



## DONOR UPDATE: CÔTE D'IVOIRE

### JULY 2011

In the aftermath of Presidential elections at the end of November 2010, Côte d'Ivoire was shaken by an unprecedented socio-political crisis that triggered massive population displacement both internally and externally. At the height of the crisis, an estimated 2 million people were displaced internally and well over 200,000 Ivorians had fled to 13 neighbouring countries, primarily to Liberia. Since Mr Gbagbo's arrest in April 2011, a ceasefire has taken effect in Côte d'Ivoire, and since the inauguration of President Ouattara and the establishment of his new Government in May, spontaneous return movements have started to some areas. However, the situation remains tense, particularly in parts of the country that were traditionally supportive of Mr Gbagbo, and return patterns vary widely.

There are now a over **172,000 refugees** from Côte d'Ivoire in the neighbouring countries and an estimated **500,000 internally displaced persons** (IDPs).

The majority of Ivorian refugees fled to **Liberia** where the number of refugees currently stands at over 144,200 persons, and the influx continues into the southern counties of Grand Gedeh and Maryland. Population movements thus continue to be fluid and dispersed over a wide area, many parts of which are difficult to access, posing serious challenges for registration of refugees which in turn has affected the provision of assistance.

UNHCR increased its registration staffing capacity so as to speed up registration. An inter-agency Task Force is working on ways of collecting refugee data more quickly and reliably. Concerns about the civilian character of camps are rising as it is possible that former combatants are mixed with the refugees. Implementing screening, separation, and internment procedures are of particular importance in the management of the refugee situation.

In **Ghana**, the current number of registered Ivorian asylum-seekers stands at near 17,000. They are assisted in a reception centre and two refugee camps. An additional camp is under development in the Central Region, but work is delayed due to weather conditions. UNHCR has strengthened border monitoring to determine the pace and magnitude of spontaneous returns.

Further to discussions between UNHCR and the Government, the Ghana Refugee Board has drafted a declaration for *prima facie* recognition which is awaiting formal approval. As in Liberia, maintaining the civilian character of the camps is a serious protection challenge. Following reports of the arrival of combatants and ex-combatants among the asylum-seeker population, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Ghanaian Refugee Board, continues to screen new arrivals.

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**Guinea** has received over 2,800 Ivorian refugees to date, and the pace of arrivals has slowed significantly. The majority are staying in camps while the rest are in neighbouring localities and urban areas. Emergency care and basic assistance is being provided in the camps. Unfortunately the long rainy season has had a devastating impact on structures housing refugees and on community infrastructure. Additional water wells are required as is improvement of inadequate sanitation and medical facilities. Further financial support is required to continue the construction of improved stoves and to reforest the living areas as firewood and charcoal are part of the refugees' daily subsistence needs.

As the height of the post-electoral crisis in **Côte d'Ivoire** came to an end in May, many of the estimated 2 million IDPs started to return to their places of origin. The Humanitarian Country Team revised to 500,000 the estimate of people who still remain displaced, of which 322,280 had been identified at the end of May. As assessments continue country-wide, a further decrease is expected.

The Protection Monitoring system that ceased to operate during the crisis has resumed its work, with monitors in Abidjan as well. The new Naibly IDP site is almost completed and with the first relocated IDPs from the Catholic Mission site at Duékoué, the focus will soon shift to the management of current structures. In Abidjan for example, IDP sites continue to face problems of overfilled septic tanks, unpaid electricity and water bills, the organisation of the collection of waste and the negative impact of the rainy season in general.

Insecurity remains a problem in areas affected by the conflict. In the most affected areas of the central West and of Abidjan, in particular, road blocks by elements of the *Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire* (FRCI) collecting unauthorized tariffs, the occupation of homes, unregulated arrests and disappearances, as well as general harassment continue to be reported, although there are fewer incidents of intrusion in IDP sites and the police are beginning to assume control in urban areas.

Unregulated militias continue to circulate and criminality remains high. In addition, weakened economic structures and the loss of livelihoods in Abidjan are leading to negative coping strategies, including prostitution and forced marriages. Other strategies include the withdrawal of children from school and child labour, the dislocation of families in search of work and continued displacement in sites or host families. Small income-generating activities and micro-credit loans, as well as assistance in reconstructing damaged homes, will be used as protection tools as returns continue. Beyond security in specific areas, the main factor hindering return is the continued high level of community tensions.

UNHCR foresees increased support for spontaneous returns and reintegration efforts in the future. Involvement in economic and social community support and reconstruction will be key to the reintegration, with a focus in the protection area on psychosocial support as well as involvement in land title initiatives, perhaps through the support of local conflict resolution mechanisms tied to current social cohesion work.

### Ivorian refugees

Benin	B/Faso	Ghana	Guinea Bissau	Guinea	Gambia	Liberia	Mali	Niger	Nigeria	Togo
503	117	16,877	34	2,836	65	144,229	955	79	104	6,272

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