

LIBERIA

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Ensure the protection of Sierra Leonean refugees (with particular focus on the special needs of refugee women and children); provide basic humanitarian assistance to refugees living in camps; and organise skills-training to increase their self-reliance and capacity to reintegrate when they return home.
- Closely monitor the situation in areas of origin (in co-operation with the Sierra Leone office); provide refugees with comprehensive information on aspects of repatriation and reintegration; when appropriate, prepare for mass repatriation and, in the meantime, facilitate repatriation for those individuals who already want to return.
- Continue to implement a multi-sectoral response to the problem of sexual and gender-based violence, through preventive measures and legal, medical and psychological support to the victims.
- Assist Liberian refugees in countries of asylum who wish to do so, to return to their places of origin (on an individual basis) and ensure their protection.
- Protect and assist urban non-Sierra Leonean refugees (with health care, education, and subsistence allowances); and organise projects and skills-training to promote their self-reliance, as appropriate durable solutions are sought for them.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED, AND CONSTRAINTS

Sierra Leonean Refugees

The civil war in Liberia has spread rapidly to areas not previously affected by fighting, causing massive displacements of Liberian citizens and impeding humanitarian operations in the country. The prevailing state of insecurity precipitated the introduction of a nationwide state of emergency and there is apprehension

that it could deteriorate further. At least three times during the last six months, the road to Sinje was closed to traffic due to fighting and general insecurity. This was the main route for the facilitated voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leoneans, which UNHCR shifted into an evacuation operation as the conflict intensified in Liberia. The operation was suspended on the eve of elections in Sierra Leone, and could not be resumed afterwards for reasons of insecurity. Between February and April 2002, UNHCR assisted 10,674 refugees to return to Sierra Leone.

The hazards faced by refugees and humanitarian workers in Liberia are highlighted by the 20 June attack on the Sinje refugee camp in Grand Cape Mount County by dissidents. Five nurses working for a UNHCR implementing partner were abducted during the attack, which left four refugees dead and dislodged thousands of people, including Liberians. The camp was looted and destroyed. Prior to the attack, Sinje hosted some 11,000 Sierra Leonean refugees and 13,000 displaced Liberians. The refugees and IDPs have relocated to relative safety in Monrovia or crossed into Sierra Leone. Others remain displaced in inaccessible remote villages in the conflict areas. Should the conflict continue to spread, Sierra Leonean refugees remain at risk of being uprooted from camps in Montserrado County.

Despite increasing insecurity, UNHCR's assistance programme for Sierra Leonean refugees have proceeded according to plan, with well co-ordinated activities implemented in collaboration with national and international implementing partners. Refugee protection was pursued by promoting refugee laws, providing legal representation and establishing of a police security project. UNHCR collaborated with Liberian Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) to provide legal representation to

refugee survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). One case was successfully prosecuted and the perpetrator sentenced to detention in prison. Two other SGBV cases are on the trial docket. The deployment of uniformed, unarmed police officers in refugee camps has led to a reduction in the number of incidents of property theft. This arrangement is the product of a memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and the Government through LRRRC and the Liberia National Police. Police signs are installed in camps as a strategy to prevent or minimise the uncontrolled entry and exit of armed elements. UNHCR organised a lecture on the international legal framework for refugee protection with emphasis on women and children, was held at the University of Liberia for about 100 students and four professors in international and human rights law of the Faculty of Law.

Sierra Leonean refugees continue to benefit from integrated health services comprising curative and preventive treatment of recurrent diseases. 5,648 children are receiving primary education, representing a 20 per cent increase over last year's enrolment. Another 300 refugee students are enrolled in secondary schools outside the camps. Fifty female teachers and fifteen female teacher assistants were recruited to improve the gender balance and to encourage the active participation of females in education. An estimated 138 male and 116 female refugees are undergoing vocational/skills-training. School supplies and resource materials were distributed to 6,776 individuals including students, teachers and administrators.

Some 893 registered farmers (466 female) all from camps in Montserrado and selected demonstration sites are continuing with the production in rice, roots, tubers, and assorted vegetable crops. Over 45 hectares of land have been cultivated in assorted vegetables and rice. 135 refugee farmers were trained in the construction of canals, seed testing, incubation and nursery management. These efforts are now being threatened by the increasing insecurity.

In Liberia, UNHCR's response to the allegations of the *Report on Sexual Violence and Exploitation* was co-ordinated in collaboration with its operational partners. The most significant achievement in this regard was the development of a comprehensive work plan for effective prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The provision of services has been reviewed to eliminate management deficiencies that may contribute to the use of humanitarian assistance to exploit refugees. There is increased involvement of refugee women in distribution activities as well as an increase in UNHCR's presence during distributions. Refugees are being sensitised to their rights and entitlements. A series of sensitisation and awareness training workshops were held for all UNHCR and NGO staff to enable them to detect, to prevent and respond to SGBV issues. Standards of accountability were developed and are included in all UNHCR sub agreements and contracts with operational partners. Sanitation facilities have also been reallocated (and increased in number) by sex to avoid males and females having to use the same facilities. Sanitary supplies are distributed regularly to women and girls.

Eighty-six huts were constructed for adolescents in the Montserrado camps in order to separate them from their parents and reduce the chances of early exposure to sex. The food distribution system saw a return to the family food distribution or scooping method, which involves women and ensures that adequate food supply reached the beneficiaries. Post distribution monitoring of food received by refugees was strengthened.

Sensitisation and awareness raising on environmental preservation activities were carried out in the refugee camps and host areas. More than 300 refugee children are being trained from an environmental education booklet produced by the Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA) with UNHCR funding.

Progress as measured against indicators

Impact/Performance Indicators	Actual Progress
Improvement in the processing of refugee identification cards.	Processing of refugee identification cards received a boost with the strengthening of co-operation between UNHCR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The data-entry and processing of the cards have increased considerably to about 500 during the last quarter as compared to less than 25 per cent of this number previously.
Teaching skills of teachers enhanced.	149 teachers received in-service teacher training.
Increase in the number of refugees receiving curative health services.	26,987 refugees received curative treatment for various diseases including malaria, diarrhoea and sexually transmitted infections.
Agricultural inputs to refugees increased productivity.	Provision of agricultural inputs (farm tools/seeds and local planting materials) to 1,506; 709 of whom are females.

Liberian Internally Displaced

In response to the humanitarian crisis engendered by the massive population displacements caused by the ongoing war, UNHCR was constrained to expand its activities to include providing assistance to Liberian internally displaced. Accordingly, a number of activities were undertaken in support of IDPs. These included the provision of shelter, household items, non-food items, medical/health care as well as advocacy for their protection and the provision of administrative and logistical support to the LRRRC, which is also responsible for IDP matters in the country.

Before June 20, UNHCR provided transit facilities for more than 25,000 IDPs in the VOA, Zuannah and Sinje refugee camps. The IDPs in these camps occupied school buildings, distribution centers and other public buildings. In all the camps, refugees and IDPs used the same education, health, and sanitation facilities. Earlier in the year UNHCR provided plastic sheets, mats, blankets, and kitchen sets to more than 50,000 IDPs in three refugee camps in the city of Gbarnga.

Urban Refugees

UNHCR provides protection and assistance such as health care, education and subsistence allowance to 16 urban refugees out of a total number of 45. In the absence of repatriation and resettlement as a durable solution for this group, the most appropriate option would be

the provision of small business grants to enable them to pursue income generation activities. This would also encourage local integration. An initial grant to a Sudanese refugee has enabled him to start a rice store.

REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY-DECEMBER 2002

During the second half of the year, UNHCR will emphasise the protection of refugees' rights. Efforts will be made to continue the provision of multi-sectoral services including food, shelter, health, education and psychosocial counselling to meet the basic human needs of the refugees. Renewed emphasis will be placed on the facilitated voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees to their country of origin. Actions and initiatives aimed at effectively preventing and responding to incidents of SGBV will be sustained.

Regarding inter-agency co-operation, UNHCR will continue its collaboration with other UN agencies, international NGOs and national NGOs in forging a common approach to responding to the humanitarian crisis in Liberia. In May 2002, UNHCR

participated with other UN agencies in drawing up the CAP and in the updating of the Mid-Year Review of the inter-agency Consolidated Appeal (CAP) document for 2002.

Financial Data (USD)

Annual Programme Budget and Trust Funds			
Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available	Obligation Level
6,737,148	7,044,079	4,631,621	2,491,600