importance are measures to enhance educational and skills training opportunities for young adolescents so as to help provide them with a positive perspective for the future and prevent the feelings of resentment and exclusion which were one of the factors that fuelled the civil war.

34. On account of the limited time available and the large number of topics to be covered this evaluation was not able to give sufficient attention to these issues. Since most of them are of regional concern, involving both the Sierra Leonean and the Liberian caseloads as well as several implementing partners working in more than one country in the region, it is hereby recommended that UNHCR should set up a special evaluation of child protection related matters covering refugees and returnees in all the Mano River countries.

35. Among the country programmes in the region that might benefit from this type of review is Guinea, where the mechanisms for the protection of refugee children have been described in one report as 'not sufficiently functional' and 'lacking in guidance and proper coordination between different partners'. The verification of the caseload of separated minors in Guinea appears to have been much delayed, which has led to a number of problems related to cases registered by UNHCR's implementing partner but not registered or recognised by UNHCR. There are also reports of separated Sierra Leonean children facing possible exploitation in households in Guinea. Issues such as these are still pending, and discussions between the Sierra Leonean and Guinean authorities are ongoing to ensure the safe repatriation of all Sierra Leonean minors. It is clear that the early establishment of a transferable data-base on UAMs in countries of asylum would have provided an important protection tool.

36. Reception arrangements for returnee UAMs in Sierra Leone seem to have functioned well, with family tracing activities for them incorporated into a nationwide system with the help of a database maintained by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. A number of problems surfaced, however,

including cases of returning ‘orphanages’ allegedly engaged in exploiting and trafficking children. UNHCR staff in Freetown expressed concern at the general level of training and professionalism of several agencies working in this sector and emphasised the need for close coordination and supervision of their activities. Following the discovery of irregularities, the implementing arrangements with one major child protection agency had to be terminated.

37. A country-level memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and UNICEF Sierra Leone in the child protection area contributed to effective collaboration between the agencies in both refugee and returnee issues, including facilitating funding by UNICEF at a time when UNHCR was facing a financial crisis. This MOU could have been extended to include other areas of cooperation with UNICEF, such as education and water/sanitation.

Recommendations:

2. As part of the planning stage of voluntary repatriation operations priority should be given to establishing a comprehensive data base of UAMs and a mechanism to transfer it to the country of origin. .
3. UNHCR should commission an evaluation of child protection measures implemented as part of its programmes in the Mano River countries; if possible, a joint evaluation with UNICEF should be considered.

Best practice:

7. Establishing a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF to address child protection issues as well as other issues of joint concern.

Protecting the rights of women

38. Protection problems facing returnee women – and Sierra Leonean women in general - are, to a considerable extent, a reflection of their traditionally inferior status in society which exposes them to the risk of exploitation and violence, particularly in rural areas.

39. Among the problems reported was the situation of females, both adults and children, who had been associated with, and as rule mistreated by, the fighting forces. While UNHCR had no direct involvement in the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (DDR) which was run by a National Commission, it noted with some regret that the programme ‘had a disproportionate focus on the needs of male fighters’ and that the needs of females forcibly associated with them were not adequately addressed. As a result there was criticism ‘that perpetrators of human rights violations were favoured over victims’.

40. As alleged in a much debated consultancy report drafted in 2002, women and children were not only at risk of abuse from fighters but were in certain circumstances also preyed upon by aid agency staff and members of peace keeping forces. While a subsequent investigation by the UN Office of Internal Oversight

Services exonerated UNHCR staff members in Sierra Leone from such accusations⁷ the problems raised by the report were found to be serious enough to require action on a major scale. A plan was drawn up to prevent and respond to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) in all sectors of activities, and training, awareness raising and public information campaigns on the issue have since become an integral part of programme implementation by UNHCR and its partners.⁸ With the formation in 2002 of a Coordination Committee for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CCSEA) under the leadership of OCHA the issue became a matter of the highest priority for the whole UN operation in Sierra Leone. In 2004 the CCSEA which is now led by UNICEF intends to extend its training programmes to relevant sections of the government and security forces and to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Social Welfare to support survivors of abuse.

41. It must be recognised, however, that conditions of extreme poverty, social dislocation and lack of adequate assistance continue to compound the vulnerability of beneficiaries to potential exploitation and, in particular, favour the spread of prostitution which has become the only source of regular income for many women in urban areas. The gap between needs and available means is illustrated by the fact that UNHCR Sierra Leone in 2002 received only \$630,000 out of the \$12million it had requested to implement a wide ranging plan to counter problems related to SGBV. The funds made available were used to improve UNHCR presence, rectify serious staffing and monitoring gaps and reduce the vulnerability of female headed households in refugee camps through shelter construction.

42. SGBV programmes did not figure among the terms of reference of this evaluation and the issue was therefore not addressed as such during the field visit. The Evaluation Mission was made aware of certain problem areas, however, like the difficulty women allegedly face in bringing rape cases to court on account of the fees being charged by doctors for medical certificates required for court action. In the light of the importance attached to the prevention of SGBV and the significant resources and programmes devoted by UN Agencies to this purpose since 2002, the establishment of an interagency evaluation of SGBV prevention activities should be considered in order to assess what their impact has been and what improvements might be required.

43. A problem faced by returnee women in particular concerns the reclamation of property by widows whose husbands died without leaving a will, a frequent occurrence during the war. According to customary law which is recognised by the Sierra Leonean constitution women cannot own property as they are considered to be the property of their husbands. In certain cases, affecting particularly women without sons to inherit property and illiterate women with no economic base, this has meant that the women concerned lost all claim to their marital homes. Wherever possible UNHCR and its government counterpart, NaCSA, attempted to negotiate a solution with the local community but it is not clear how effective or durable such

⁷ However, the report of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services documented a case of a returnee boy in a returnee transit centre who was sexually assaulted by a peace keeping force soldier. The boy was assisted by UNHCR throughout the UNAMSIL investigation process and the soldier was subsequently repatriated.

⁸ All sub-agreements with implementing partners now include a clause concerning observance of the UN Standards of Conduct Ensuring Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse which were adopted in the wake of the concern raised over SGBV (see Annex E).

arrangements are likely to be. UNHCR is continuing to address the issue with local authorities, lawyers associations and the government with the intention of advocating for a law reform.

44. Taking account of the need to improve the status of women in Sierra Leone and the benefit this may bring to the development of the country as a whole the UN Country Team adopted as part of its guiding principles for its relief and recovery plan that women and youths should be empowered so as to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives and in the planning, design and evaluation of programmes.⁹ In the same vein, the Sierra Leone UNDAF declares gender equality as well as women's rights, education and capacity building to be one of its goals.¹⁰ The implementation of such policies in the context of the UNHCR reintegration programme is discussed in further detail below.

45. The need for special measures to address the needs of women, secure their rights and protect them from exploitation and violence has been noted repeatedly in repatriation and reintegration programmes. In this context it is worth recalling the findings of the UNHCR evaluation on reintegration in South East Asia which recommends that UNHCR should institute 'a comprehensive gender action plan' for each operation of this type, comprising a situational analysis and an identification of the ways, means and the partnerships required to ensure that needs are adequately met; in all cases, one of the key measures must be the recruitment of adequate numbers of female staff members.¹¹ This recommendation remains very pertinent and is reiterated here.

Best practice:

8. Introducing and observing SGBV prevention measures in the implementation of all operations.

Recommendations:

4. UNHCR should establish a comprehensive gender action plan for all repatriation and reintegration operations, covering also the recruitment of an adequate number of female staff members by UNHCR and its partners and the deployment of gender officers to mainstream gender concerns from the early stages of the operation; planning guidelines to this effect should be added to the *UNHCR Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities*.
5. UNHCR should seek to promote an interagency evaluation of the effectiveness of SGBV prevention measures in country programmes where these have been introduced.

Other issues

46. There are a number of other protection related issues which should not go unmentioned in this report even though they do not figure as such among the terms

⁹ See United Nations Transitional Appeal for Relief and Recovery - Sierra Leone 2004, p.17.

¹⁰ See UNDAF for Sierra Leone, p.11.

¹¹ See Reintegration programmes for refugees in South East Asia - Lessons learned from UNHCR's experience, p.79, recommendation 20.

of reference of this evaluation and hence were not subject to specific attention during the field visits. These include

- measures undertaken by UNHCR and the Government to allow returning refugees to make use of their civic right to vote by registering as late as possible for the parliamentary elections of 2002; this was facilitated by a UNHCR inputs into electoral legislation and a funding contribution to the National Electoral Commission;
- UNHCR funding support for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to help it conduct sensitisation campaigns and statement taking among Sierra Leonean refugees in countries of asylum as well as Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone, and involve them in the process of the TRC;
- UNHCR cooperation with the Special Court for Sierra Leone to assist it in explaining its mandate to Sierra Leone refugees and persuade ex-combatants that they had nothing to fear from going home since the task of the Court was to prosecute only leaders responsible for war crimes; Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone were also included in these information campaigns.

47. Concerning ex-combatants it should be noted that UNHCR regretted the fact that those returnees who had previously been combatants were, as a rule, not able to benefit from the DDR programme after their return since the latter was limited to those who handed over weapons or surrendered as military units. Despite UNHCR advocacy, the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration considered such individuals as civilians and also maintained that there was no proof of their ex-combatant status. Excluding this group from the DDR programme generated resentment and was a missed opportunity since the programme might have helped in facilitating their reintegration.

48. As a matter of principle UNHCR should seek to ensure from the outset that DDR programmes take account of the needs of persons under its mandate, namely asylum seekers/refugees and returnees with an ex-combatant background. This will require DDR programmes to have a regional and cross border focus. In the light of the experience in Sierra Leone UNHCR should also seek to ensure that DDR programmes include, and provide adequate support for, the reintegration of women and children who were associated with fighting forces. Since eligibility criteria for DDR programmes are usually determined early in the peace process and with the involvement of the Security Council, DPKO and UN missions, it will be necessary for UNHCR to intervene early on at a multiplicity of levels, including in regional forums, at Headquarters level and in New York.

Best practice

9. Promoting the introduction of legislative measures and making funds available to the National Electoral Commission, to ensure that returnees have access to the electoral process.
10. Promoting inclusion of refugees and returnees in the processes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Special Court for Sierra Leone, as part of return and reconciliation initiatives.

Recommendation

6. UNHCR should seek to ensure that the assistance criteria of DDR programmes are designed to take account of the reintegration needs of all relevant categories of persons, including asylum seekers/refugees and returnees with an ex-combatant background, as well as women and children associated with fighting forces.

The repatriation operation

49. Judging by the circumstances witnessed in the field by this evaluation mission, the repatriation operation has been concluded very successfully indeed. Without the help of this programme which provided returnees with the means to transport themselves and their belongings back home and secured the rehabilitation of basic services in areas which had been all but wiped out during the war, the repatriation process would have been a very painful, difficult and lengthy process for many. The gratitude of the communities was palpable in the festive welcome the Evaluation Mission was given in many locations, and criticism of UNHCR's performance on the part of the returnees was rare.

50. The following is a brief survey of the most important issues affecting the operation as discussed during the evaluation workshop in Freetown and analysed in the UNHCR self-evaluation document.

Logistics

51. Transport and logistics represent up to 50% of total expenditure of the repatriation operation (see Annex I) . Circuitous repatriation routes, poor road conditions and the use of old trucks with high fuel consumption and repair costs were among the factors which added to the expenses. The logistics operation was, however, well organised and effective, since UNHCR was able to rely on a single implementing partner with regional responsibility covering Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. The agency concerned, GTZ, performed well and provided for a harmonised approach with near seamless cross-border movements.

Repatriation routes (see Annex D)

52. The biggest logistical difficulty that arose concerned the repatriation of refugees from Kailahun District who had fled across the Moa River into the Parrots Beak region of Guinea. In 2000 the breakdown of security in that region meant that refugees had to be moved further inland in Guinea and that the only way for them to return home was to engage in a five day journey by truck and boat. Despite the improvement in security, this longer route was maintained until January 2003 when a causeway was built across the Moa River which reduced the travel time from five days to one. The causeway was washed away by the river after only six months whereupon the longer land route was resumed once more until January 2004 when a system of canoes was introduced for the river crossing.

53. Safety concerns were a major factor in determining repatriation routes and drop off points. As explained in mass information campaigns, it was UNHCR's policy not to take returnees to areas which had not yet been declared safe for return, but to transport them to a designated drop-off point in the nearest safe area. Returnees could then decide of their own accord if they wished to proceed further and could make use of their secondary transport allowance for this purpose. The

number of drop off points was extended as more areas of origin were gradually declared safe.

54. Transport was rendered problematic by the extremely poor road conditions in Sierra Leone which slowed down the trucking movements and resulted in frequent breakdowns and high repair costs. The Government did not, as a rule, have the necessary equipment for road rehabilitation and maintenance available, and UNHCR found it to be more cost effective and efficient to have its own plant and equipment for this purpose.

55. With hindsight it would seem that a significant early investment in upgrading transportation links, including the construction of a solid causeway across the Moa River as soon as security improved, would have greatly eased the repatriation process and reduced the overall costs. In the light of this it should, in similar circumstances, be investigated whether development funding from sources such as the World Bank could be made available from the beginning of a repatriation operation so as to upgrade key repatriation routes and crossing points in a durable and professional manner. This would not only ease the logistics of the repatriation but also provide an early stimulus to the local economy by granting job opportunities and rehabilitating vital transport links. It must be recognised, however, that in many situations factors such as time constraints and security concerns will, in practice, make it difficult to secure the mobilisation of development funding for major infrastructural works.

Trucks

56. The operation showed that a regional approach to trucking management run by one implementing partner is highly beneficial since it enables easy transfer and exchange of assets and provides for a harmonised approach. The UNHCR trucking fleet, however, consisted largely of rented secondhand vehicles and has been described as outdated and insufficient in number to cope with the demands. In retrospect, it would have been more economical to procure a new fleet of trucks for the operation rather than renting secondhand vehicles since this would have reduced fuel and repair costs. Savings and efficiency gains could also have been obtained if bulk procurement of spare parts could have been undertaken at the beginning of each year but this was not possible due to lack of funds.

57. In 2002, a crisis situation arose with the influx of Liberian refugees when UNHCR did not have sufficient trucking capacity to move the refugees inland from the border while maintaining the logistics of the repatriation operation. At this point UNAMSIL agreed to support UNHCR with a fleet of some 100 trucks to assist in moving Liberian refugees and Sierra Leonean returnees from Liberia away from the border and transporting to inland destinations. While this proved to be crucial, difficulties arose on account of the military ethos of the UNAMSIL drivers, constraints on their availability, and their lack of local knowledge and language barriers. Moreover, some NGO partners felt uncomfortable about working closely with the military. UNAMSIL trucks thus could not provide a real substitute for a UNHCR fleet.

58. In future operations it is recommended that a cost-benefit analysis be undertaken prior to deciding whether to use second hand vehicles or a new fleet.

Way station management

59. Complications arose in 2002 when way stations established for the returnees in the Bo and Kenema region had to be used to accommodate newly arrived Liberian refugees and the two caseloads on occasion crossed each other in one locality. Such an eventuality had not been foreseen in contingency planning for the region. With the establishment of way stations near the border in Kailahun and Zimmi the situation improved considerably. Way stations are normally intended to accommodate only one returnee convoy in transit. As a result of unforeseen delays, unexpected new arrivals or changes in the distribution schedule of relief supplies, however, two convoys were on occasion found to overlap in one way station. To prevent overcrowding in such circumstances it was found advisable that way stations should have twice the capacity of persons expected to travel in one convoy.

Luggage and transfer of assets

60. The ability to bring as much as possible of their personal belongings with them is understandably a great priority for the returnees. To have made this possible to a considerable extent and thus facilitated their reintegration back home is certainly one of the greatest benefits of the UNHCR trucking operation.¹² Returnees in several communities visited by the Evaluation team stated, however, that they were not permitted by the Guinean authorities to take the crops they had harvested with them and that they were forced to sell them cheaply before boarding the trucks.

61. The transport capacity of trucks is one of the reasons why the returnees preferred them to any other means of transport. Repatriation by air proved to be by far the most unpopular method since the returnees were unable to pay for excess luggage and often had to sell some of their belongings for a minimal return before boarding. There were also cases where the airline did not carry all the returnees' luggage as preference was given to other commercial passengers.

62. Both with air and sea returns problems arose with tracing and identification of the returnees' luggage and a proper tagging system should have been introduced from the beginning to assist them in keeping track of their belongings.

Best practice

11. Appointing an implementing partner with the ability to cover transport and logistics in the entire area of operations.
12. Arranging overland transport with sufficient capacity to take all the refugees' personal effects.

Recommendations

7. A cost-benefit analysis should be undertaken before deciding whether to use second hand trucks or purchase a new fleet.

¹² As stated in the UNHCR returnee information leaflet, 'there is no restriction on the amount of luggage a person may take'; exception were only made for large furniture, cattle and large quantities of goods intended for business purposes which were subject to customs.

8. Efforts should be made already at the planning stage to secure the cooperation of development actors in order to upgrade repatriation routes and crossing points.
9. To cope with contingencies, way stations should have twice the capacity of persons expected per convoy.

Assistance entitlements

63. Among the model features of the Sierra Leone repatriation is the fact that parallel protection and assistance standards and criteria were adopted for both returnees and returning IDPs. Since many communities were made up of both groups, often to an almost equal extent, the adoption of an integrated approach was meaningful and fair and prevented frictions which might otherwise have arisen.

64. The downside of this was that government standards set for IDP reintegration assistance were lower, both in terms of food and non-food items, than what UNHCR would have wished to provide. Instead of food aid for a period of six months as had originally been foreseen, only a two months ration was initially provided which was subsequently increased to four months. According to the returnees even the four month ration proved to be insufficient to tide them over until their first harvest, and some groups reported having been forced to rely on wild plants and 'bush yam.' In this context it should be noted that the above cited South East Asia returnee evaluation recommends that 'in circumstances where people's livelihood depends on agricultural production' - which squarely applies to rural Sierra Leone - 'returnees require sufficient food assistance to carry them through at least one agricultural cycle.'¹³ Taking account of this UNHCR provided Laotian returnees with 18-20 months worth of rice rations and / or cash grants. This type of assistance would certainly have been warranted also in Sierra Leone where the level of rural poverty is far greater than in Laos.

65. For non-food items (NFIs), too, adopting the government's reintegration package for IDPs meant that the assistance was below standard compared to UNHCR repatriation packages in other operations and regions. It was essentially short-term and emergency focused and did not cater for real needs in devastated areas of return where adequate shelter was seriously lacking.¹⁴ As a result, numerous dwellings in areas of return are to this day covered with UNHCR plastic sheeting since the inhabitants are as yet unable to provide for more durable roofing material.

66. As returnees were found to be selling their NFIs to pay for transportation to their home areas a cash allowance was introduced to help returnees cover the cost of onward transportation from drop-off points to their final destination. This was especially helpful during the earlier stages of the repatriation when many areas were

¹³ See Reintegration programmes for refugees in South East Asia - Lessons learned from UNHCR's experience, p.71, recommendation 4.

¹⁴ The NFI package consisted of a plastic sheet, a kitchen set, a hurricane lamp, a jerry can, 3 blankets, 3 sleeping mats, a bag and bars of soap. As a response to families splitting themselves into smaller units to benefit from additional NFI packages the package was revised in 2003, with certain entitlements issued per individual and per adult, as opposed to per adult. The revised NFI scale led to the repatriation of all family members together as a unit. However, the new system did lead to some problems (although more manageable) with minors trying to falsify their ages in order to benefit from NFI items distributed per adult.

not yet declared safe for UNHCR assisted return. Over time the cash allowance had to be increased from 10,000 to 25,000 Leones (US\$4 to US\$10), but it was found that commercial vehicles followed suit by also increasing their transport costs. Moreover, some drivers refused to go to remote destinations and it is reported that in certain cases returnees had to cover the final distance on foot.

67. The experience has shown that the allowance played a vital role in providing returnees with some liquidity and thus preventing the sale of food or NFIs to obtain cash. It should therefore become a standard practice in repatriation operations. Transportation, however, should, if at all possible, be arranged in such a way as to bring returnees to their final destination (as has been the case in 2004 when safety conditions and UNHCR's improved trucking capacity made this possible). Failing that, regularised transport links should be introduced with the help of the authorities to avoid returnees being exploited by unscrupulous commercial vehicle operators.

68. The relatively low assistance standards adopted in Sierra Leone draws attention to the wide variety of assistance packages implemented in different countries and regions which appears to be determined less by the level of actual needs and more by extraneous factors such as the visibility of the operation and the funding priorities and vested interests of key players on the international scene. It may be in the interest of UNHCR and its beneficiaries to conduct a comparative study of assistance entitlements adopted in previous repatriation and reintegration operations with a view to establishing a fairer and more objective basis for the determination of assistance standards in future operations. Special attention should thereby be given also to situation of urban refugees whose reintegration needs are sometimes not sufficiently taken into account. The existence of objective criteria is likely to provide UNHCR with a stronger and more credible basis to approach donors in its funding appeals, especially if these criteria can be given the seal of approval by the Executive Committee.

Best practice

13. Introducing a cash component as part of the returnee package.
14. Transporting returnees all the way to their final destination in areas declared safe for repatriation.

Recommendation

10. UNHCR should conduct a comparative study of assistance entitlements adopted in previous repatriation and reintegration operations with a view to establishing fair and objective criteria for the determination of assistance standards in future operations of this kind; these should be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval.
11. As a matter of principle UNHCR should seek to ensure that having the same assistance entitlements for IDPs and returnees does not result in lowering standards beneath those it would normally recommend.

Registration

69. In many previous repatriation operations it was found that a reliable and well-managed refugee registration system in the country of asylum is an unavoidable precondition to keep control of the operation, establish a fair and transparent distribution system for relief items, follow up on protection cases and prevent the recycling of beneficiaries. Taking account of this, the Evaluation of the UNHCR repatriation and reintegration programme in East Timor recommended that UNHCR 'should be willing to give the utmost priority, and necessary resources, to establishing appropriate data bases.'¹⁵ In practice this is often difficult to achieve, however, as refugee registration systems in countries of asylum are, as a rule, outdated by the time repatriation takes place and affected by errors on account of unrecorded population movements and multiple registrations. Special measures are then required, such as the stringent re-registration exercise of Malian refugees in Mauritania undertaken in 1995 which resulted in reducing the number of returnee beneficiaries from 85,000 to less than half.¹⁶

70. On account of the deteriorating security situation in Guinea and Liberia a comprehensive re-registration of the refugees prior to repatriation was clearly not a feasible option. As a result, a number of problems surfaced, such as the following:

- returnees with multiple ration cards registered for repatriation several times;
- refugees who had registered in more than one camp claimed multiple benefits;
- ration cards were sold and reused by others to claim benefits;
- deceased or absent family members were replaced by other persons, including nationals of the country of asylum, to claim benefits;
- children were intentionally abandoned at the border to pose as 'Unaccompanied Minors' and be treated as vulnerable cases;

71. In several instances fraudulent claimants were intercepted by field staff who were able to recognise them but the size of the problem is difficult to quantify. The incidence of such cases could certainly have been reduced if a sound registration system with ready access for cross-checking in the country of origin could have been put into operation.

Recommendation:

12. No effort should be spared to introduce reliable refugee registration systems in countries of asylum with ready access for cross-checking in countries of origin.

¹⁵ See *Evaluation of the Repatriation and Reintegration Programme in East Timor (1999-2003)*, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit 2004, recommendation 1 which includes a detailed proposal on the establishment of such a database. The issue is also covered in some detail in the *Review of the Mali / Niger Repatriation Programme* which concludes in recommendation 3.1 that 'UNHCR should be prepared to make all necessary resources available for the conduct of registration exercises and the ongoing monitoring of refugee numbers; the investment is likely to be repaid through enhanced credibility and financial savings' (p. 26).

¹⁶ See *Review of the Mali / Niger Repatriation*, p.25.

Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVIs)

72. As noted above, arrangements were made with implementing partners to receive and support vulnerable persons such as unaccompanied minors, handicapped persons and victims of gender based violence upon arrival. Considering the lack of an adequate medical or social services infrastructure in Sierra Leone there is, however, virtually no capacity to provide long term care and follow up for them. In Kailahun District it has been observed that the difficulties they have encountered has induced many to engage in secondary migration in search for better conditions, and some are said to have returned to the country of asylum.

73. The difficulties encountered by some EVIs seem to have been compounded by the fact that, at least in the case of Guinea, the modalities and special arrangements for their repatriation were not adequately established until the end of the operation.¹⁷ There were instances of vulnerable individuals arriving without prior notification, and some refugees seem to have been under the impression that special care arrangements, including medical treatment which had been made available to them in the refugee camps, would continue to be provided by UNHCR after repatriation.

74. In the circumstances the UNHCR Office in Freetown found that EVIs should, as a rule, not be encouraged to return home if structures for their absorption and longer term care are not available. Concerning mentally ill refugees it has been agreed that they should be permitted to remain under care in Guinea until adequate facilities for them are made available in Sierra Leone. Past experience has shown, however, that leaving vulnerable refugees behind in countries of asylum when their community (and aid agencies) have departed may be ill advised and detrimental to their condition.¹⁸ There is a dilemma here which can only be resolved on a case by case basis.

Recommendation:

13. Repatriation arrangements for EVI require attention at the planning stage; a transferable database on such cases should be established in countries of asylum to facilitate follow up after repatriation; EVIs returning to countries with limited facilities should be provided with maximum assistance and counselling at the point of departure.

Mass Information Campaign

75. Already in early 2001 when the repatriation was in its early emergency phase UNHCR began mass information activities to inform refugees about conditions in areas of return and the assistance that could be made available for them. As conditions improved the information campaign was intensified with the adoption in late 2001 of a detailed strategy aiming at achieving coordinated regional information coverage through a variety of means so as to enable refugees to make an informed

¹⁷ It must be noted that this runs counter to UNHCR guidelines; as stated in the UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Handbook (1996), durable solutions for vulnerable groups 'should be identified from the early planning phases of a repatriation operation' (p.86).

¹⁸ The UNHCR Repatriation Handbook notes as a basic principle that EVIs should be not be singled out but 'kept with the family / community' (p. 95) and warns against the negative effect of vulnerable individuals being left behind (p. 86).

decision about when and where to repatriate.¹⁹ With the onset of the promoted phase of voluntary repatriation in early 2003 the range of the campaign was broadened further to achieve the widest possible coverage.

76. The most important implementing partner proved to be a Sierra Leonean radio station, the Talking Drum Studio which broadcast two 30 minute programmes per day which were also aired on local radio stations in Guinea and Liberia. In addition information leaflets, maps and videos on conditions in areas of return were widely distributed and numerous cross border information visits were organised. Since the majority of returnees were illiterate, audio-visual information means proved to be the most effective way to reach them.

77. Judging by interviews conducted with groups of returnees during the evaluation mission, the information campaign was very successful. The information provided was judged to have been helpful and accurate throughout and no complaints were heard.²⁰ As noted above, however, misunderstandings seem in certain instances to have arisen about special benefits being made available for EVIs. In order to prevent the incidence of wrong expectations it is important for information campaigns to address the situations of such categories of people in some detail. This is also noted in the UNHCR Handbook on Voluntary Repatriation which stresses that 'specific information for vulnerable groups on special arrangements made for them' should be included in information campaigns.

Best practice

15. Establishing a comprehensive regional mass information strategy using culturally appropriate means of dissemination.

Recommendation:

14. Information campaigns should provide vulnerable groups with details on the reception arrangements and conditions they are likely to encounter; in cases where the scope for such special arrangements is limited or even non-existent this should also be made explicit.

Spontaneous returnees

78. During the Evaluation Workshop in Freetown a representative of NaCSA stated that the UNHCR reintegration programme did not sufficiently address the needs of spontaneous returnees. This concerned especially those in the six border chiefdoms of Koinadugu District, one of the most impoverished in Sierra Leone, who according to NaCSA statistics number some 38,000. The evaluation mission did not proceed to this area and could therefore not verify these claims. UNHCR Freetown conducted several returnee monitoring missions to Koinadugu in late 2000 - 2001

¹⁹ The relevant strategy document (*Mass Information Campaign for Sierra Leonean Refugees and Returnees - Strategy Paper 10/11/01*) may of interest for the planning of similar information campaigns.

²⁰ The only report of a major information error which came to our notice were the erroneous radio reports on safe returnee corridors allegedly established by UNHCR in RUF controlled areas which led to unfortunate consequences (see above, p. 25); this report did not originate from UNHCR. Subsequently UNHCR undertook mass information campaigns to warn refugees of the risks involved in crossing RUF controlled areas.

when it was an enclave surrounded by RUF territory, but lack of human resources precluded further action in this location which harbours only a limited number of registered returnees. With an increase in protection staff in 2004, UNHCR is planning to resume missions to this area.

Recommendation:

15. The number and location of spontaneous returnees should be included among the criteria used to decide upon the operational areas of UNHCR's reintegration programme.

Reintegration assistance: approaches and strategies

79. The UNHCR reintegration programme for returnees in Sierra Leone is part of the wider attempt by UN agencies, bilateral donors and NGOs to support the government's reconstruction efforts. As documented in the UN Consolidated Interagency Appeals for Sierra Leone which have been issued annually since 2001, all major UN agencies have participated in this programme, with the largest contributions provided by WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF. Perhaps the most important bilateral donor was the British Government which provided a major input in the DDR programme through its Department for International Development (DFID).

80. According to all accounts received, including testimonies from donor representatives interviewed in Freetown, the UN system worked together in a highly effective, flexible and mutually supportive manner. Among the reasons most often cited for this remarkable performance are the 'appointment of very good agency heads' and an integrated leadership brought about by the fact that the functions of UN Resident Representative, Humanitarian Coordinator and DSRSG were occupied by one person who enjoyed the support of all concerned.

81. In reference to this positive experience, the 2004 UN Transitional Appeal for Relief and Recovery in Sierra Leone lists 'effective coordination and collaboration' as the most important achievement of the previous years' activities.²¹ Among the fruits of this collaboration are three which deserve to be highlighted here since UNHCR appears to have played a significant role in bringing them about: the establishment of an integrated information management system, the establishment of an joint planning mechanism to smooth the transition from relief to development, and the adoption of a common approach aimed at maximising community ownership and participation in recovery interventions.

The Sierra Leone Information System (SLIS)

82. Having in previous reintegration operations, notably in Mali, experienced the benefits of making detailed information on assistance activities readily available to partner agencies, the UNHCR Representative in Freetown proposed in early 2000 that UNHCR should provide funding and expertise to help in setting up an information management system which would be at the disposal of all agencies involved in the reconstruction effort. The proposal was widely supported, technical input was obtained from UNHCR Headquarters and the so-called 'SLIS' started operating as of March 2001, jointly funded by UNHCR and ECHO.

83. Owing to the lack of suitable government information management facilities, the SLIS was located in the Humanitarian Information Centre run by OCHA which subsequently assumed responsibility for maintaining and updating the system. In the initial stages its main objective was to provide data at chiefdom level on population, health, education and food supplies as well as to promote the use of

²¹ See p.9.

common information standards. SLIS went on to provide a range of mapping products used to enhance analysis and decision making and became instrumental in assisting the National Recovery Committee to monitor recovery activities. It must be noted that all this could not have been achieved without the readiness of agencies in Sierra Leone to share their information by agreeing to make it available to others through the joint information system. Such openness cannot always be taken for granted and should serve as a model for other operations.

84. SLIS might have been even more effective as a planning tool if it had been used more widely also in the provinces. Its impact there has been described as negligible and little reference was made to it during the field mission undertaken for this evaluation²². Criticisms have also been made of the quality and reliability of the input and the lack of adequate capacity of the system to analyse the data. In the course of 2004 the by now very extensive database is being transferred to the Government where it will become part of the Development Assistance Coordination Office with the support of OCHA and UNDP. The intention is to make it into a comprehensive information system covering all aspects of humanitarian and development work, producing analytical data and strengthening local and central Government information management capacity.

Best practice

16. Introducing a joint interagency information management system from the start of the operation to ensure timely collection and transmission of data.

Recommendation

16. Interagency information management systems should not remain a centralised planning tool but be designed in such a way as to make them into a useful field-oriented resource.

Transition and the 4Rs Framework

85. Realising that the longer term needs of returnees in post-conflict situations require innovative measures which bridge the gap between relief and development, the High Commissioner for Refugees in 2002 resumed the dialogue with UNDP and the World Bank which had begun some years ago in the context of the Brookings initiative, with a view to identifying a new formula that would ensure a smooth transition from repatriation to reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The resulting concept, known as the '4Rs', became the cornerstone of UNHCR's Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern which was published in May 2003. The document concerned describes it as 'an overarching framework for institutional collaboration' requiring the strong engagement of the UN Country Team as well as bilateral and multilateral donors, with 'the government assuming ownership of the entire process.'²³

²² The limited information flow from the capital to districts and chiefdoms has been frequently observed (see also Annex F, p. 93).

²³ See *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern*, UNHCR Geneva, May 2003, p.19. A detailed description of the 4Rs framework has since appeared in the *UNHCR Handbook for*

86. Together with Eritrea, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone was selected as a pilot country to test the new approach. As a result, a high level UN Inter-Agency mission visited Sierra Leone in May 2003 to assess how the agencies of the UNCT could best join forces to enhance the transition and recovery process. The resulting mission report provides an insightful analysis of the situation and many of its recommendations remain pertinent to this day. Several are discussed in more detail below, and the report has therefore been added to this evaluation for easy reference (see Annex F).

87. Perhaps the most significant practical outcome of the Inter-Agency mission was the rapid establishment by UNDP and UNHCR of a Transitional Support Team (TST) consisting of a Coordinator attached to the UNDP Office in Freetown and three Field Officers posted in the UNHCR Offices in Kambia, Kono and Kailahun. Additional Field Officers are to be posted in the remaining nine districts of Sierra Leone. While administratively supported by UNDP this is a UN interagency team tasked to support the transition from relief to development by assisting government authorities in the planning process and helping to identify needs and priorities for the purpose of generating integrated strategies in the context of the 4Rs initiative.

88. TST staff thus helped to organise workshops at district level, bringing together UN Agencies, NGOs and the local District Recovery Committees which include representation from the line ministries. The aim was to review activities undertaken so far and work towards a joint district recovery strategy. The extensive report on the first one of these which was held in Kambia already in September 2003 makes impressive reading and illustrates the benefit of an interactive planning process convened at provincial level.²⁴ Continuity is being ensured through 4R technical committees comprising UN agencies, key NGOs and bilateral donors which meet on a monthly basis and provide an additional planning resource for the local Government.

89. In establishing the 4Rs process in Sierra Leone UNHCR and UNDP have both benefited from funding support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) which has established a separate budget line for development work in situations of transition. As part of the cooperation between the two agencies UNHCR agreed in 2004 to make part of its NORAD funds available to UNDP to establish microfinance projects for sustainable development in Kambia where UNHCR is due to phase out by the end of 2004.

90. Currently the Field Officers of the TST are playing a significant role in assisting the Sierra Leonean authorities manage a transition process of their own, namely the introduction of a more decentralised form of local government which began with the election of District Councils in May 2004. The Councils are meant to take the lead in regional development by replacing the now defunct District Recovery Committees. The new coordinating mechanism required for this purpose was designed with the help of a recently convened series of workshops organised by the TST Officers in Kambia, Kono and Kailahun District.

Repatriation and Reintegration Activities, Geneva, May 2004, see Module 1. See also B. Lippman, 'The 4Rs: the way ahead', in *Forced Migration*, September 2004, p. 9.

²⁴ See 4Rs / District Recovery Workshop (DRC) Report (10–11 September 2003), UNHCR Kambia, Sierra Leone.

91. Clearly the establishment of the TST team has been of considerable use in bringing development actors together at provincial level and strengthening the planning capacity of the local government. As will be discussed in more detail below, however, their input in the transition process could be further enhanced by giving special attention to ensuring the sustainability of the UNHCR reintegration programme in the post-phase out stage.

Best practice

17. Assigning a team of UNDP administered staff to UNHCR field offices to assist local authorities and the UNCT in planning and managing the transition from relief to development.

The community empowerment approach

92. Due to the effects of the war, basic government services were virtually non-existent in most returnee areas and the infrastructure was severely damaged. The commencement of reintegration programmes as soon as an area was declared 'safe for resettlement' was therefore a critical necessity to enable returning IDPs and refugees to begin rebuilding their lives. The proliferation of visibility signposts on project sites erected by donor agencies in key areas of return in Kailahun, Kambia and Kono Districts bears witness to the sizeable reintegration input provided by the international community.

93. The UNHCR programme was a major factor in this joint response. Two very different stages may be distinguished, however. The first was characterised by a top-down approach in which UNHCR's implementing partners were given considerable leeway to decide on the type and location of projects to be undertaken. Achievements were considerable, with some 550 medium-scale projects implemented in a large range of sectors in the course of 2001 and 2002. However, UNHCR staff found that the management of the programme was too centralised, with local communities and even UNHCR field staff not being sufficiently involved in deciding on the type of input to be provided. As a result the priorities did not always reflect those of the local communities, a situation compounded by the weak monitoring capacity of UNHCR which at that time suffered from a serious staffing shortage in Sierra Leone (see below).

94. Recalling among others the positive experience of the UNHCR reintegration programme in Mali²⁵ and the more recent attempts at enhancing community participation in the Liberia reintegration programme implemented in 1997-2000²⁶, UNHCR staff-members thus favoured a change of approach in Sierra Leone. In the Mali programme returnee communities had been allocated funds which they were able to use for a range of purposes of their choice in accordance with basic project guidelines. This brought about a decentralised decision making process as committees set up by the communities themselves were empowered to use the funds in accordance with their own priorities. In order to develop an approach of this kind

²⁵ See *Review of Mali / Niger Repatriation and Reintegration Programme*, UNHCR 1998, p.33-34. Both the UNHCR Representative in Sierra Leone and the Head of the UNHCR Sub-Office in Kenema had been involved in setting up the reintegration programme in Mali.

²⁶ As recorded in *The WHALE - Wisdom We Have Acquired From the Liberia Experience*, UNHCR, 2001.

in Sierra Leone UNHCR commissioned a study from a local consultant which resulted in a detailed strategy to set up what came to be known as Community Empowerment Projects (CEPs).²⁷

95. CEPs were introduced as of mid 2003 and represent the second, altogether different phase of the UNHCR reintegration programme. According to the UNHCR Guidelines on the subject (see Annex G), financial envelopes are allocated per chiefdom the utilisation of which is decided by local communities, subject to certain conditions which stipulate the participation of the community in project implementation through the provision of unskilled labour and local materials. In cooperation with NaCSA, the UNHCR implementing partner has the task of sensitising and training community members, supervising and monitoring the implementation and providing financial control. Implementing partners have been selected to cover designated geographical regions but are not entitled to decide on sector preferences. Between 2003 and 2004 some 250 multi-sectoral CEPs were implemented in the four Districts where UNHCR is operational.

96. The community empowerment approach proposed by UNHCR found favour with the UN Country team as a whole and was included as one of the guiding principles in the 2004 UN Transitional Appeal for Relief and Recovery where CEP implementation is described as a joint UNHCR-UNDP activity.²⁸ The approach is also in close agreement with the Community-driven Development (CDD) concept which the World Bank intends to introduce as part of its longer term development programmes in Sierra Leone. In preparation for this the Bank in 2003 commissioned a detailed study on CDD implementation in Sierra Leone which contains a number of observations of relevance also to UNHCR's CEPs²⁹. Conversely, UNHCR's experience with the CEPs may well be of some relevance to the forthcoming World Bank funded CDDs.

97. The following section of this evaluation attempts to assess the impact of UNHCR's reintegration programme. The findings must, however, be treated as preliminary, also with regard to the Community Empowerment Projects. Many of these were only recently established or in the process of being introduced and it was clearly too early to come to any definitive conclusions on their viability and sustainability. The true impact of these reintegration measures can only be assessed once some more time has elapsed and the projects have been allowed to run independently. This makes it all the more important that the detailed inter-agency review of the Community Empowerment projects in Sierra Leone which has been under discussion for some time should go ahead as planned. Perhaps the most opportune period for such a review to take place would be in the second half 2005, prior the phase out of the UNHCR programme. By that time the CEPs would have been running for a period of between one and two years, which would make it possible to assess the true impact and durability of the measures undertaken.

²⁷ Z. Bangora, *Community Empowerment Consultancy Report for UNHCR*, UNHCR Freetown, 2003.

²⁸ See p.17, also 39-40.

²⁹ P. Richards, K. Bah, J. Vincent, *The Social Assessment Study: Community-driven Development and Social Capital in Post-war Sierra Leone*, November 2003.

Best practice:

18. Empowering returnee communities to decide on assistance priorities and to participate actively in their implementation.

Recommendation:

17. A detailed inter-agency review of UNHCR's Community Empowerment Projects should be undertaken in the latter half of 2005, with particular focus on assessing their sustainability.

Reintegration assistance: an impact assessment

98. During its field trip the Evaluation Mission visited over 100 UNHCR reintegration projects in Kambia, Kailahun, Kono and Pujehun Districts. As indicated in the list provided in Annex H, the projects covered a range of different sectors and involved a variety of implementing partners. It should be noted that this list does not include the many water and sanitation projects witnessed by the Evaluation Team in areas of return as these would have been too numerous to mention. Suffice it to say that in virtually every location visited, stand pipes or wells had been installed or rehabilitated since the beginning of the repatriation operation in order to provide returnees with access to safe drinking water. The importance of this input for the health and well-being of the returnee communities cannot be overstated. The Evaluation also witnessed the fruits of major investments in the education sector involving the reconstruction of numerous primary and several secondary schools in areas of return which was undertaken as part of the first phase of the reintegration programme.

99. Concerning the CEPs implemented during the second phase of the programme, it was clear that these were a new venture for all parties concerned and that everyone, including the local communities, was involved in a learning curve. UNHCR Field Offices in different Districts had developed different approaches to their implementation of which the most sophisticated and well documented was perhaps the one found in Kailahun. It involves a comprehensive set of procedures, with each stage clearly defined and supplied with reporting forms and procedural guidelines. Subject to a more detailed review, it may be said that the administrative procedures for CEPs developed in Kailahun have model character and deserve to be examined for replication in other situations.³⁰

100. As a matter of principle it can be said that the field visits confirmed the value of the CEP approach. Considering the neglect suffered by rural areas in the pre-war period, a neglect which was one of the contributing factors to the conflict, the attempt to involve rural communities directly in the decision making on aid provided by international donors and to give them a sense of ownership by enabling them to participate directly in bringing the project to fruition, undoubtedly sets a positive signal. Judging by the comments made by members of the community interviewed during the mission and by the collective action witnessed on the ground it seemed clear that community involvement in the reintegration projects helped to build confidence and foster social cohesion, quite apart from the benefits brought about by the project itself.

101. The situation was not as positive in all CEPs, however, and the Evaluation Mission noticed certain problem areas which require attention if the concept is to be replicated in other countries. The issues involved concern (1) the nature of the

³⁰ It is set out in a document entitled *PRVAIMEB Process in Community Empowerment Programme Implementation* by J.L.Karmacharya (UNHCR Kailahun, 2004). PRVAIMEB stands for the implementation stages covering Proposal Submission, Review, Verification, Approval, Monitoring and Evaluation and Benefit.

communities to be targeted, (2) the technical requirements of the implementing partners, (3) the capacity building requirements of the communities, (4) the role of the government counterparts and (5) enhanced interagency cooperation to enhance the sustainability of the projects.

Special groups and the targeting of CEPs

102. As stated in the UNHCR Project Guidelines on the subject, the aim of CEPs is to empower 'different groups within communities - especially women, children, adolescents and older people' who are priorities for UNHCR, by means of a 'participatory procedure in decision making with regards to funds and other resources available to them'. The reality in Sierra Leone shows, however, that this entirely laudable aim - to empower the traditionally weak and excluded - cannot be fully attained through the manner in which most of these projects are currently implemented. This does not mean that the Sierra Leonean CEPs do not benefit this category of people; many of them do, as perhaps best illustrated by the CEPs involving the erection of 'community barriers'³¹ which are used by young and old, women and men.

103. The problem resides in the fact that in most cases the sensitisation and decision making process concerning the CEPs is geographically focused and relies on traditional leaders at chiefdom and village level, as well as on existing decision making bodies such as the Village Development Committees (VDC). This means that the actual decision on the type of CEP to be selected is often not taken by 'different groups within communities' but by the community leaders who are traditionally elderly and male. The risk of this happening was identified in the CDC study commissioned by the World Bank which warns that communities may 'decide priorities undemocratically' and that there may be strong pressure 'from powerful lineages and closed associations.'³² In certain cases, particularly in Chiefdom Headquarter towns, it was evident that paramount chiefs or those associated with them were either attempting to control the project or were in the process of undermining it because they felt no benefits would accrue to them. What was very much in evidence in these cases was a lack of trust between different groups within the communities concerned which sometimes led to accusations of financial impropriety. Generally speaking these negative examples - which were the exception rather than the rule - show that in a post-conflict situation when community cohesion is fragile CEPs can become a source of dispute between different parties seeking to exert control. Caution, sensitivity and insider knowledge is therefore required of the Implementing Partner, and to maintain trust it is absolutely vital to ensure complete transparency of financial and procurement transactions.

104. Judging by the situation in Sierra Leone it seems that the best way to ensure that excluded groups - especially women and youths - are truly 'empowered' is to enable them to become decision makers in their own right by targeting them from the outset. That this can be successfully undertaken is shown by the CEPs in Kambia

³¹ 'Community barriers' are largish roofed structures which serve as village meeting places for a variety of purposes (ritual gatherings, election rallies, dances etc.).

³² The WHALE document also notes that community leaders are often adult males 'unwilling or unable to represent the interests of women, girls, boys and other social groups' and concludes that 'special efforts must be made to gain access to these often disempowered groups' (see para. 41).

nearly half of which benefit women or women's associations. This commendable ratio is most probably no coincidence but reflects a conscious decision on the part of UNHCR staff in Kambia to favour CEPs of this type, notwithstanding the fact that the official guidelines state that there should be 'no sector preferences.' Many of the women's projects in Kambia are run by competent and determined individuals; in a minority of cases, however, it looks as though the women had been used as a front to attract the project, with men directing things in the background. This is a sobering reminder that such targeting also requires caution and must be based on a sound understanding of community dynamics.

105. In this context it is remarkable to note that there appears to be a certain lack of correlation between the concerns of UNHCR Protection and Community Services staff in the field offices on the one hand and the CEP projects on the other. With the notable exception once more of Kambia, very few attempts appear to have been made to target CEPs consciously at communities housing clusters of vulnerable returnees such as orphans, widows or unaccompanied elderly persons, despite the fact that such cases are known to the Office. This means that the CEPs have not really lived up to the expectation of becoming, as stated in the Project Guidelines, 'the protection interface between UNHCR and people of concern in returnee areas'.

Recommendation:

18. Community Empowerment funds should not be apportioned only on a geographical basis; instead, part of these resources should be set aside specifically for the benefit of certain categories of persons such as women, youths and vulnerable groups. Community-wide projects may be introduced in the initial phase, followed by such more targeted initiatives which take account of UNHCR's protection concerns. This type of targeting must go hand in hand with careful sensitisation directed at the traditional leaders so to enlist their support and ensure that they do not feel undermined by the process

Technical and sectoral constraints

106. The lack of sector preferences in CEPs means that implementing partners are required to work in whatever sector the community may wish to choose, whether they have expertise in this field or not. To offset potential problems, the CEP rules allow communities to use part of their funds to pay for technical advice if needed. This has rarely been done, however, because communities are generally not aware of their limitations while implementing partners have been found to lack experience and field staff with technical competence to cover the full range of sectors required. As a result, the performance of implementing partners has varied considerably, reflecting their relative strengths and weaknesses. In certain cases implementing partners still seemed to attempt to influence the choice of projects in accordance with their special skills.

107. This situation has resulted in the technical deficiencies witnessed in a number of CEPs, such as poor buildings standards, infringement of health guidelines in the construction of sanitary facilities and faulty installation or maintenance of machinery. In some cases these short-comings were so serious as to ground the entire CEP from the outset. In other cases lack of technical monitoring allowed communities to expand buildings beyond the initially agreed size, with the result

that resources ran out and the construction could not be fully completed. The limited financial envelope per project (15,000,000 Leones or US \$ 6,237) also means that certain buildings cannot be constructed in keeping with government standards; community barriers, for instance, are left without toilets. Micro-credit CEPs were also found to be a matter of concern. The difficulty of implementing such projects is well known and it should only be attempted by agencies with a proven track record in this field. A number of micro-credit CEPs currently run by non-specialist implementing partners seem to be destined for an early demise.

108. Another technical aspect concerns the nature of the project as such. In Kambia, for instance, a considerable number of gara tying and dying projects have been set up but there was no evidence of market research to ascertain the commercial viability of having so many projects of this type in one area. The establishment of health, education and agricultural projects are normally subject to approval from line ministries, but sometimes this approval seemed to be more of a formality and did not necessarily mean that the project fitted into a wider governmental plan for the region. Allowing communities to set their own priorities thus carries the risk of producing a somewhat random agglomeration of sectoral inputs whose longer term viability may be open to question. A potential contradiction therefore exists between the philosophy of community empowerment projects with its emphasis on decision making at local level and a development rationale which demands that sectoral priorities be determined on the basis of integrated regional planning approaches.

109. In this context it is of some interest to take note of the comments on participatory planning approaches in the UNHCR Evaluation of Reintegration in South East Asia. While recognising that participatory methods can help identify projects that are relevant to the needs of local people the report points out that the sustainability of reintegration projects depends rather more on 'the quality of technical planning and construction' and the availability of governmental or other resources for maintenance and repairs.³³ The fact that neither is fully assured in quite a number of Sierra Leonean CEPs must be a matter of concern.

Recommendation:

19. Careful thought should be given at the planning stage to the technical nature of CEPs and the technical capacity of the implementing partners. They should either be allowed to specialise on a limited range of sectors or be supplied with additional funds to recruit technical expertise in key sectors. Line ministries should be more closely involved in vetting project selection on the basis of a wider regional development strategy. Micro-credit projects should only be implemented by specialised agencies.

Capacity building needs

110. One of the aims of the CEPs is to enable local people to run their projects themselves through the formation of Project Management Committees (PMCs) which take part in planning, implementing and evaluating the project and assume responsibility for drafting project documents, storing materials, keeping records as well as collecting and distributing revenue. Making such a concept work in a rural

³³ See p. 81.

Sierra Leone where formal education is often less than rudimentary and illiteracy is the norm requires a more sustained capacity building approach and a longer time scale than is currently the case. In particular, close and regular monitoring by implementing partners is required, which is difficult to ensure considering the far flung project locations, the poor road conditions and the limited number of skilled staff.

111. Many of the CEPs are de facto small businesses (training centres, rice mills, retail outlets, etc.) which are collectively managed on a voluntary basis by their PMCs and whose survival depends on sound financial management and cost recovery. Even apparently straightforward construction projects such as community barriers have a business component since the proceeds from their use is intended to pay for upkeep and maintenance. The capacity of the PMCs – many of which depend on one or two individuals who are literate – to undertake this successfully and engage in it voluntarily in the longer term seemed in many cases open to question. This is all the more so because the training the PMC members presently receive from their implementing partners is very brief and general and does not seem to equip them sufficiently with the key skills required for their task, namely numeracy, accountancy and small business management.³⁴

112. The 4Rs Interagency Mission Report mentioned above noted the need to increase the self-reliance capacity of local communities through ‘business support centres, extension outreach and learning centres for skills development’ and suggested that these could ‘build on the existing community empowerment programmes’ (p. 3). The situation on the ground shows, however, that skills development opportunities had best be provided in preparation for or, at least, simultaneously with community empowerment projects. Adequate training is particularly difficult to achieve because the short time scale of CEPs dictated by the UNHCR project cycle does not allow for community sensitisation and capacity building of PMC members at the level and of the duration required. In fact, many CEPs started late because sensitisation took longer than expected and the projects had to be completed in a hurry, which may have been detrimental to the quality of the output.³⁵

113. Moreover, the very fact of working in a PMC does not appear to be a familiar notion in the rural areas. In this respect it was very interesting to find that the most successful PMCs were those staffed with individuals who had received training in refugee camps (primarily in Guinea) or who had worked with NGOs in the camps and were therefore acquainted with the whole concept of ‘project management’ and the administrative tasks involved. The phenomenon was widespread and included women’s groups who had been helped to establish small businesses in the camps and wanted to continue working together after repatriation, as well as craftsmen and teachers who had acquired their skills in exile and now put them to use in the implementation of CEPs.

³⁴ In one CEP retail outlet, PMC members were found to be selling rice at purchase price without taking into account the transportation cost, and their capital was being rapidly depleted.

³⁵ An OXFAM report on CEPs notes that ‘the CEP methodology is inappropriate for the short timeframe of the programme. Community development cannot be achieved within an emergency funding window’ (*Strengthening Rural Communities through Public Health, Empowerment and Activities and Stronger Women’s Organisations*, OXFAM, 2003). In 2003 OXFAM had acted as one of UNHCR’s implementing partners in Kailahun but its projects were delayed and its contract was not extended.

114. It has, in fact, been repeatedly observed that education, training and capacity building programmes administered in refugee camps can play a crucial role in preparing the ground for successful reintegration and community empowerment after repatriation. The South East Asia evaluation notes that 'UNHCR can promote sustainable reintegration outcomes by (...) providing adult literacy, vocational training and commercial and employment opportunities for camp residents whenever feasible.'³⁶ The document rightly concludes that 'UNHCR's capacity to support sustainable reintegration outcomes depends on the degree to which staff are able to plan, finance and coordinate activities that consider refugee migration as a continuum spanning flight, camp residency, repatriation and reintegration.'³⁷ One way in which this can be successfully achieved is by establishing more direct linkages between refugee and returnee assistance projects aimed at the same group of beneficiaries. In Sierra Leone, a pertinent example is the *Refugee to Return Programme* currently implemented by ARC which provides financial services to returnees with a positive credit history in their country of asylum.³⁸

115. In order to strengthen existing Sierra Leonean CEPs involving small businesses and increase their chances of sustainability, arrangements should be made for them to be closely monitored beyond the formal end of the project period (ideally with a visit every second week involving financial advice and control). Under the 2005 programme funds should be made available to provide PMC members with additional training, both through convening special workshops and through enabling them to attend existing adult education and capacity building initiatives. Women in particular would benefit from this, considering the high illiteracy rate among them. It would put their 'empowerment' on firmer foundations and may enable them to participate more effectively not only in their own PMCs but also in other development initiatives in their area.

Recommendations:

20. Assistance programmes in refugee camps should include training and education programmes designed to facilitate repatriation and reintegration; direct linkages should be established between refugee and returnee assistance projects benefiting the same group of beneficiaries.
21. In CEP projects close attention should be given from the outset to the training requirements of PMC members; as a matter of principle, training should be provided **before** the project commences rather than after completion, even if this may require the project implementation period to be extended.
22. CEPs should be designed so that part of the proceeds can be used as financial remuneration for PMC members involved in managing business transactions since these individuals cannot be expected to make their time available free of

³⁶ Evaluation of Reintegration Programmes in South East Asia, p. 69. See also the lasting impact of women's training programmes in Mauritania described in Review of the Mali / Niger Repatriation and Reintegration Programme, p. 35-36.

³⁷ See p.83. In similar vein the WHALE document recommends that 'every effort should be made to apply the principle of community involvement to UNHCR's assistance programmes in countries of asylum' (see para. 44).

³⁸ This programme 'links financial services to refugees in their country of refuge with those in their country of return through a transferable credit history methodology' (T. Nourse, ARC). Similar linkages could also be attempted in other sectors, notably shelter construction, agriculture, health and education.

charge indefinitely. This would also introduce an incentive and an element of accountability into the management of such projects.

23. Under its 2005 programme in Sierra Leone, UNHCR should aim to provide selected PMC members with additional training, both through convening special workshops, enabling them to attend existing capacity building initiatives, and liaising with NaCSA and UNDP to provide for longer term coverage of training needs.

Government structures in transition

116. While recognising the key role district government and line ministries would have to play in the future management of development activities in their respective regions, the 4Rs Interagency Mission Report of 2003 points to a number of obstacles which would have to be overcome in order to make local government structures fully functional. Among these are lack of resources, limited technical capacity and a lack of clarity in the respective interrelationships between different actors such as NaCSA, the line ministries and the Paramount Chiefs.³⁹ Since the report was written some progress has been achieved. As mentioned above, district council elections have now been held and district coordinating mechanisms have been set up, notably with the help of TSTs.

117. Many concerns raised in the report, however, remain to be addressed. While the situation differs somewhat from district to district, line ministries are generally still weak in rural areas and their input in terms of funding, staffing and technical support cannot be relied upon to improve significantly in the near future. The newly elected district counsellors are not yet operational and appear to lack the funding, offices, mobility or institutional clout to be effective in any real sense of the word. This means that NaCSA still remains the best resourced agency and, as noted in the 4Rs report, continues to assume a 'de facto leadership' despite the fact that it was only meant to be a transitional, coordinating institution expected to phase out as line ministries and district counsellors assume their responsibility.

118. The continuing lack of capacity and clarity of local government structures means that future governmental responsibility for the CEP legacy (upkeep, maintenance and ownership of assets, sustainability of enterprises, management of training centres and agricultural projects etc.) is less than clear, with the exception of health and educational facilities that are under the tutelage of their respective Ministries. Staffing and maintenance even of these, however, is not assured in all cases. In this context it must be recognised that despite the recent election of District Councils the real power in rural areas may continue to reside with the Paramount Chiefs who are elected for life. They and their retinue of village chiefs, section chiefs and other traditional elders represent 'the community' in the eyes of people, and it seems more than likely that the final decision about what happens to the assets financed by the CEPs – in particular the buildings and the equipment installed therein – will be theirs, especially when it comes to determining what should happen to these assets in case a CEP fails. The possibility that some of the weaker projects (including those run by women) may be appropriated by them once UNHCR and its implementing partner leave is not to be discounted.

³⁹ See Annex F, p.91.

119. Considering the complex transitional state of local government in Sierra Leone, the absence of strong and competent local counterparts at the present time, as well as the limited capacity of many PMCs, it must be accepted that a significant number of Community Empowerment Projects will require guidance, monitoring and technical support from outside implementing partners for much longer than anticipated. Only in this way can it be ensured that they make a truly durable impact on the development of their local communities and become, as intended, seed-beds of positive change. It is recommended that UNHCR should take account of this in its exit strategy and ensure that such partnerships are securely in place before it withdraws.

120. From a planning perspective this means that in countries with weak post-conflict institutions UNHCR should give priority to implementing partners that have the intention, the technical capacity and the funding to remain in the area and continue their input well beyond the phase-out of UNHCR.⁴⁰ In Sierra Leone this appears to apply only to GTZ and Peace Winds Japan; the exact nature of their future input and its link-up with the CEPs is, however, yet to be clarified. From a capacity building point of view GTZ has the added advantage of utilising local NGOs as subsidiary partners, though the competence of these local agencies has not always been up to standard.

121. A positive example of how long term continuity can ensure a successful transition from relief to development is provided by the 'Programme Mali Nord' which began in 1993 as an emergency assistance and conflict resolution programme financed by GTZ in the Timbuktu region of Mali. In the period 1996-99 it acted as local implementing partner for the UNHCR returnee assistance programme and, after UNHCR's withdrawal, remained in the area with focus on employment creation, food security and education. By 2004 the project had helped to double the area for irrigated agriculture in the region, allowing for an additional harvest of 30,000 tons of rice.⁴¹

Recommendation:

24. In implementing reintegration programmes priority should be given to implementing partners with the capacity, the intention and the funding to remain in the area after the phase-out of UNHCR

Enhanced interagency cooperation needed

122. The UNHCR Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities describes the 4Rs concept as 'a framework for institutional collaboration for the implementation of reintegration operations.'⁴² As described above, such a framework has indeed been successfully established in Sierra Leone where institutional collaboration has proved fruitful, particularly at central level. It was all the more surprising for the Evaluation Team to find that, in practical terms, interagency

⁴⁰ In the same vein the South East Asia Evaluation notes that project sustainability may depend on UNHCR's ability to 'engage other organisations to carry on projects where government capacity is weak' (see p.81).

⁴¹ See H.Papendieck and B.Rockloh Papendiek, *Programm Mali Nord - Progress report no. 20*, Berlin, October 2004.

⁴² See module 1, p.8

collaboration has played a very limited role in implementing the UNHCR CEP programme and ensuring its sustainability and effectiveness as a transitional tool. It is symptomatic that the UNHCR CEP guidelines refer to interagency cooperation and the 4Rs in their preamble but make no further mention thereof when defining the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved (see Annex G). It is therefore unclear who has the responsibility to seek cooperation with development actors in the context of the CEPs, what the aim of this cooperation should be and how it should be organised. This lack of clarity in the guidelines reflects the situation encountered in the field.

123. TST staff posted in field locations are the most evident point of linkage between the UNHCR programme and the wider concerns of the UN Country Programme. The TST's terms of reference, however, do not foresee any role for them in monitoring or following up upon UNHCR's CEPs or in making plans for those CEPs likely to require continuing attention once UNHCR phases out. The TST staff's lack of involvement in the CEP process is quite deliberate and relies on the assumption that the new District Councils and District Coordinating Mechanisms will follow up on UNHCR's CEP projects in the context of their role as leaders of development activities in their respective regions. As noted above, however, local government in Sierra Leone is still in a state of flux; the District Councillors are not yet operational and the Coordinating Mechanisms, while agreed in principle, are not yet in place. A great deal of time is still required until these structures will have the funding and the implementing capacity to become effective in any real sense; moreover, the development challenges which confront them are enormous and attending to needy CEPs may not be a priority concern.

124. UNDP and the World Bank have funding for community development work but at the time of the evaluation team's visit it was not yet clear if and how their programmes will link up with the UNHCR CEP input, and whether continuity will be maintained by employing the same implementing partners. As a result of this situation, no concrete plans were in existence to ensure the maintenance of, or the follow up upon, the substantial reintegration input UNHCR had provided. Considering the fragility of quite a number of CEPs, particularly those involving businesses such as training centres and retail outlets as well as those requiring the maintenance and servicing of machinery or equipment, this was found to be a matter of concern.

125. In this context, special consideration should be given to longer term needs in Kambia District where UNHCR and its implementing partner are due to phase out by the end of 2004 when several CEPs in the District will only just have been set up and may still be affected by teething troubles. Another source of special concern is the District of Pujehun, a much neglected part of the country in which UNHCR has been virtually alone in supplying reintegration assistance, unlike the other returnee district which have been, and continue to be, serviced by many other agencies. If UNHCR pulls out of Pujehun without a successor not only will the longer term viability of some of the CEPs in the area be open to question, but many other pressing needs are likely to remain unmet.

126. Unresolved questions of sustainability do not, however, only relate to the UNHCR CEP programme. Under the first phase of the reintegration programme, for instance, numerous wells and pumps were installed in Kailahun District and pump

attendants were trained among the local community. This system has now been in operation for a couple of years but to date no plans have been made to secure the supply of spare parts, the technical maintenance and the regular chlorination of the wells. Another, rather different example concerns the eucalyptus forests planted in Pujahun under a UNHCR funded environmental protection project. The Evaluation Mission found the local villagers dismayed at the actions of the Implementing Partner who planted the trees two years ago and then disappeared, allegedly without explaining the purpose of what seemed to them a useless crop; the plantation is now neglected and overgrown, and the villagers are not sure what to do about it. The project would clearly have benefited from community involvement and provides a simple illustration of the fact that development work is a long term inter-active process which requires more than a one-time input of resources.

127. The examples cited above indicate that there is a need for UNHCR to engage, as part of its phase-out strategy, in a detailed review of its programme in order to determine what actions may be required to make it more sustainable and firmly integrated in a wider process leading towards rehabilitation and reconstruction. The following types of action might usefully be undertaken for this purpose:

- linking CEP training workshops in carpentry and gara tying and dieing with micro-credit programmes so that trainees can obtain loans to purchase starter kits; no arrangements for this exist at present and the lack of access to starter kits virtually precludes gainful employment for the trainees;
- setting up workshops to maintain and service agricultural machinery such as rice mills and cassava grinding machines purchased under CEPs;
- setting up workshops to maintain and service pumps and sanitary facilities established under the reintegration programme;
- providing additional training for PMC members, including facilitating contacts between different CEPs so that PMC members can learn from each other's experience;
- ensuring that agricultural, environmental or commercial projects financed by UNHCR become part of a wider network of similar initiatives that mutually reinforce each other.

128. For the purpose of future CEP programmes it is recommended that the UNHCR CEP guidelines be reviewed in close consultation with development actors in order to clarify their role in the design, funding and implementation of these programmes. The experience in Sierra Leone shows that CEPs have longer term implications; they require an extended time frame to allow for proper sensitisation and training of community members and may need an extended period of guidance, monitoring and support after completion. As such they are not really compatible with the short-term project cycle of UNHCR and it would seem to be unwise for them to be implemented by an agency which is under obligation to phase out its activities and, in many cases, also those of its implementing partners after a relatively brief time span.

129. In the circumstances it would seem to be preferable for development actors to take the lead in establishing CEPs. If this is not possible CEPs should from the

beginning be conceived as joint exercise between UNHCR and development actors such as UNDP and the World Bank. In practice this would mean that both the staff recruited for the programme as well as the Implementing Partners would remain in the area beyond the phase-out of UNHCR and for as long as conditions require. Such an approach depends on introducing innovative funding and administrative arrangements but it would certainly go some way to ensure a seamless transition from relief to development and thus to make the 4Rs framework not only a planning but also an implementation tool.

Recommendations:

25. As part of its exit strategy UNHCR, NaCSA and TST staff should engage in a comprehensive first hand review of UNHCR's reintegration projects to determine
 - which are in need of ongoing support (maintenance, capacity building, etc.) and how such support should be funded and supplied;
 - which are so successful they deserve to be strengthened and expanded;
 - when and under what conditions local government structures will be ready to assume sectoral responsibility for these projects and how they can best be assisted for this purpose;
 - which implementing partners are the most capable and qualified to continue operating as CEP partners for development agencies;
 - how future community development programmes by UNDP, the World Bank and other agencies can best be build upon and consolidate the projects established by UNHCR.

26. Development actors should from the outset be involved in the design of CEP programmes in post-conflict situations and, if possible, take the lead in their establishment so as to ensure continuity over the longer term; to this effect UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank and other concerned agencies should examine the creation of a joint implementing strategy.

Management issues

130. The most serious management related problems which affected the operation were the 2002 financial crisis which brought the repatriation operation to a temporary halt and a persistent lack of staffing resources which was only resolved in 2004 by which time the operation was in its final phases. The section ends with an assessment of the impact on the Sierra Leone operation of best practices and lessons learned from other repatriation and reintegration operations.

The 2002 financial crisis

131. As mentioned above, the year 2002 faced the UNHCR Office in Freetown with a dual challenge. On the one hand there was the need to assist a cumulative total of 209,208 Sierra Leonean returnees; on the other there was the emergency influx of new Liberian refugees which started in February at the rate of 500 a day and had reached a total of 63,494 by the end of the year. It so happened that this was also the year in which UNHCR as a whole experienced a critical shortage of funds which affected its operations on a global scale.

132. The resulting budgetary constraints, as well as the inability to move funds from one project to another or from one country operation to another, led to several temporary suspensions of the repatriation operation. For example, when the Liberia crisis heightened, leading to outflows of both Sierra Leonean returnees and Liberian refugees, the UNHCR Office in Sierra Leone lacked the resources (trucks, travel allowances, NFI, staff) to be able to handle simultaneously the population outflows from Liberia and the repatriation of Sierra Leoneans from Guinea and other countries. In order to focus on the Liberian emergency, the office had to suspend Sierra Leonean repatriation operations from other countries, much to the frustration of all parties, in particular the refugees.

133. According to the Annual Report for 2002 issued by BO Freetown, the UNHCR Office in Sierra Leone in late February that year forwarded an emergency submission to Headquarters with a request for US\$2.8 million for the Liberian influx which by that time had reached 7,000 persons. It was not until June, however, that US\$2.4 million were authorised, by which time the number of new arrivals had swelled to 30,000. In July UNHCR Headquarters issued an emergency appeal to respond to the influx of Liberian refugees not only into Sierra Leone but also into Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. The response, however, appears to have been limited. While needs in Sierra Leone had risen to US\$ 8.4 million by August, the sum made available for the Liberian emergency by the end of the year amounted to no more than US\$3.8 million in total.

134. The consequences for the refugees have been described as catastrophic, both in assistance and protection terms. The construction of shelters and sanitary facilities ceased and all but the most basic emergency services were suspended. At the same time, the general UNHCR funding crisis, combined with the demands of the Liberian emergency, meant that the repatriation operation was also increasingly under-

resourced. By the third quarter of the year UNHCR ceased to be able to honour its commitments to implementing partners some of whom had began advancing funds from their own resources. In October 2003 several implementing partners, including the Norwegian Refugee Council and the International Rescue Committee, decided to suspend operations altogether.

135. By all accounts this was a traumatic period, first and foremost for the refugees, but also for the staff members of aid agencies who were deprived of the means to carry out their responsibilities and had to witness the human consequences of suffering and anger on the part of those they were meant to support. Much praise was heard by the Evaluation Mission for the manner in which UNHCR staff in Sierra Leone tried to cope with the pressure they found themselves under.

136. There are indications that management and communication problems within the organisation rather than slow donor response may have been the principal reason for the critical condition which developed in Sierra Leone. A major adverse factor was no doubt occasioned by the long delay in issuing the emergency appeal. At the same time, the general funding shortage affecting all operations during this period led to considerable in-house competition by different programmes, and to secure resources it was necessary to pass strong and persuasive messages on existing needs to senior decision makers. While the Office in Freetown made every effort to justify its funding requirements it seems that the seriousness of the situation in Sierra Leone was underestimated in Geneva for a considerable period of time.

137. A wider issue with some bearing on this financial crisis is also the funding policy adopted by UNHCR in recent years. Faced with donor pressure to limit its expenditure, the Office seems to have decided to adjust its budgetary needs to the level of contributions it is likely to obtain rather than to base it primarily on the actual needs of the refugees. The situation has led to very serious hardship as many ongoing UNHCR programmes have been increasingly curtailed, and has contributed to the progressive erosion of non-emergency assistance measures such as education and vocational training. In 2002 the Sierra Leone programme was in the unfortunate position of being simultaneously the victim of a general funding shortage, a major emergency, and a management seemingly reluctant to engage in rapid and resolute action to issue supplementary appeals.

Staffing issues

138. The lack of financial resources which hindered the Sierra Leone repatriation in its early phases was matched by a no less serious staffing shortage. With the beginning of the emergency evacuation from Guinea in late 2000, the UNHCR Office in Freetown made repeated but largely unsuccessful requests for the creation of new posts. As indicated in table 1 below, by the end of 2001 when 92,330 new returnees had entered the country the number of regular posts had only increased from 31 to 37.

Table 1

End-year	UNHCR posts	Refugees	Returnees during year	Total number refugees and returnees during year	Refugees & returnees during year per UNHCR post
2000	31	6,546	40,900	47,446	1,531
2001	37	10,501	92,330	102,831	2,779
2002	120	63,494	75,978	139,472	1,162
2003	182	61,194	33,255	94,449	519
2004	220	45,638	30,000	75,638	344
2005	171	21,638	0	21,638	127

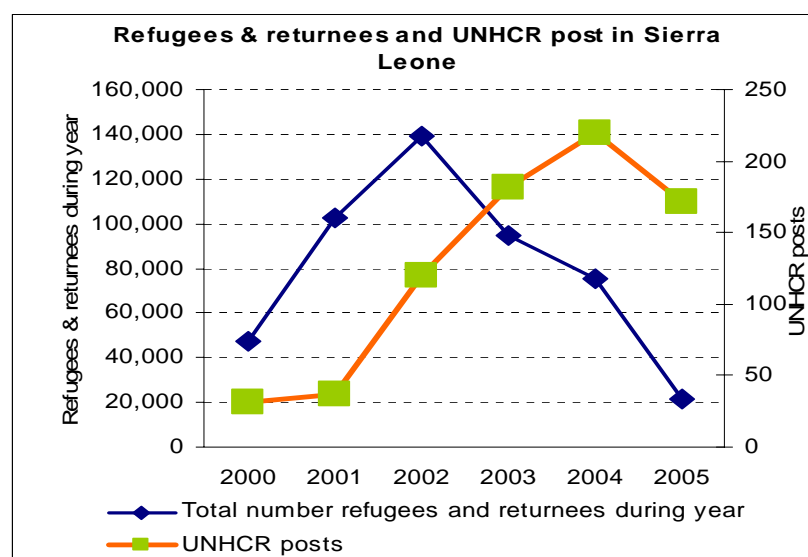
Note:

Refugees and returnees figures for 2000-2003 are based on the 2003 Statistical Yearbook (provisional)

For 2004-2005 the figures are based on COP figures.

Furthermore, as illustrated in the graph below, the peak in the number of UNHCR posts created in Sierra Leone occurred 2 years after the peak in the number of beneficiaries.

Graph 1



139. Until 2002, there was a serious disconnect in Headquarters' approval to open up field offices in newly accessible areas of return, without commensurate approval to create posts for these offices. A sub office in Kenema was established in 2000, and field offices in Bo, Daru and Kambia in 2001; field offices in Koidu, Kailahun and Zimmi were agreed in 2002, but it was not until then that any significant creation of posts began. Instead of creating new posts, staffing needs were met by multiple deployments of Emergency Response Teams, repeatedly extended temporary

assignments, secondments and professional staff on mission status. This approach proved costly and detrimental as frequent staff rotation and the uncertain prospects of those on extended 'temporary status' hindered the operation and lowered moral. It also failed to meet staffing needs and thus resulted in excessively long working hours, extreme stress and cases when field offices in volatile areas had to be left in charge of inexperienced personnel.

140. One of the reasons for the reluctance to create new posts was the Special Area Concept which had been introduced to allow for rapid redeployment of staff from country of asylum to country of origin as refugees returned. The experience in Sierra Leone has show that the concept does not work in favour of countries of origin. Staff are needed there from the beginning of the operation while those in the country of asylum are usually not free to move on until the end. A serious staffing shortage in the country of origin is therefore almost unavoidable, especially in the early stages of the operation. It must be said that UNHCR has also in previous operations found it difficult to provide rapid and adequate staffing resources in countries of origin at the beginning of repatriation operations.⁴³ Taking account of this problem the new UNHCR Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities stresses the critical nature of an early field presence of UNHCR in countries of origin and points to the need for staff continuity in core functions by recalling the maxim that 'one permanent staff member for an extended period is better than to have ten successive short-term staff.'⁴⁴

141. As indicated in the table above, the number of posts created in Sierra Leone increased significantly in 2002 to a total of 120. This was still far from sufficient to meet the needs but the general financial crisis of 2002 precluded the provision of additional resources. Partly on account of a ban on all missions declared at the end of that year a full staffing review for Sierra Leone was not conducted until March 2003. While it resulted in the creation of a substantial number of additional posts for 2003 and 2004, the lessons learned document prepared by BO Freetown points that this was up to three years late. Certain posts required in 2001 were only filled in 2004 when the operation was nearing its end.

Recommendation

27. It is essential to agree on an adequate staffing table for the country of origin from the planning stage of the operation and to undertake all necessary measures to create and fill the posts concerned in time for the arrival of UNHCR assisted returnees; transfers of posts under the Special Area Concept should only be envisaged in the final stages of the operation, not at the beginning.

Cost-effectiveness

142. A detailed assessment of the cost-effectiveness of assistance measures in a long and complex operation such as the one in Sierra Leone would require an evaluation

⁴³ The Mali Operation is a case in point (see Review of the Mali / Niger Repatriation and Reintegration Programme, p.22-23).

⁴⁴ See Module 7, p.1-2. The Module also mentions the possibility of a 'progressive transfer of UNHCR staff from country of asylum to country of origin.' The Sierra Leone experience shows that this should not be relied upon as being feasible in the early stages.

in its own right. A certain number of pertinent observations on this topic have, however, been made in the course of this inquiry. Some areas where costs might have been saved if it had been possible to adopt a different approach have been indicated above and may be summarised as follows:

- purchase of a new fleet of trucks would have led to significant savings in fuel and repair costs;
- greater investment in upgrading repatriation routes (in particular establishing a viable means to cross the Moa River) would have reduced transportation costs significantly;
- bulk procurement of spare parts for trucks at the beginning of the year would have reduced purchase costs;
- a reliable and transferable refugee registration system in countries of asylum would have limited the scope of benefit fraud;
- early creation and filling of posts would have avoided costly mission assignments.

143. What the above points have in common is that in each of them a substantial early investment or funding commitment would have avoided high recurrent costs at a later stage. Owing to lack of funds such early investments are often not possible, however, and specially targeted fund-raising drives may be required to secure earmarked donations for the intended purpose.

144. The use of GTZ as an implementing partner has been a subject of debate on account of its high overhead costs of 8.6% which are much above the recommended rate of 5%. This expenditure has, however, resulted in a positive return. An internal analysis of GTZ's role found that 'it played an integral part in the overall success of UNHCR's refugee repatriation and reintegration operation in Sierra Leone.' As regional implementing partner for transport and logistics GTZ has secured seamless cross-border links, and its positive performance as a partner in the reintegration programme is further enhanced by the fact that it intends to remain in the area beyond the phase-out of UNHCR and is presently in the process of raising funds for the purpose. In future operations the overhead costs of GTZ should no longer be an issue as UNHCR has now negotiated appropriate compensation arrangements with the government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

145. In addition to its other merits, the community empowerment concept is a cost-effective approach to reintegration assistance since it relies on labour and local raw materials to be supplied free of charge by the local community. As noted above, however, the limited funding envelope per project, the occasional lack of sound technical expertise and the lack of investment in adequate training of management committee members has in certain cases detracted from the quality and sustainability of project activities.

Recommendation:

28. In cases where a substantial early investment of funds may result in significant savings in the longer term, a special fund raising strategy should be devised and donors approached accordingly.

Applying lessons learned from previous operations

146. The terms of reference of this Evaluation raise the question to what extent the UNHCR programme in Sierra Leone was able to make use of best practices and lessons learned from previous operations. The most evident and effective manner in which this happened was through the appointment of UNHCR staff with extensive experience in similar operations, including those in Mali, Liberia and Bosnia. As indicated above, initiatives such as the Sierra Leone Information System and the Community Empowerment Projects were at least in part the fruit of the past experience of key staff members. Of equal importance is the fact that these staff-members knew the importance of establishing a fruitful and mutually supportive relationship with implementing partners and other UN agencies, notably WFP, UNICEF and UNDP. This contributed significantly to the collaborative spirit of the UN Country Team which many observers have remarked upon.

147. If the Sierra Leone operation could be successfully accomplished despite the dire shortage of financial and staffing resources it is in no small measure due to the leadership and experience that experienced staff-members were able to provide. The Evaluation Team observed, however, that the operation might have benefited even more if documentary evidence of past experience, namely evaluation reports and lessons learned papers, could have been made more widely available to staff, particularly those in the field postings. Several of the United Nations Volunteers, for instance, who acted as reintegration officers in the field offices and were thus at the forefront of bringing a new assistance concept to fruition, stated that they were unaware of this documentation and might have benefited from it if it had been pointed out to them.

148. UNHCR has by now accumulated much valuable repatriation and reintegration experience which is recorded in a considerable number of documents several of which have been cited in this paper. In fact, quite a number of lessons learned from the Sierra Leone operation are not new but have been observed before in other operations. The problem is how best to make use of the considerable resource represented by this lessons learned material which, moreover, continues to grow thanks to relevant studies conducted also by other organisations. It is well known that staff who are fully occupied with their day-to-day work find it hard to read and absorb additional material on the side. Perhaps the most effective way to make use of this resource is to integrate it fully into the staff training and operations planning process. For this purpose, planning, team building and training workshops could be designed in such a way as to include a special session dedicated to examining the relevance of past 'lessons learned' for the new operation at hand. Establishing and disseminating the relevant documentation for such workshops could be one of the tasks of the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit.

149. A word must be said in this context about the self-evaluation exercises undertaken by the UNHCR Office in Freetown. In mid 2003 a field based review was undertaken involving meetings with returnee communities in areas of return to gather their views on the performance and effectiveness of all actors in the repatriation and reintegration programmes.⁴⁵ Subsequently, a detailed internal lesson learned document was drafted by UNHCR staff in Freetown. These are extremely

⁴⁵ See UNHCR Sierra Leone Field Review Sessions, July – September 2003.

valuable initiatives which in themselves deserve to be considered as one of the 'lessons learned' from the Sierra Leone experience. It is commendable that at the first regional planning meeting for the new Liberian repatriation operation in 2003, a session was devoted to sharing these lessons learned from the Sierra Leone repatriation operation, given the similarities in the early stages of both operations.

150. Every UNHCR Office handling a major operation should be encouraged to produce an internal self-evaluation document of this kind for the benefit of other colleagues. The staff members themselves are the best placed persons to produce such an analysis which is in itself a learning experience for those involved. Rather than undertaking a general survey of an operation such as the one attempted in this document, external evaluations could then be commissioned, if appropriate on an interagency basis, to make more in-depth studies of critical issues that have arisen in the operation concerned. In the Sierra Leone context, these include child protection and the effectiveness of SGBV measures, topics which a general evaluation such as this is unable to cover in the required depth.

Recommendation:

29. UNHCR planning, team building and training work-shops should, as a matter of routine, include a special session to review relevant lessons learned from previous operations; EPAU should be designated as focal point to provide the required documentation and, if needed, the resource persons for such sessions.
30. On completion of major repatriation and reintegration operations UNHCR Offices should be encouraged to conduct an internal, results-oriented review of all aspects of their work and produce an internal lessons learned report accordingly; external evaluations should be commissioned to conduct detailed reviews of critical issues, if appropriate in collaboration with other UN agencies.

Annexes

Annex A. Terms of Reference

Evaluation of UNHCR's repatriation and reintegration programme in Sierra Leone

Over the past 13 years, some 300,000 Sierra Leonean refugees have fled to neighbouring countries, namely Guinea, Liberia and to a lesser extent, the Gambia. In 2001, UNHCR took advantage of the peace initiative and the creation of the Sierra Leonean Government for reconciliation and national unity (supported by UN and British peace keeping forces), to embark on a repatriation operation of Sierra Leonean refugees. The repatriation operations are due to be completed by the end of June 2004 while reintegration activities will continue throughout 2005.

For the benefit of a new operation starting in Liberia in October 2004, UNHCR would like to demonstrate, by way of this evaluation, the main 'lessons learned' from the nearly completed operation in Sierra Leone. This is based on a recommendation at a Representative meeting that took place in Abidjan in February 2004.

In gauging the overall effectiveness of UNHCR's repatriation and reintegration operation, the evaluation will seek to address the following questions:

1. To determine to what extent did UNHCR undertake an effective and accurate assessment of the risks confronting returnees during the process of programme planning, implementation and monitoring?
2. To determine to what extent was UNHCR able to effectively monitor the protection and general welfare of returnees?
3. To determine the level of secondary migration and identify the categories of secondary migrants and reasons.
4. To determine to what extent has the UNHCR assistance provided to returnees been appropriate and timely? To what extent has it promoted self-reliance and sustainable reintegration in Sierra Leone?
5. How well did UNHCR make use of implementing partners in terms of identification, training, monitoring, and control?
6. How cost-effective has the UNHCR operation been? Have the outputs and impact of the programme been commensurate with the organization's inputs in terms of human resources and financial expenditure?
7. To what extent did UNHCR pursue an effective approach to the issue of separated children and the pursuit of a durable solution, including their reunification with family members?
8. What contribution has the UNHCR programme made to the UN operation in Sierra Leone and the broader process of peace-building, and what was the extent and effectiveness of UNHCR's inter-action with other UN agencies and entities, particularly in the context of DDR and the "4 Rs"?
9. To assess the level and success of actions taken so far to avoid an "off the cliff" approach linked to phasing-out of UNHCR interventions and smooth transition "from relief to development"
10. To assess whether UNHCR Sierra Leone was able to make use (and further develop) best practices in repatriation and reintegration activities, in regard to lessons learnt from previous operations in the sub -region (Mali, Liberia and Mauritania)
11. To assess the accessibility of data and documents on lessons learned for other operations of similar character and determine if any of these have already

been replicated (or avoided), which will determine, to an extent possible at this moment, the success of the operation in Sierra Leone.

12. To assess the impact and synergies of the fact that UNHCR was running two parallel operations in Sierra Leone, namely a refugee emergency and care and maintenance operations for Liberian refugees (since late 2001) and the repatriation and reintegration programmes for Sierra Leonean returnees.

In addition to the questions listed above, the evaluation may also examine a range of other issues, including:

- the management structure established for the Sierra Leone operation (in Sierra Leone itself, within the region, and at Headquarters);
- human resource issues, including recruitment/assignment, timely deployment, competencies, staff training, staff welfare (including counselling), and staff security;
- logistical issues, including constraints in procurement, shipping, and port facilities;
- relations between UNHCR and its implementing partners;
- relations between UNHCR and other actors, including UN agencies and Peace keeping Mission (UNAMSIL), national agencies, and international military/police forces and how did bringing (or not bringing) of all these elements together help or disrupted the process;
- fundraising, external relations, and public information dimensions of the Sierra Leone repatriation operation;
- UNHCR's and IP's performance in different sectors, including shelter, health,

Methodology:

The evaluation will take place in the Districts of Kailahun, Kambia and Peijehun in Sierra Leone as well as in selected locations in Guinea and Liberia, as appropriate. The evaluation is expected to provide a comprehensive and empirically-supported analysis of UNHCR's repatriation and reintegration programme in Sierra Leone, identifying lessons learned from the programme and drawing attention to examples of good and bad practice that can be incorporated in training activities, guidelines and manuals.

The evaluator will be expected to prepare an initial analysis of lessons learnt to be tabled at a Regional meeting in mid-September and to prepare a final report by the end of September. At the end of the mission in Sierra Leone, it is proposed that an evaluation workshop be convened in Freetown including UNHCR staff, NGO and IP staff, to collectively review lessons learnt.

The evaluation will be undertaken in accordance with the mission statement of UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU), as well as UNHCR's evaluation policy. It will therefore involve extensive consultation with returnees and other stakeholders, and adopt an approach which is sensitive to the issues of age, gender and socio-economic differentiation of returnee populations.

This evaluation will begin in late July 2004 and will be completed by mid-September 2004. The selected consultant will undertake initial interviews and research at

UNHCR's Geneva Headquarters, and will undertake missions to Sierra Leone and to one or two neighbouring countries.

The report of this evaluation project will be placed in the public domain. UNHCR will not exercise any editorial control over the report but will provide comments on the draft and will proofread and format the report prior to publication. The findings and recommendations of the project may be used as a basis for national or regional workshops, briefings to donor states, the Executive Committee and NGOs, and for training purposes.

EPAU/RBA - June 2004

Annex B.
Evaluation Mission Itinerary

Date	Activity	Location
9/08/04	Arrival in Freetown	Lungi International Airport
10/08/04	Briefing by Programme Unit Meeting IPs	UNHCR BO Freetown
11/08/04	Meeting TST/UNDP and WB Travel Freetown Kambia Meeting and briefing by acting HOF Kambia	Freetown-Kambia
12- 13/08/04	Visits at project sites Briefing and debriefings FO Kambia, IPs, TST	Kambia
14/08/04	Travel SO-Kenema	Kambia to SO Kenema
15/08/04	Travel to FO Kailahun Meeting and briefing by Reintegration Officer Kailahun, IPs and TST	Kailahun
16-18/08/04	Visits at project sites	Kailahun
19/08/04	Travel Ms. De Vriese: Kailahun to Kono Travel M. Sperl: Kailahun to Zimmi	Kailahun to Kono Kailahun to Zimmi
20-23/08/04	Meeting and briefing by FO Kono/Zimmi, IPs and TST Visits at project sites	Kono and Zimmi
24/08/04	Travel to Freetown	
25-26/08/04	Meeting WFP, Dfid, USAID, ...	Freetown
27/08/04	Lessons Learned Workshop	Freetown
30/08/04	Debriefing of Representative and Programme Unit and Departure of Team to HQ	Freetown

Annex C. List of persons met / consulted

UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva

Arnauld Akodjenou
Jonathan Andrews
Zobida Hassim-Ashagrie
Dominik Bartsch
Jean-François Durieux
Bruno Geddo
Christina Halverson
Maya Ilic
Sajad Malik
Raouf Mazou
Sam Mbugwa
Kamel Morjane
Julia Schtivelmann-Watt
Karl Steinacker
Nemia Temporal
George Woode
Betsy Lipman (UNDP)
Shane Hough (UNDP)

Freetown, Sierra Leone

Musa Abiriga, UNHCR
Nyanjagi Ally, UNHCR
Maya Ameratuinga, UNHCR
Timothy Barker, SCF
Sidi Bah, NaCSA
Edward Benya, USAID
Dawn Calabria, ARC
Tommy Garnet, EFA
Mary C. Gutman, ARC
Louis Imbleau, WFP
Sahr K. Foyo, BPDA
Solomon Kebede, IMC
Ellie Kemp, OXFAM
Salieu Koroma, NaCSA
Christof Kurz, IRC
Nay-Jit Lam, UNHCR
Bengt Ljungren, UNDP
B. Massah, WUSL
Gibril Foday Musa, TDS
Momidu Massaqui, BPDA
Janet Momoh, NaCSA
Lynn Ngugi, UNHCR
James Sackey, World Bank
Jacob Saffa, World Bank
Linus Sarkor, UNHCR
Joseph Senesie, WUSL
Sunday Shorunke, UNHCR
Donald Robert Shaw, UNICEF

Christine M. Sheckler, USAID
Stephanie Sobol, USAID
Christian Smida, GTZ
Ian Stuart, British High Commission
Umu Tejan-Jalloh, NaCSA
Sarah Ward, ARC
Barbara Whitmore, ARC
Bauke Van Wering, UNDP
Serge Zeaudry, ARC
Tatiana Zulevic, IMC

Kailahun

Pierra Kamara, GTZ
Jaykrishna Karmacharia, UNHCR
Joesphine E. Ngebeh, UNHCR
Joan Tucker, UNDP / TST

Kambia

Reine A. Adorgloh, UNHCR
B.J. Bangura, Ministry of Agriculture
Papanie Bangura, GTZ
Alfred J. Conteh, CARITAS
Bakie Kamara, Ministry of Social Welfare
M.G. Kamara, District Council
Andrew R. Kany, CARITAS
M.S. Njai, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
Alpha U. Sesay, UNDP /TST
Bai Sesay, ARC
Santigie Sesay, Ministry of Health and Sanitation
Obafemi Williams, ARC

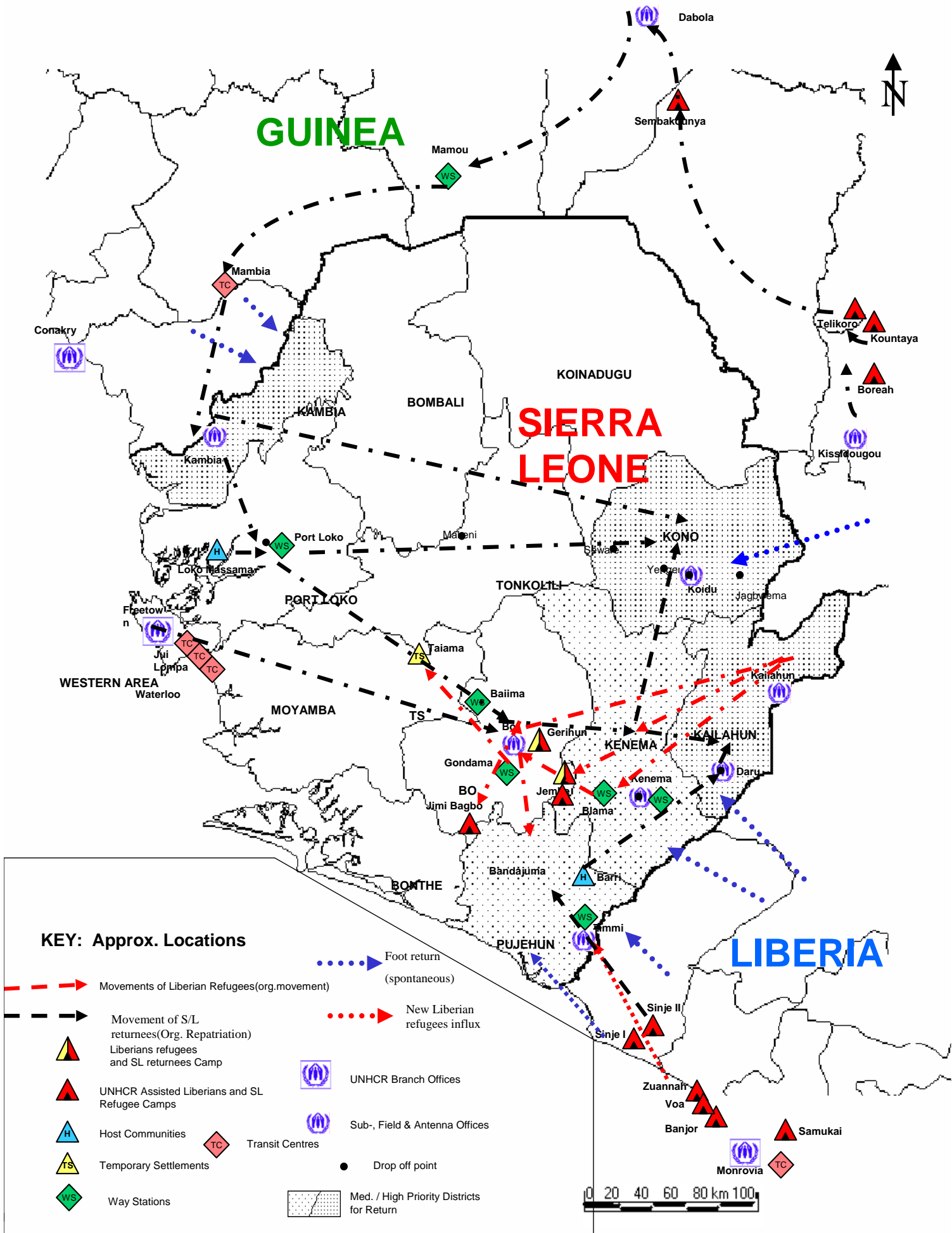
Kono

Said Nabi Akbar, PWJ
Tamba Boima, UNHCR
George Boma, UNHCR
Solomon Brima, UNDP / TST
David Coomber, UNHCR
Abu Bakar Fallah, GTZ
Sudang Kaentrakool, UNHCR
Benjamim Kamara, UNHCR
Paul Longwe, UNHCR
Salieu Koroma, NaCSA
Benedict Mgegsa, IRC
Assiatu H. Tholley, UNHCR

Zimmi

Farama Joseph Bangora, NaCSA
Sidi Dicko, UNHCR
A. C. Moiwo, GTZ
Mikkel Maduro Tuxen, UNHCR
E.H. Tommy, CARD

Annex D.
Map showing main repatriation routes and areas return



UNHCR Sierra Leone - Facilities and Main Routes

Annex E. Standards of Conduct

Ensuring protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse may occur in many different forms. Sexual exploitation is defined as any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Sexual abuse is actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

1. Sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel working on Projects/sub-Projects funded by UNHCR, constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal.
2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally⁴⁶. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
3. Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
4. Sexual relationships between personnel working on Projects/Sub-Projects funded by UNHCR, and beneficiaries of assistance undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of the UN, and UNHCR in particular, and are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics.
5. Where personnel working on UNHCR Projects/Sub-Projects develop concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established reporting mechanisms.
6. Personnel of agencies, both non-governmental and governmental, working on UNHCR-funded Projects and Sub-Projects are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems that maintain this environment.

These six standards are not intended to be an exhaustive list. Other types of sexually exploitative or abusive behavior may be grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal.

In entering into cooperative arrangements with UNHCR, Agencies and Governments undertake to inform their personnel of the six core principles listed above and work to ensure adherence to them. By signing a Sub-Project Agreement with UNHCR, the Parties to the Agreement undertake to abide by and promote these principles. The failure of partner agencies to take preventative measures to prevent abuse, investigate allegations of abuse and to take disciplinary actions when sexual

⁴⁶ Executive Heads of Agencies (Governmental or NGO) may use their discretion in applying this standard where a staff member is legally married to someone under the age of eighteen but over the age of majority or consent in both their country of citizenship and the country in which they are stationed.

exploitation or sexual abuse is found to have occurred, will constitute grounds for termination of a Sub-Project Agreement with UNHCR.

Annex F. Interagency 4Rs mission to Sierra Leone, 19 - 26 May 2003.

MAIN FINDINGS

Introduction

An inter-agency team comprising UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, ILO and the World Bank conducted a review of the 4Rs as part of the wider transition and recovery process in Sierra Leone. The mission took place from Friday 23 - Monday 26 May 2003 and included field visits to Kailahun and Kambia districts, where the team was joined by the European Union, WFP and FAO. A smaller delegation also visited Kono district on 21 and 22 May. These districts were selected because of their high levels of displacement during the war, their prioritisation within the National Recovery Strategy, and the substantial role that UNHCR has been playing there.

The mission was part of a broader review of 4Rs pilot countries (also including Afghanistan, Eritrea and Sri Lanka), to identify successes and challenges, offer recommendations and feed lessons learned into a broader institutional framework. This builds on increasing momentum on the issue of 4Rs being one of the tool for transitional support, as reflected in the increased level of policy discussion in humanitarian and development fora, more flexible approaches to transition in Consolidated Appeals and other UN strategic and fundraising tools, and increased interest and even preference among some major donors for integrated UN transition programmes. One of the main outputs of the review in each country is to submit a funding proposal to these donors.

Within the Sierra Leone review, the team looked at some key 4Rs issues including: managing the shift from beneficiary-based relief projects to recovery and longer-term national development; measuring the overall impact of all the different relief and development initiatives and strategies at the community level and identifying any gaps that could strongly detract from the peacebuilding and recovery process or result in substantial loss of development gains to date; and use of joint working and integrated planning contributing to the national and district recovery strategy, to help smooth the transition phase and facilitate the withdrawal of relief-focused agencies.

Overview

The team is impressed with the handling of the wider recovery and transition process in Sierra Leone. The level of strategic planning, coordination and information management is high, with a considerable degree of cooperation and joint understanding among agencies. Equally impressive is the level of information handling, coordination and cooperation at district level, including the use of a bottom-up process of data collection to shape the National Recovery Strategy. The inclusion of both relief and recovery in the 2003 Inter-Agency Appeal, and the development of a UN Recovery and Peacebuilding Strategy, both show the innovative, responsive and flexible approach that the UNCT has adopted to transition issues in Sierra Leone. In addition, there are several examples of integrated planning at the district level, coupled with a high interest and commitment among field-based staff to forge closer links.

What is needed is to consolidate all these initiatives at the district level supporting national recovery and development programmes and enhancing existing structures and programmes to help minimise the inevitable gaps that occur in any country transiting from relief to development. Most of these gaps are already well-known to the UNCT, and are in many cases mainly due to the limited funding available given the immense needs in the country. However the team considers that not all gaps are related to programme funding, and that some further steps could be taken to knit together those initiatives that are in place or planned for maximum impact, as well as to enable withdrawal of UNHCR and other relief agencies. It recommends prioritising those gaps that are most central to peacebuilding and recovery, and/or that can be addressed with only minor additional funds and modification of existing structures and programmes. All recommendations are intended to sit within Sierra Leone's forward-looking strategies and priorities, including the PRSP and UNDAF (see diagram at Annex B).

Key findings and recommendations

Basic services and infrastructure

The damage inflicted by the war, combined with Sierra Leone's already low level of development, have resulted in immense needs across the whole country. Needs are so pervasive that it is hard to select priorities, although rehabilitation of infrastructure, which was extensively damaged during the war, comes high on the list. There is also the massive task of not only restoring, but improving basic services that were already woefully inadequate prior to the war due to some thirty years of neglect. This would include not only infrastructure but also human resources and capacity building. In this respect, the mission recognised that national capacity building, as well as sector reform and restructuring are vital parts of the transition process that will be necessary for some basic services to operate in the 4Rs districts. Much has already been achieved at national and district levels in the relatively short time that agencies have been able to access affected areas. More remains to be done, however, particularly in those sectors that do not so far feature strongly in longer-term development programming (in particular, shelter, feeder roads and rural water and sanitation) and where standards and consistency are variable at District level (partly because no agency has overall responsibility for them and that it falls under different Ministries' responsibility). The needs in the water and sanitation, shelter and feeder road sectors are huge and cannot be addressed within a short time frame: they will therefore need a sustained investment over time. The primary responsibility should lie with government (at National and District levels in particular), but given that insufficient development programmes are planned for above referred sectors, its capacity is likely to stay weak for some time. Therefore additional support is needed. NaCSA will be playing a significant role in supporting these, but their work may need supplementing, particularly in areas where community return is fragile and in need of additional support to consolidate the recovery process.

Recommendation

- As a first step, it is proposed that a stock-take is conducted of what is going on where, and what is planned, on water and sanitation, feeder roads and shelter. Recommendations should come out of this on areas that need additional focus, for example potentially Kambia on water and sanitation (where gaps have already been identified). This can then be incorporated into the broader transitions proposal to be submitted to donors
- Within this, it is recommended that aid agencies should focus on the larger investments, ie those infrastructure components that are difficult to meet through community-based interventions or through government's slim resources, while working to build local capacity to build and manage smaller infrastructure in the future
- In the water and sanitation sector, the team recommends strengthening the UN sectoral lead to help ensure adequate cover given the importance of this as an ongoing basic asset

Economic recovery

The team notes that to date, the emphasis of support has been mainly on infrastructure and basic services (above), with less attention on promotion of livelihoods and immediate local economic revitalisation/recovery. The team considers these should be given a much more central role, given their importance in enabling communities to improve their own standard of living, access services and resources and reduce dependency on outside assistance (which will be phasing down over the next eighteen months as relief programmes come to a close). This is particularly important given that government capacity is likely to remain weak for some time, requiring a strong degree of self-reliance among communities.

Recommendations

- The team understands that work is already underway for programmes in the micro-finance sector. It proposes that this should be supplemented by socio economic survey including skills and market analyses in the affected districts and associated support, for example through business support centres, extension outreach, particularly on agriculture, and learning centres for skills development. These activities could build on the existing community empowerment programmes. ILO could work with FAO and WFP, starting by posting a livelihoods advisor to each district for a period of one or two months to identify opportunities, linkages to ongoing and forthcoming initiatives, and to prepare a concept paper for funding, for inclusion in the transitions donor proposal

Phasing in development programmes

While there are a number of promising development programmes coming on line, the team is concerned that (1) these are mainly focused on a few sectors – particularly health and education; (2) the majority of development funding so far is to be channelled through government agencies and commissions, allowing few options for

alternative channels of support that may be needed to fill gaps, boost civil society and the private sector, or meet needs not normally within the remit of government; (3) the programmes may take some time to deliver tangible results, particularly given the range of complex institutional structures and processes to be ironed out within the governance system.

A particular challenge is sustaining human resources when NGOs phase out of health and education. In theory, the government is meant to take over responsibility for education and health staffing, and development programmes do provide for some delivery of salaries and training that should be on-stream by end 2003, but delays could well occur.

Recommendations

- The team recommends that donors and government accelerate those aspects of development programmes that produce tangible results and help build community confidence at the district level: particularly training and funding human resources (teachers, medical staff etc). One option is to offer advance funding to enable certain components to proceed while the main programme components come on line. If necessary to avoid prejudicing broader institutional structures, this process could be focused on those areas most highly impacted during the war (Kambia, Kailahun and Kono). The delegation will, in consultation with the UNCT and the World Bank, discuss further how this could be implemented within individual development programmes.
- The team also recommends a specific focus at district level to monitor the phase-in of major development investments such as those through the World Bank and European Commission, to help support conditions for their introduction, and in turn to help inform their final design and structure so they are adapted to conditions on the ground. This can be provided through the district government and UN transition teams (see below)

Mid-level district management

During the transition phase, responsibilities for assistance and coordination should increasingly transfer from aid agencies to government. The team sees district government and line ministry representatives as key in this regard, maintaining an overview, managing and coordinating planning and prioritisation of needs, monitoring and evaluation, bringing together different initiatives, realising national policies and programmes at the district level, and addressing important emerging gaps. A policy decision has already been taken that the District Recovery Committee should lead on planning and monitoring. However there are several obstacles to the DRC delivering its responsibilities, not least its lack of resources and decentralised power, weak linkages between district and headquarters on policy and technical issues, and limited technical capacity to play a full role.

A particular concern of the team is the respective inter-relationships and responsibilities of the DRC, NaCSA, Provincial government, the District Officer, Paramount Chiefs and National Line Ministries. These do not seem clear to all key actors at the district level, nor is it yet clear what roles they will all have in relation to

the future District Council. The continued postponement of district elections is not helping in this regard. This lack of clarity does not aid local planning or accountability, and while relations between the different bodies appear cordial for the present, a prolonged confusion of roles and future power bases could deteriorate government relations and reputation in the district. At present there is a growing de-facto leadership by NaCSA, which is by far the best resourced agency, and widely perceived as the locus for information, programming and support within the district. The team is concerned that this could lead to an institutionalised imbalance, making it more difficult for district government to reclaim a role for itself once its responsibilities are finally clarified. This is further compounded by the fact that many development resources coming on-line have already been programmed elsewhere, leaving little prospect for district government in terms of future resources (assuming revenue raising capacity remains low for some time).

Recommendations

- While the team recognises the complexities of the decentralisation debate in Sierra Leone, it sees these issues as central not only to managing the transition process, but to peacebuilding and recovery more broadly, and would urge accelerated progress on agreeing structures and systems and respective inter-relationships and roles of the different district bodies, even if these have to be labelled 'interim' while the country waits for longer-term political processes to mature and bed in. Another option may be to pilot some limited decentralisation before nationalising the process. This could be trial led in one or more of the heavy war-affected districts. The work being done by the World Bank, UNDP, OCHA, Civil Affairs and others can help in this regard (with particular clarification needed of the particular value-added of provincial and chiefdom governance, both of which were unclear to the team)
- All efforts should be made to support the government in holding district elections by November 2003 or as soon as possible thereafter.
- Some steps can be taken immediately, even preceding elections/clarity of structure, to help build the supporting institutions for elected district government. Although it may be politically sensitive to build the capacity of the DRC (given the importance of not legitimising a structure that has not been elected), it should be possible to provide capacity building for line ministry representatives at district level, since these will play a role in the new District Councils. Additionally, it is recommended that a decision is taken on which of the district civil servants are likely to stay on (for example the District Officer) so that their capacity can also be built. If necessary an agreement can be made that such officials will not run for elections, to avoid prejudicing district elections.
- The type of capacity building needed should include: financial accounting and office management, information management skills, assessments and analysis, district-based planning and prioritisation, making linkages between relief, transition and development programmes in the area, monitoring, evaluation and so on. Such support would build on the infrastructural support and technical inputs already provided through UNAMSIL civil affairs, OCHA, UNDP and

others, all of which could potentially be streamlined through a UN transition team in each focus district (see 'UN presence in the field' below).

Integrated planning among aid agencies

Although there are some excellent examples of joint planning and initiatives that support transition at field level (for example CEP of UNHCR and NaCSA's community empowerment programme) these are often ad-hoc and not necessarily linked to wider programmes or replicated elsewhere. There is scope to do more on district-specific integrated planning of this kind. This offers multiple advantages: complementary sectoral support and use of resources; more effective support for multi-sectoral post-conflict issues such as community-based development; support to coexistence and reconciliation between the different community groups; consistent approaches and standards; avoidance of overlap and promoting smoother transitions between approaches and programmes within and between agencies, emphasising development strategies and enabling those that have a relief mandate to phase out.

Recommendations

- Lessons should be drawn from areas where the integrated planning process seems to be developing well, for example Kambia district, to inform similar processes in other districts (particularly Kailahun and Kono). This can be supported through the government and transition teams (see 'Mid Level District Management' above and 'UN presence in the field' below).

UN presence in the field

It is essential that the transition process in Sierra Leone is supported not only theoretically and in programme planning at headquarters, but that it is operationalised and turned into reality at field level, including through district-specific integrated planning as outlined above. This will, over the next year, require a focused presence in the districts. In general, except for UNHCR, UN presence is fairly thin on the ground in the focus districts visited. Such presence is needed to support the transition process during a time of rapid change in the field (shifting circumstances, progress and obstacles, programmes phasing out and in). Such presence is also needed to help ensure that positive inputs, such as UNHCR's community empowerment programme and many other community-based initiatives, are sustained during the shift in focus from short-term relief and initial community empowerment programmes towards longer term programmes that aid the government in taking forward recovery.

Recommendations

- The team recommends that the UNCT reviews the community empowerment programme initiated by UNHCR, and other relief programmes that have produced similar positive transition/development focused impacts not likely to be picked up in the mainstream development programmes coming on line (for example on water and sanitation), to identify ways of scaling them up, linking them with the growing number of other community-based initiatives promoting

development and reconciliation and involving other development agencies, including linkages to NaCSA where relevant

- To take forward all these initiatives, the team recommends the establishment of a small team under the Resident Coordinator, supported by interested UN agencies, to support the transition and development of substantive, synergistic integrated planning. This would be complemented by a planning specialist in each focus districts, to work together with District authorities, UNAMSIL Civil Affairs and OCHA (OCHA; which will begin to phase out at the end of 2003). This team would work together on shifting towards a stronger recovery and development focus including on information management (see the section on 'information systems' below); building the capacity of line ministries (see section on 'Mid Level District Government' above); and assisting in the transition towards District Councils.

Enhanced information systems

The SLIS information available is excellent - the best seen by the inter-agency mission members - but it could be further enhanced, particularly as a planning and tracking tool. Although extremely useful, particularly on establishing a common data baseline, district level data packs and strategies are primarily focused on relief inputs, comprising a compilation of needs and information on who is doing what where. They could be substantially enhanced to promote development planning, including through tracking actual progress on the ground with regular updates, qualitative assessments, and information on forthcoming programmes, including likely timelines, approaches and target areas/groups. This would also help increase clarity at the district and local level on what exists now, what future support can be realistically expected, and from this what should be the priorities for action. A further issue is ensuring that data packs are seen by all those that need to see them, given the relatively weak information flows between district, chiefdom and headquarters.

Recommendations

- Information management systems should be modified to adopt a stronger development focus, and decentralised so that information is compiled and processed at the district level as well as headquarters. One option is to incorporate this into the teams proposed to support the district government, with OCHA and UNDP facilitating the handover
- A review of information flow systems should be conducted to identify problems in getting information to and from districts, and to overcome blockages to ensure wide dissemination and readership of data.
- Building capacity of District and line ministries in analysing and using the data collected for coordination, planning and monitoring purposes.

Balanced support within districts and nationally

Relief programming has been focused on the distinct needs of special groups, such as returnees, ex-combatants and the war-wounded. While recognising the important role that such support has played, it seems to have led to perceptions amongst some communities of unfair distribution of resources. This is particularly the case regarding ex-combatants. Agencies are aware of this issue, and the team supports their efforts to promote a community-based, equitable approach for assistance in affected areas. A further risk is potential over-targeting of the highly war-affected districts of Kailahun, Kono and Kambia, resulting in imbalanced development and potentially new resentments within the country.

Recommendations

- Continue to prioritise community-based approaches, ‘de-labelling’ target groups and ensuring complementary programmes that are sufficiently flexible to meet the range of different needs within war-affected communities (use a co-existence and gender lens when planning all programs).
- Give clear criteria for focus districts to avoid possible perceptions of favouritism, and maintain ongoing analysis at the central level (see ‘information systems’ above) to ensure balanced development across all the districts.

Security

The team wishes to underscore a point already made by others: namely that security should be the first priority in any post-conflict setting, and that UNAMSIL has been playing an essential role in this regard.

Recommendations

- The team strongly supports the position that UNAMSIL’s drawdown should be linked to increased local capacity of the police, army and justice system, as well as a minimum achievement of community establishment and stability in border areas.

Bilaterals and NGOs

The mission recognised the need for donors and NGOs, in addition to Government to buy-in the 4Rs process.

Recommendation

- Organise donor briefings at Freetown and Geneva level to stimulate donors interest and support of the UNCT efforts for integrated planning, as part of the 4Rs and transition interventions.
- Raise awareness of the NGO community at country and headquarters level and make them full actors of the planning process.

- Systematically include donors and NGOs in the planning process for the 4Rs

28 May 2003

Summary of initiatives recommended by 4Rs/mission team

- 1) Conduct a rapid analysis of what exists where and what's coming on line in shelter, feeder roads, water and sanitation and from this make recommendations for additional support, focusing on infrastructure that will be difficult to meet at the individual community level, and on training local counterparts to meet nationally agreed standards. Strengthen the sectoral lead for water and sanitation
- 2) Supplement work already underway on economic revitalisation, by posting a livelihoods specialist to each district to conduct a socio-economic survey including skills and market survey and make recommendations on livelihoods support needed, including linkages to other programmes coming on line. Projects could include skills development, resources centers providing guidance on technical issues, SME, business, employment, market, existing resources and ways to access them, etc.) To be initiated through ILO, FAO and WFP.
- 3) Support advance implementation of development programme components that will have a tangible impact and help to build confidence among communities, particularly on basic services and human resources. Support the phase-in of development programmes through advice and support at the district level, and upwards feedback from the districts to Freetown to influence the final stages of programme design
- 4) Accelerate progress on agreeing respective inter-relationships and roles of the different district bodies, even if these have to be labelled 'interim' or piloted in limited areas
- 5) Strong support for early district elections (November 2003 or soon thereafter)
- 6) Provide technical support, including through on-the-job training, to help district line ministries both on sectoral and cross-cutting issues such as planning, prioritisation, information management coordination, etc.
- 7) Document and seek to replicate lessons learned on integrated planning in different districts
- 8) Review successful relief programmes that address transitional issues such as community development, and identify ways of scaling them up/linking them to mainstream development processes
- 9) Establish a small transition team under the Resident Coordinator, supported by interested UN agencies, to support all the above processes, complemented by a planning specialist in the focus districts of Kono, Kailahun and Kambia to

support the transition, provide district-level capacity building, integrated planning etc in close partnership with UNAMSIL civil affairs and OCHA (OCHA; which will begin to phase out at the end of 2003)

- 10) Modify and decentralise information management systems, giving them a stronger development focus, and enhancing their utility as a planning tool, with a handover from OCHA to UNDP and later to the District.
- 11) Increasingly move towards community-based, holistic approaches rather than targeting labelled groups (returnees, ex-combatants etc), and ensure a national balance between support for districts based on criteria including level of need (co-existence lens)
- 12) Continue to advocate that UNAMSIL's drawdown should be linked to increased local capacity of the police, army and justice system, as well as a minimum achievement of community establishment and stability in border areas

A concept paper, together with joint log frame, will be prepared to encapsulate all these recommendations into a proposal for donor funding and UNCT action.

NRS / PRSP

UNDAF

Integration

4Rs-Transition

- Of returnees (IDPs and refugees) and ex-combatants within local communities (dovetailed projects, short and long-term harmony, same implementation approaches)
- Of projects into development programmes
- Of district-based plans (same data collection and management systems, same priorities, same funding cycles?)
- Of funding proposals (integrated proposals, join log frames)

Annex G.
UNHCR Guidelines on Community Empowerment Projects

**UNHCR Sierra Leone Repatriation and Reintegration of Sierra Leonean Returnees
Community Empowerment Project Guidelines**

Overview

An important focus of UNHCR's work initiated in 2003 and which continues in 2004 will be to support communities based initiatives in a participatory way to re-establish in main return areas through a number of small projects. 15% of programme funds are allocated to Community Empowerment Projects (CEPs), focusing on small-scale interventions that can be managed by communities. The scope of projects will be modest, but strategic in empowering different groups in communities – especially women, children, adolescents and older people; priorities for UNHCR. The projects will focus on small-scale interventions that can be managed by communities such as social activities, local construction or gardening and so on – with an imperative for different groups to combine resources to achieve something more than they could individually.

Specific funds should be allocated as part of CEPs for the training/capacity building of PMCs at chiefdom level in community development and CEPs management, including gender, community participation, community mobilization, record/stock keeping and reporting, accountability and transparency, CEP conflicts management, with the help of UNHCR field teams, through experienced implementing partners and in co-operation with other UN agencies and actors in the field – especially through the 4Rs Strategy of UNHCR, UNDP and the World Bank. Joint work with the Bank, via NaCSA and the NSAP programme and Government, to help communities design and implement projects that bring people together, and to monitor and evaluate the progress of their communities is expected.

Community Project Management Committees (PMCs) will be empowered, with a focus on strengthening the position of all vulnerable groups, especially women in society. These activities are designed to be the protection interface between UNHCR and people of concern in returnee areas, enforcing a close association of staff and communities, participative identification of reconciliation and protection issues, and giving the means to address problems at the field level.

Below are guidelines on the process.

STRATEGIES/ METHODOLOGY FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

The purpose of UNHCR's involvement in this field of work is to make a significant contribution to the reintegration of Sierra Leonean returnees, and setting the foundation for empowering people in main areas of return to gain control of resources and make fair decisions over the use of these resources. This group of activities aims to both add resources to communities and build their capacities to manage them - assisting people to achieve a position from which they can control and fairly manage their own recovery.

At the basis of the community empowerment concept lies the idea to establish a transparent, inclusive and participatory procedure for communities in decision making with regard to funds and other resources available to them. This concept requires functioning, democratic institutions at the Chiefdom level.

An important point to recognize in empowering communities is the concept of transfer of power and control within existing systems. Specifically in the recovery and transition to peaceful development, this means disempowering the actors that 'traditionally' control resources during humanitarian operations: the UN and implementers. Rather than treating people as passive recipients – 'beneficiaries' of predetermined handouts – these people will decide what their priorities are and how to drive their own recovery process.

GENERALLY

UNHCR will allocate a financial envelope per Chiefdom and entrust these funds for administrative purposes to an implementing partner – with authorization for expenditure to be obtained from the respective UNHCR field offices through forms (see attached) and with the involvement of NaCSA in the project appraisal.

UNHCR will determine geographical area of concern based on registered and expected numbers of returnees and internally displaced persons, including assessment of needs to be done by NaCSA, UNHCR field office, implementing partners and in collaboration with the communities of concern.

Within certain chiefdoms, specific villages and groups to receive assistance will be selected in a collaborative way with Chiefdom Development Committee. Communities that have not been accessible by other donors will be given preferential treatment. It will be important to involve traditional chiefdom authorities in the process, although the exact entry point for making resources available may also be through functional village development committees and interest groups.

Joint field teams of UNHCR, NaCSA and the respective implementing partners will inform the Chiefdom population at large, in the villages and sections, to identify needs and to develop proposals for projects that address community needs, in particular women and children.

Needs will be identified by the communities and proposals developed by the communities with the facilitation and non biased support of the implementing partners.

UNHCR through regular meetings and reviews with implementing partners, NaCSA and visits to communities will closely monitor the projects, whilst also disbursing resources to implementing partners. Constant evaluation may also lead to changes in these guidelines and the approach taken. Regular review reports will be submitted to BO Freetown and SO Kenema programme Units.

Scope and Community Empowerment Projects Criteria:

1. There should be no sector preferences by UNHCR or especially implementing partners. Communities will choose their own priorities.
2. Projects requested by the communities should not address needs otherwise planned to be covered by large sectoral assistance programmes.
3. Projects should be environmentally sound (not causing deforestation, erosion etc.)
4. There must be maximized participation of different communities groups in identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of project especially women and youth to ensure community ownership.
5. There must be maximum benefits especially for women, children, adolescents, disabled and older people.
6. Projects must make maximum use of local skills, knowledge and community strength (locally skilled labor may receive incentives from project resources)
7. Projects must be technologically and economically sustainable – communities must be able to maintain.
8. If possible, also positively impact on the prevention of HIV/AIDS in society. (Projects that address this will be given preferential approval.)
9. UNHCR contribution should not exceed LE 15,000,000 per project site. However in exceptional situations projects of higher cost may be justified, for example if benefiting more than one community.

Responsibilities of communities (Village and Chiefdom Development Committees:

1. Full participation through out the project identification, prioritization, designing, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process. This should be an all-inclusive process taking into account all groups especially women, youth and the disabled.
2. Complete the project forms with all annexes (see attached).

ANNEX G

3. Agree upon representation and approve the project.
4. Accept receipt of materials and sign form acknowledging quantity and quality.
5. Provide storage and security for project materials (if any)
6. Supply maximum local materials such as timbers, stones, sand etc. (Where and when necessary, and if available).
7. Provide all unskilled labor free of charge.
8. Development of an implementing work plan with timelines taking into consideration other commitments and seasons.
9. Ensure visibility – erecting signs at project sites (indicating community name, the implementing partner supporting and clearly displaying the UNHCR logo). Modest cost can be included in project proposal – see attached forms.
10. Appoint a Secretary and record all community decisions taken, compiling notes of meetings and all projects related documentation (including photocopies of accounts of all expenditures receipts and invoices related to their CEPs- IPs should ensure that this happens).
11. Provide a written evaluation of the project upon completion. With needs great and resources limited, preference will be given to communities that demonstrate a maximum degree of compliance with the above.
12. Communities should participate and represented during the procurement of the project materials. (see CEP procurement procedures)

Responsibilities of implementing partners:

1. Community sensitization through existing Cheifdom Development Committees CDCs, direct communities towards possibility of support to small-scale initiatives, brief communities on policy priorities and indicate initial funding.
2. Help communities identify, prioritize lists of projects and facilitate the designing of a project (as per standard format and below criteria) and submit to UNHCR field offices for approval.
3. Ensure technical capacity to help community verify plans, fill project submissions etc.
4. Once approved, supply resources procured with involvement of the communities and deliver materials, and also assist community to implement project. (Ideally communities would procure material with funds allocated. This approach should be taken if feasible)
5. Inform communities of actual value of projects, and provide regular update on all expenditure on projects to communities and UNHCR.
6. Ensure full accountability to communities (and UNHCR) of the use of project funds.
7. Aid community to monitor and evaluate project, providing training/ capacity building of Project Management Committees (PMC) where necessary.
8. Report to UNHCR field offices on any protection related issues perceived within communities (training will be provided).

9. Create work plan and report upon this to UNHCR field offices with monthly updates of progress of all on going CEP and a final comprehensive report upon completion.
10. Accept direction from UNHCR field locations
11. Obtain approval from UNHCR field offices for projects requested by communities.
12. Assist NaCSA in gathering information on community profiling as information management system is established by NaCSA.
13. Participate in periodic reviews of the programme.

Responsibilities of NaCSA (all at field level)

1. Participate in the project approval process (as part of the project committee coordinated by UNHCR field office).
2. When relevant, ensure the coordination and approval of lines ministries.
3. Coordinate the activities of agencies working with particular communities to avoid duplication (general inter agency coordination responsibility).
4. Participate in the verification and monitoring of projects outcomes.
5. Consider target communities for additional support if any.

Responsibilities of UNHCR Field Teams.

1. Help BO Freetown select limited number of implementing partners for the community Empowerment programme and designation to Chiefdom.
2. Inform Implementing Partners of availability of funds per district and per chiefdom.
3. Approve expenditure on each community empowerment projects below Le15, 000,000 following verification that it is within general objectives and corresponds to priority needs, criteria and guidelines (referring to BOF/T if limit is to be exceeded)
4. Hold regular review meetings with implementing partners, NaCSA and communities.
5. Maintain a register of projects, monitoring Implementing Partners, NaCSA and commitment.
6. Ensure that UNHCR protection officers are part of the monitoring process, providing training to UNHCR, NaCSA and implementing partner field staff on protection and returnee monitoring issues.
7. Clarify to partner's responsibilities of individual UNHCR field staff.
8. Report to UNHCR BO FT of progress / constraints etc. seeking support where required.

Responsibilities of UNHCR BO FT (Programme – Reintegration Team):

1. Support with guidelines and policy (standardising methodology, forms etc)
2. Assist in the selection of implementing partners
3. Allow decision making on individual community empowerment project selection at field level
4. Co-ordinate resources and ensure that adequate funds are made available through Implementing Partner's sub-agreements for field support staff, contribution to office running cost and in kind: transport, communications equipment and other non-expendable property.
5. Act as overall external focal point and, with compiled information from field location, ensure that all actors are adequately informed of the programme.
6. Liaise with HQ Reintegration Section to develop standardized indicators for the CEPs.

Annex H.

List of projects visited

Kono District

Chiefdom	Town/village/ project site	Project name	Imple- ment- ation year	Imple- ment- ing partner
Nimikoro	Yengema	Women's skills Training Centre - GBV	2003	IRC
Nimikoro	Yengema	Tongoma Community Store	2003	IRC
Nimikoro	Yengema	Yengema Secondary School Rehabilitation	2003	IAS
Nimikoro	Bumpeh	Community Health Post	2002	WV
Nimikoro	Bumpeh	Bore Hole Well	2003	PWJ
Nimikoro	Njagbwema	Health staff quarters	2004	WV
Nimiyama	Sewafe	Sewafe secondary school	2003	WV
Nimiyama	Sewafe	Women's skills training center	2004	WV
Nimiyama	Sewafe	Community Health post	2002	WV
Nimiyama	Peya	Latrine construction	2004	WV
Nimiyama	Taama Forest	Bambafoidu primary school	2003	WV
Nimiyama	Sandia	Community primary school	2003	WV
Nimiyama	Sandia	Community health post	2003	WV
Fiama	Njagbwema Fiama	UMC primary school	2002	NRC
Soa	Kainkordu	RC primary school	2002	IRC
Soa	Kainkordu	Community Health post	2003	WV
Soa	Tongoro	Community Court Barri	2003	GTZ
Soa	Fuidu Mongor	Community Court Barri	2003	GTZ
Soa	Manjama	Petty Trading	2003	GTZ
Soa	Gbamandu	IVS Cultivation	2003-	GTZ
Soa	Gbamandu	+ court barri	2004	GTZ
Soa	Fuero	Community Court Barri	2003	GTZ
Gbane	Koardu	Community Market	2003	GTZ
Kandor				
Mafindor	Kamiendor	Rice Mill Construction	2003	GTZ
Mafindor	Kamiendor	IVS Cultivation	2003	GTZ
Kamara	Bendu II	Women's skills training center	2003	WV
Sandor	Yormandu	Women's skills training center	2003	WV
Sandor	Fensedu	Community primary school	2004	WV
Sandor	Wordu	Community Guest House	2003	WV
Sandor	Waidala	Community primary school	2004	WV
Sandor	Tefeya	Community center/barri	2003	WV
Nimikoro	Bongema II	Water reservoir, gravity fed system	2002	WV
Nimikoro	Njala	Community health post	2003	WV
Nimikoro	Njaiama	Women's skills training	2003	IRC

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		center		
Nimikoro	Masayinfeh	Community grain store	2003	IRC
Gorama	Selukuma	Community grain store	2003	IRC
Kono				
Gorama	Kangama	Store and bakery	2003	IRC
Kono				
Gorama	Kangama	Women's training center	2003	IRC
Kono				

Kambia District

Chiefdom	Town/village /project site	Project name	Implementation year	Implementing partner
Magbema	Thormina	Women skills development	2003-4	ARC
Magbema	Rokupr	Women gara tie dying	2003-4	ARC
Magbema	Rokupr	Youth fishing association	2004	ARC
Magbema	Kambia	Women cloth weaving hair dressing	2003-4	ARC
Magbema	Kambia	Women skills training	2003-4	ARC
Magbema	Kambia	Youth carpentry association	2003-4	ARC
Magbema	Kambia	Office for adult literacy / numeracy training	2003-4	ARC
Magbema	Kambia	Women entertainment centre	2004	ARC
Magbema	Kambia	Women's trade store	2004	ARC
Magbema	Kambia	Nursery School	2004	ARC
Magbema	Kambia	Rice Mill and drying floor	2003	ARC
Magbema	Mathan	Community School	2004	ARC
Samu	Bubuya	Community School	2003-4	ARC
Samu	Bubuya	Women skills training	2003-4	ARC
Samu	Kychom	Women skills training	2004	ARC
Samu	Kychom	Woodland establishment	2003	ARC
Samu	Kassirie	Health Unit	2003	ARC
Masungbala	Munu	Bamoi Munu Skills Training Project	2003-4	ARC
Masungbala	Bamoi Munu	Community School	2004	ARC
Masungbala	Kawula	Rice Mill and drying floor	2003	ARC
Masungbala	Benah	Community School	2004	ARC
Gbinleh	Tawuya	Women and Youth Skills Training Centre	2003-4	ARC
Dixon				
Gbinleh	Tawuya	Health Unit	2003	ARC
Dixon				

Kailahun District

Chiefdom	Town/village/ project site	Project name	Implem- entation year	Implem- enting partner
Upper Bambara	Garama	Construction Community Barri	2003	NaCSA/ Oxfam
Upper Bambara	Pendembu	Microbusiness	2004	BPDA
Mandu	Mobai	Micro-finance and construction of Women Skills Training Center	2003	NaCSA/ Oxfam
Dea	Baiwala	Construction Community Market	2003	BPDA
Dea	Dodo	Construction Community Barri	2004	BPDA
Dea	Ngooh	Construction Community Barri	2004	NaCSA/ Oxfam
Malema	Jojoima	Construction of Maternity post	2004	BPDA
Malema	Jojoima	Construction of Rice mill and provision of machine	2004	BPDA
Malema	Salina	Construction Community Barri	2004	BPDA
Malema	Gawama	Construction Community Barri	2004	BPDA
Malema	Ngeihun junction	Construction of 3-classroom school	2004	BPDA
Peje Bongre	Manowa	Micro business	2004	GTZ / PACE
Peje Bongre	Pujehun	Community Store	2004	GTZ / PACE
Peje Bongre	Foindu	Rice mill	2004	GTZ / PACE
Peje West	Jocibu	Micro-business	2004	GTZ /PACE
Peje West	Bunumbu	Mechanical rice cultivation	2004	GTZ /PACE
Peje West	Kigbi	Maternity ward	2004	GTZ / PACE
Luawa	Kpandembu	Court barrie	2004	GTZ
Luawa	Kailahun town	Micro-finance	2003	Oxfam / NACSA
Luawa	Dodokortuma	Micro-finance and women's tailoring	2003	Oxfam / NACSA
Luawa	Dodokortuma	Court barrie	2004	GTZ / PACE
Kissi Teng	Bayama	Court barrie	2003	GTZ
Kissi Kama	Dia	Rice mill	2003	GTZ
Kissi Tongi	Buedu	Guest House	2004	GTZ

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Kissi Tongi	Buedu	Micro-finance	2003	Oxfam / NACSA
Jawie	Daru	School building	2003	BPDA
Njaluahun	Segbwema	Court barrie	2004	BPDA

Pujehun District

Chiefdom	Town/village/ project site	Project name	Implem- entation year	Implem- enting partner
Makpele	Guissiwulu	Road rehabilitation	2000	GTZ-MLP
Makpele	Guissiwulu	Health Centre	2000	GTZ-MLP
Makpele	Guissiwulu	Primary School	2001	GTZ-MLP
Makpele	Guissiwulu	Community Barri	2003	GTZ
Makpele	Zimmi	Tree planting	2001	EFA
Makpelel	Zimmi	Secondary School	2002	GTZ-MLP
Makpele	Zimmi	Log bridges	2003	GTZ
Makpele	Zimmi	Guest House	2004	GTZ
Makpele	Gofor	Tree planting	2001	EFA
Makpele	Dar es-Salam	Primary School	2003	GTZ
Makpele	Dar es-Salam	Latrines, School Furniture	2004	GTZ
Sorogbema	Fairo	Toilets	2004	GTZ
Sorogbema	Fairo	Rice Mill	2003	GTZ
Sorogbema	Fanima	Road rehabilitation	2000	GTZ-MLP
Sorogbema	Fanima	Health Centre	2000	GTZ-MLP
Sorogbema	Fanima	Primary School	2001	GTZ-MLP
Sorogbema	Fanima	Cassava Processing Unit	2003	GTZ
Sorogbema	Wai	Road rehabilitation	2000	GTZ-MLP
Sorogbema	Wai	Primary School	2000	GTZ-MLP
Sorogbema	Wai	Cassava Processing Unit	2004	GTZ
Sorogbema	Sulima	Provision of fishingboat	2001	FAO
Sorogbema	Sulima	Cassava processing unit	2001	FAO

Annex I. Acronyms

ARC	American Refugee Committee
BPDA	Bo Pujehun Development Association
CCSEA	Coordination Committee for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
CDC	Chiefdom Development Committee
CDD	Community Driven Development
CEP	Community Empowerment Project
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme
DRC	District Recovery Committee
ECOMOC	Monitoring Observer Group of the Economic Community of West Africa States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFA	Environment Fund for Africa
EVI	Extremely Vulnerable Individual
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HDI	Human Development Index
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMC	International Medical Corps
IRC	International Rescue Committee
NaCSA	National Commission for Social Action
NCRRR	National Commission for Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Resettlement
NFI	Non Food Item
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NRC	National Recovery Committee
NRS	National Recovery Strategy
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PMC	Project Management Committee
PWJ	Peace Winds Japan
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SCF	Save the Children
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SLIS	Sierra Leone Information System
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TST	Transitional Support Team
UAM	Unaccompanied Minor
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee

WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
4Rs	Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction