

## Part 4

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# The Resettlement of Displaced Civilians and Resettlement/ Rehabilitation of Ex-combatants



Abducted child soldiers are returned by the RUF to the UN, May 2001

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# Resettlement of Displaced Civilians and Resettlement/Rehabilitation of Ex-combatants

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## Introduction

The 10-year civil war in Sierra Leone inflicted death on more than 25,000 and caused the internal displacement of more than 1.2 million people. An estimated 500,000 people fled Sierra Leone into neighbouring countries. The war has resulted in the devastation of the economy and the destruction and debilitation of houses, infrastructure and basic services in both rural and urban communities.

The previous peace agreements and the on-going peace talks have rekindled the opportunity for peace and reconciliation within the country. A central requirement for peace is the disarmament and demobilisation of all combatants and their reintegration into society. As these and other tenets are being implemented, the government of Sierra Leone, together with its local and international partners, are endeavouring to extend humanitarian assistance to previously inaccessible parts of the country and to re-engage in reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in support of war-affected populations.

A core part of this process involves the planning and implementation of programmes to support the resettlement and reintegration of the internally displaced, returning refugees and ex-combatants and their dependants back into their communities. Resettlement therefore is in part conditional upon the continued progress of the disarmament and demobilisation process and, with this, the expansion and consolidation of security within the country. As this develops, the provision of support to reconstruct and rehabilitate the livelihood and security of returnees will enhance the opportunity for reconciliation and the shift to longer-term development.

The National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NCRRR) therefore in carrying out the resettlement part of its mandate has made sure that all planned resettlement programmes are gender-sensitive. Through these programmes the Commission reaffirmed the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and has stressed the importance of their equal participation in sustainable development.

The first phase of resettlement began in April 2001 for those internally displaced persons (IDPs) resettling into areas declared safe by the government. So far, to date (May 2001) the NCRRR, together with its partner agencies, has facilitated the resettlement of about 7,000 people in various parts of the country from the Western Area IDP camps.

It is hoped that, given the positive developments resulting from the Abuja meetings, that the government will declare new areas safe, so that we can start the facilitated resettlement of both Sierra Leone refugees and IDPs back into their communities. This will include those refugees still living in neighbouring countries and those that have already returned to Sierra Leone, but who have been temporarily located in settlements or host communities as their area of origin has not yet been declared safe. In addition, the assistance offered through NCRRR and its partner agencies will support the reintegration of ex-combatants and their dependants through community-based programmes.

These programmes, such as the provision of basic services and employment opportunities, offer a light at the end of the disarmament and demobilisation process and provide a bridge for ex-combatants re-entering civilian life. This bridge, which needs to be strengthened by community-based reconciliation efforts, offers the means by which ex-combatants and their dependants can re-establish themselves within home or new communities for building a new and meaningful existence.

The paper focuses on the support that is offered to displaced people as they resettle back into their communities. In the case of ex-combatants and their dependants, it only covers assistance being provided in support of their reintegration back into communities. This is NCRRR's mandate. Other aspects of support to ex-combatants and their dependants through the different phases of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration are the purview of the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR). Of note to this consultation are policy and programmes that NCDDR have developed for female combatants, the assistance to the dependants of male ex-combatants during disarmament and demobilisation, female child ex-combatants and abductees.

### **Principles of Resettlement**

The key principles on which the resettlement programmes have been based are as follows:

- ◆ The government of Sierra Leone will only facilitate resettlement into an area when it is deemed that the area in question is sufficiently safe to allow for the protection of returnees;
- ◆ As far as possible support measures provided during the resettlement process will be standardised and in parity to avoid inter- and intra-community tensions;

- ◆ As far as possible support for integrated resettlement, reconstruction and rehabilitation will be community-based, incorporating resettling internally displaced persons (IDPs), repatriating refugees, ex-combatants with their dependants and existing resident populations;
- ◆ All beneficiary groups are fully informed of the support they are entitled to and of the procedures for accessing them;
- ◆ Resettlement and reintegration programmes for IDPs, refugees and ex-combatants and their dependants are integrated as far as possible;
- ◆ Every effort will be made to ensure that there is close coordination of all aspects of assistance for the resettlement process to ensure appropriate targeting and efficient use of resources;
- ◆ The resettlement process is closely monitored to ensure that appropriate interventions or adjustments are made for those beneficiaries failing to cope adequately during this transitional period.

## **Beneficiary Groups**

In view of the scale of displacement within the country and the longevity of the conflict, there exists a broad spectrum of beneficiary groups to be supported in the resettlement



Return of abducted child soldiers

process. This also includes existing resident populations in areas in which resettlement is occurring, who too have been severely affected by the conflict and for whom assistance is also required for the most vulnerable. This is to ensure parity of assistance and reduce potential tensions that may arise.

The various beneficiary groups are as follows:

***Registered internally displaced persons (IDPs)***

This population consists of those displaced persons who have been registered and verified, and are currently receiving IDP support services. This group includes spontaneous returning refugees whose areas of origin are not safe for resettling.

When their home of origin is declared safe for resettlement, these IDPs will enter into the resettlement programme. This will include transportation and the receipt of a resettlement package, the potential for entry on to seeds and tools or other employment-based safety-net programmes, and benefits from community rehabilitation and reconstruction targeted at basic service provision and income generation.

***Vulnerable groups***

Within the registered IDP beneficiary population, as with other beneficiary groups, there are a number of vulnerable groups deserving special attention during the resettlement process, who include:

- ◆ female-headed households (with no additional able-bodied persons);
- ◆ pregnant and lactating women;
- ◆ mentally and physically handicapped persons (including amputees and war-wounded);
- ◆ orphans;
- ◆ the infirm;
- ◆ the elderly.

***Female-headed households***

Female-headed households face considerable challenges in returning to their resettlement areas and rebuilding their lives, particularly those who do not have extended families or able-bodied children to support them. Attention has to be given to their basic requirements, such as shelter, rebuilding their livelihoods and protection from sexual violence. Close monitoring of their ability to cope during this transitional process is crucial.

Female-headed households account for roughly 45 per cent of registered IDP households.

### ***The disabled***

The exact number of people, both civilians and ex-combatants, who have been disabled as a result of mutilation or war-wounds is unknown. In the case of amputation victims, there are currently 401 registered amputees. It is envisaged that this number will increase as new areas become accessible. Estimates of the war-wounded are as high as 30,000. There are other disabled groups requiring special assistance, such as polio victims.

The current response to these vulnerable people consists primarily of the essential tasks of physical reconstruction, such as through the use of prostheses and physiotherapy, as well as psychological rehabilitation. A key challenge now being faced is in supporting this vulnerable group to become reintegrated back into their communities and re-engaged in meaningful economic activities. The greatest challenge will be faced in rural areas. Special programmes need to be developed to support this transitional process.

### ***Unregistered Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)***

There is no clear information on the number of unregistered IDPs in the country. This population of IDPs has not been registered and so has not benefited from the support services provided to registered IDPs. Given the drive to phase down IDP camps and support resettlement, the government does not support the registration of new caseloads, unless there is a significant new displacement of people.

Despite this, unregistered IDPs are not excluded from support during the resettlement process. They will be eligible to enter on to seeds and tools programmes and/or other employment-based safety net/income generating schemes, as well as gain benefits from community-based initiatives supporting the rehabilitation and reconstruction of basic services and the resuscitation of the local economy. It is also recommended that agencies consider providing non-food items to the most vulnerable members of the community in the resettlement area. This could be achieved through targeted distributions or through employment-based safety net schemes.

Although this group will not be eligible for resettlement food rations, provisions of food aid for vulnerable groups within this category may be provided through employment-based safety-net schemes, school feeding programmes, VGF rations in cases of food insecurity and, in cases where there is acute malnutrition, therapeutic feeding. The promotion of such interventions will be determined through food security and nutritional monitoring.

### ***Refugees and returnees***

Refugees who repatriate spontaneously (without any UNHCR involvement or assistance) to a situation of internal displacement, shall be considered as IDPs and included under relevant mechanisms for IDPs' resettlement. For proper tracking purposes, their formal refugee status will be stated on their resettlement benefit cards. These returnees will not be entitled to benefit from UNHCR repatriation assistance, but will be included under community-based reintegration assistance by UNHCR and other agencies.

Sierra Leonean refugees returning under the framework of UNHCR-assisted repatriation will be given assistance in parity to that offered to registered IDPs.

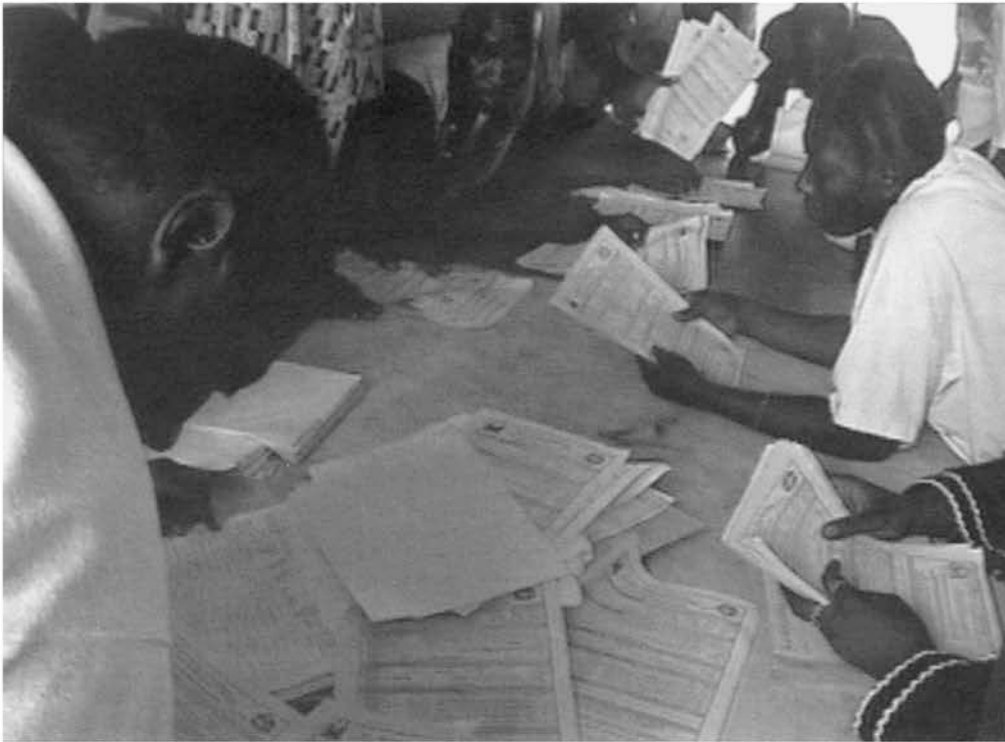
Organised transportation will however only be provided in the context of a promoted return. This will consist of the provision of transport to the most vulnerable households. In the case of food, a two-month food ration will be provided in their areas of return. This will be distributed at the chiefdom-level alongside resettlement food rations provided to resettling, registered IDPs.

In parity with registered IDPs, refugees will receive a resettlement package. In the case of shelter, ways will be found to ensure that those who cannot build on their own will be provided with assistance to do so. Like other beneficiary groups, returnees will have the opportunity for entering on to seeds and tools projects and/or other employment-based safety net/income generating schemes, as well as gaining benefits from community-based initiatives supporting the rehabilitation and reconstruction of basic services and the resuscitation of the local economy.

Like the internally displaced, the decision as to when their homes of origins are suitably safe to allow their facilitated repatriation will be determined through the Resettlement Assessment Committees, for which UNHCR is represented at all levels.

### ***Non-displaced war-affected population***

Non-displaced, war affected populations living in areas of resettlement will receive benefits in the resettlement process similar to that of unregistered IDPs living with host families. This includes the opportunity of entering on to seeds and tools projects and/or other employment-based safety net/income generating schemes, as well as benefits from community-based initiatives supporting the rehabilitation and reconstruction of basic services and the resuscitation of the local economy. As with resettling non-registered IDPs, it is recommended that agencies consider providing non-food items to those most vulnerable members of the community in the resettlement area who were not entitled to a resettlement package. This could be achieved through targeted distributions or through employment-based safety net schemes.



UN documentation of abducted children

Although this group will not be eligible for resettlement food rations, provision of food aid for vulnerable groups within this category may be provided through employment-based safety-net schemes, school feeding programmes, VGF rations in cases of food insecurity and, in cases where there is acute malnutrition, therapeutic feeding. The promotion of such interventions will be determined through food security and nutritional monitoring.

It is envisaged that in areas yet to be declared safe for resettlement, this population group will be provided with humanitarian assistance by non-governmental and international organisations where access is feasible.

#### ***Ex-combatants and their dependants***

Each ex-combatant discharged from the disarmament and demobilisation process, is provided with assistance to support his or her reintegration into civilian life. This is provided and distributed by the Executive Secretariat of the NCDDR.

Through the reintegration programme of NCDDR, ex-combatants are supported by the training and employment sub-project activities. In addition, ex-combatants and their

dependants, as they reintegrate into communities, will benefit from community-based initiatives supporting the rehabilitation and reconstruction of basic services and the resuscitation of the local economy.

### **Community-based projects**

A core support component of the resettlement process, over and above immediate 'start-up' assistance, will occur through community-based reconstruction and rehabilitation activities that enhance reconciliation and livelihood development. Such activities include:

- ◆ agriculture, fisheries and livestock rehabilitation;
- ◆ shelter;
- ◆ rehabilitation of community infrastructure;
- ◆ re-establishment of essential services;
- ◆ promotion of reconciliation;
- ◆ small enterprise promotion and vocational training schemes;
- ◆ capacity building of local organisations.

As community-based activities, the participation of all members of the community in their development and implementation is a prerequisite for building both the community's and households' livelihood security. Such activities will be a cornerstone for supporting the resettlement and reintegration of IDPs, refugees, ex-combatants and their dependents into their local economy and society.

Support programmes for these activities include:

- ◆ Emergency Recovery Support Fund of the Community Reintegration and Rehabilitation Programme (NCRRR);
- ◆ Training and Employment Programme of the Community Reintegration and Rehabilitation Programme (NCDDR);
- ◆ Sierra Leone Rehabilitation and Resettlement Support Programme (EC);
- ◆ Social Action and Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPA) (NCRRR);
- ◆ SRR Programme (NCRRR);
- ◆ Integrated Development Programme (NCRRR);

- ◆ Reintegration Projects (UNHCR);
- ◆ Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Programmes of NGOs, international organisations, UN agencies and line ministries.

### ***NCRRR and targeted community-based assistance for women***

Two of the above programmes of NCRRR, the ERSF and SAPA, will be used to demonstrate the specific community-based projects targeted at women:

#### ***The Social Action and Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPA)***

The Social Action and Poverty Alleviation Programme has specific areas of concern targeting women in very difficult circumstances as a result of the war.

- ◆ The Special Programmes for Women line item assists displaced women, disabled women and very poor women in income-generating activities such as soap-making and vegetable gardening. This programme has supported about 7,500 women through 30 NGOs.
- ◆ The Micro Credit Programme has benefited over 12,000 women in various safe communities countrywide with soft loans for various income generating activities.
- ◆ The SAPA Programme also rehabilitates and reconstructs maternal and child health centres that cater for the health needs of mothers and children.

#### ***The Emergency Recovery Support Fund (ERSF)***

The Emergency Recovery Support (ERSF) also supports programmes for resettling populations. Some of these projects are specifically women-focused. To date the programme has funded 13 women's programmes in various areas, for example skills and vocational training, food production and processing, vegetable gardening, capacity building and training in trauma healing, peace-building and reconciliation.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion it is important to emphasise the need for partnership between men and women in all resettlement-related programmes. The war we all know had damaging consequences. Let us, however, not lose sight of the lessons learnt during those troubled times. One of the greatest lessons learnt is the realisation about the persevering nature of women and how they coped with the responsibility of being sole breadwinners and protectors of their families during the war. Because of the difficulties women experienced during the war as sex slaves, combatants, rape victims, etc., they are the key vehicles to forgiveness, peace-building and reconciliation. It is only by involving them equally in post-war reconstruction, rehabilitation and resettlement can any meaningful



Male amputee, Amputee Camp

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development occur in Sierra Leone. The NCRRR is fully aware of and totally committed to the need to make all resettlement programmes for both displaced civilians and ex-combatants gender-sensitive. Government through the NCRRR will continue targeting the most vulnerable for specific benefits during the implementation of the resettlement strategy.