

Sierra Leone



Main objectives

- Provide international protection and basic humanitarian assistance to Liberian refugees.
- Facilitate the repatriation of Liberian refugees who opt to return home in conditions of safety and dignity; provide information about security and living conditions in Liberia.
- Facilitate local integration, naturalization or resettlement for Liberian refugees who arrived in Sierra Leone during the 1990s and are not willing to repatriate.
- Enhance Government capacity to handle refugee issues following the adoption and implementation of national refugee legislation, including assisting new government structures to become operational.

- In collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone and other partners, pursue the reintegration of Sierra Leonean returnees, leading to a complete phase-out of interventions by UNHCR (i.e. rebuild national protection structures and hand over assistance activities to development actors).

Planning figures		
Population	Jan 2005	Dec 2005
Liberia (refugees)	50,000	24,000
Sierra Leonean returnees	30,000	0
Total	80,000	24,000

Total requirements: 25,043,136

Working environment

Major developments

In 2004, political stability and the progressive restoration of state authority permitted a further 30,000 Sierra Leoneans to return. By 31 July 2004 – the end of the organized operation launched in 2001 – some 280,000 Sierra Leoneans had returned home, of whom almost 180,000 had been assisted by UNHCR.

The progressive reduction in numbers of UNAMSIL troops from 16,000 in 2003 to 5,000 by the end of 2004 (and only 3,250 envisaged by mid-2005) is testimony to the countrywide exercise of control by the government authorities, as is the smooth operation to date of the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Constraints

Road conditions are deplorable, especially in main areas of return, affecting both repatriation and reintegration operations, with many sections almost impassable during the heavy rains, which are at their most intense from June to September. Unfortunately, it must be assumed that these road conditions, and other associated infrastructure problems, will persist in 2005 and beyond.

Under the Sierra Leonean reintegration programme, the main social problem faced by returnees is the lack of dependable, legal employment opportunities for young men.

Strategy

Sierra Leonean returnees

Having terminated the organized voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leoneans at the end of July 2004, UNHCR will conclude its programme of reintegration activities in December 2005. The advocacy role played by the Office, which is intended to bridge the gap from relief to development through

the 4Rs strategy, has yielded positive results, with the presence of the UNDP/TST (Transitional Support Team) being accommodated in UNHCR field offices to ensure continuity of interventions. With the focus of reintegration efforts on consolidating and linking of work already undertaken to the longer-term programmes of development actors, UNHCR will only fund new projects in 2005 if they are sure to reach completion by the year's end.

Liberian repatriation

In 2005, the focus of UNHCR's efforts in Sierra Leone will be on continuing facilitated repatriation of Liberian refugees throughout the year. Then, after the elections planned to take place towards the end of 2005, UNHCR will launch the anticipated promotion phase of the voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees living in eight camps. The field office in Zimmi will be reinforced to respond to the needs of the voluntary repatriation operation, as the majority of the returnees will travel through Zimmi. Some 24,000 Liberian refugees are expected to return during the year.

Care of Liberian refugees in camps

Standards of protection and assistance for refugees remaining in camps will be closely monitored and maintained in 2005. Continuous efforts will be made to ensure the regular distribution of sanitary kits to women and girls aged 14-54 in all refugee camps (more than 17,500 kits were distributed in 2004). In 2004, women's representation on various refugee committees stood at roughly 40 per cent. This achievement will be further built on in 2005.

The continued provision of camp services will be rationalized as the number of refugees accommodated in the camps decreases. The regrouping of remaining populations will be reviewed as necessary, and could entail the closure of some camps. The needs of Sierra Leonean host communities will continue to be considered. Restoration of land to original owners and the handover of camp infrastructure to host communities will be carefully planned in concert with governmental and local authorities.

Residual Liberian refugees

Legal assistance and promotion of local integration for the residual group of Liberian refugees (who arrived more than a decade ago) will be provided by UNHCR. In early 2004, the Cabinet decided to proceed with the enactment of refugee legislation, using a model of the draft Refugee Protection Bill provided by UNHCR. Assuming the law is passed before the end of 2004, the year 2005 will be the first full year of operation of new government structures mandated to handle refugee issues, in accordance with the Sierra Leone Government's obligations under the UN and OAU Refugee Conventions. These structures will comprise: 1) a National Refugee Authority consisting of high-level government representatives with responsibility for policy issues; 2) an Implementing Agency (the National Commission for Social Action) with responsibility for operational issues and refugee status determination at first instance level; and 3) a Refugee Status Appeal Committee. The draft model legislation mandates UNHCR to play a key advisory role with respect to all three structures. In 2005, a major function of the Office will be to promote local capacity building in protection and assistance by supporting the implementation of the national refugee law and assisting the new governmental structures to become operational and assume responsibility for refugee issues. Capacity building of civil society and local NGOs will complement this process.

Organization and implementation

Management structure

In 2005, UNHCR will have a total of 174 staff, comprising 32 international, 142 national and will benefit from the assistance of United Nations Volunteers, and Secondees/Consultants. The staff will operate from six offices located in Freetown, Kenema, Bo, Koidu, Zimmi and Kailahun. The office in Kambia will close at the end of December 2004 as a consequence of the termination of the repatriation and reintegration operation for the Sierra Leonean returnees in the district.



Arriving back home in the Kenema region. UNHCR / N. Behring

Coordination

UNHCR implements its programmes with its government counterpart, the National Commission for Social Action, 15 international NGOs, three national NGOs and one governmental organization. UNHCR will continue to facilitate the field presence of development actors, such as the World Bank and UNDP Transitional Support Team (TST), by making office space and communication equipment available in field locations. Community Empowerment Projects have been implemented within the framework of the "4Rs" strategy in most returnee areas. As foreseen in the strategy for phase out, UNHCR has already successfully handed over certain responsibilities to development actors in a series of multilateral initiatives (UN, World Bank, African Development Bank, Government, EU, DFID and others). UNHCR also made modest inputs into capacity building of national and international NGOs. UNHCR coordinates with the Government through the relevant line ministries, providing facilities and logistical support.

Offices
Freetown
Bo
Kailahun
Kenema
Koidu
Zimmi

Partners
Government agencies
National Commission for Social Action
Sierra Leone Roads Authority
NGOs
African Concern
African Development and Emergency Organization
American Refugee Committee
Arch-Diocesan Development Office
Bo/Pujehun Development Associates
Caritas Kenema
Catholic Relief Services
Christian Children's Fund Inc.
Environmental Foundation for Africa
International Medical Corps
International Rescue Committee
Lutheran World Federation
OXFAM International
Peace Winds Japan
Sierra Leone Red Cross
Talking Drum Studio
World Vision International
Others
<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i>

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and coordination	5,803,912
Community services	2,266,746
Crop production	224,826
Domestic needs	1,259,267
Education	3,600,511
Food	90,992
Forestry	137,912
Health	739,071
Income generation	123,394
Legal assistance	296,983
Operational support (to agencies)	2,608,695
Sanitation	574,534
Shelter/other infrastructure	193,983
Transport/logistics	3,056,862
Water (non-agricultural)	853,180
Total operations	21,830,868
Programme support	3,212,268
Total	25,043,136

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