

# WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

## Regional Overview

Benin • Burkina Faso • Cameroon • Cape Verde • Central African Republic • Chad • Côte d'Ivoire • Equatorial Guinea • Gabon • Gambia • Ghana • Guinea • Guinea-Bissau • Liberia • Mali • Niger • Nigeria • Sao Tomé and Príncipe • Senegal • Sierra Leone • Togo

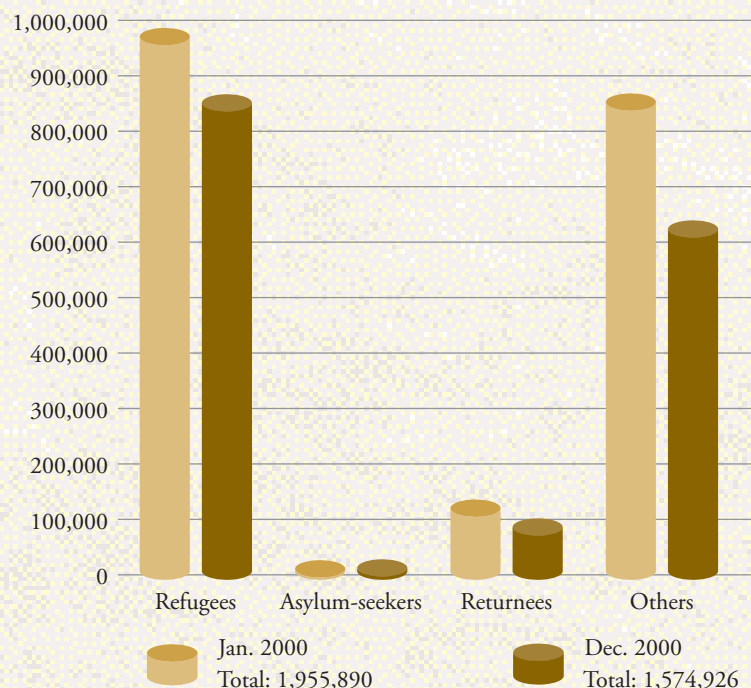


## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

The year saw renewed armed conflict and instability in many parts of West and Central Africa, culminating in a situation best described as “unstable equilibrium” with potential for further conflict and displacement. The security climate was particularly worrying in Sierra Leone, where the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) launched a new offensive in May, thereby effectively annulling the Lomé peace agreement signed with the Government in July 1999. Continued instability in the northern provinces of Liberia hampered efforts to bring about the return and reintegration of refugees. In Guinea, armed rebel incursions intensified in September, seriously threatening the security of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees and forcing many of them to return to an uncertain situation in their own

countries. On 17 September, during an attack on the Guinean border town of Macenta, the UNHCR’s head of office was murdered and another staff member

Persons of Concern to UNHCR



abducted. In October and November, increased civil disturbance marred the elections in Côte d'Ivoire, deepening fears about the continued stability of the country. Presidential elections also took place in Guinea-Bissau and Senegal, where the armed conflict in the Casamance region continued unabated. The Central African Republic and Gabon continued to receive a steady influx of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Republic of the Congo.

## CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

UNHCR's capacity to provide assistance and protection to refugees and returnees in West and Central Africa was seriously hampered by security problems. The main challenges to the Organisation's work came from the renewed civil war in Sierra Leone, rebel attacks in Guinea and rising tensions in these two countries, as well as in Liberia, which often led to threats and violence against refugees. Following the attack in Macenta, staff in all field locations in Guinea were relocated to the capital, Conakry. The closure of the border between Guinea and Liberia in July resulted in the suspension of the repatriation of Liberian refugees in Guinea. Insecurity in several Liberian counties prevented UNHCR from carrying out planned reintegration activities. While some progress was made in the repatriation of refugees from the Central African Republic and Cameroon to Chad, reintegration activities for returnees were affected by security problems in the south of the country, and only 58 per cent of the returnees benefited. Political instability in Côte d'Ivoire also had a negative impact on local integration activities for Liberian refugees, while the economic and social problems experienced by most countries in the region made the refugees' uphill struggle to achieve self-reliance all the more daunting.

## PROGRESS TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

In view of the inter-related nature of the conflicts in West and Central Africa, UNHCR adopted a regional approach to facilitate more effective co-ordination of its response to emergencies. This included strengthening its working relationship with other UN agencies and with regional bodies. In pursuit of this approach, UNHCR participated in the West Africa Sub-Regional Meeting on Humanitarian Strategy and Contingency Planning organised by OCHA in early October. Despite the serious security constraints described above, the organised voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees was virtually

concluded by the end of 2000, with remaining Liberian refugees being helped to integrate locally in the countries of asylum. Since the start of the repatriation in 1997, some 377,000 Liberians returned home either spontaneously or with UNHCR's assistance. The organised voluntary repatriation of Chadian refugees from the Central African Republic and Cameroon was also completed, as well as the repatriation from Guinea of refugees from Guinea-Bissau. At the same time, the overall backlog of asylum requests throughout the region was considerably reduced as a result of various activities, such as the refugee status determination project and training activities to enhance the Government's capacity to conduct eligibility determination. More than 3,000 individuals were resettled in third countries.

## OPERATIONS

The following paragraphs summarise UNHCR's operations and activities by country, except for Côte d'Ivoire, **Guinea, Liberia** and **Sierra Leone**, which are described in separate country chapters.

In **Benin**, through UNHCR's pilot resettlement project, some 80 refugees were resettled and another 1,321 admitted for resettlement processing. At the same time, about 30 refugees were assisted to repatriate voluntarily. A comprehensive information campaign was conducted to increase awareness and understanding of local integration initiatives and income-generating projects designed to make refugees self-reliant. A micro-credit project benefited ten refugees. Training was provided to 100 refugees at the Pomasse Centre. Desks were provided for 136 school children and 24 secondary school students received assistance while studying for the *baccalaureate* examination.

As of December 2000, there were almost 700 refugees and 314 asylum-seekers in **Burkina Faso**. The number of refugees included a total of 72 persons resettled through a pilot resettlement programme which Burkina Faso, like Benin, has been implementing since 1998. Four refugees were resettled in third countries and three repatriated voluntarily during the year. Some refugees resorted to violent protest (including the occupation of UNHCR's office premises) against the perceived double standard in assistance provided to refugees resettled in Burkina Faso under the pilot project, and to those granted asylum under the normal status determination procedures. Some also protested against resettlement in Burkina Faso which is considered to be less favourable, by the refugee themselves, than resettlement outside the continent. This led to a re-evaluation in order to harmonise criteria regarding the level of assistance between these different groups. Measures were also introduced to



ensure that refugees gained a better understanding of protection principles, of the selection criteria for resettlement and, generally, to promote a peaceful environment for local integration. However, the poor socio-economic condition of the country continued to place local integration of refugees and those resettled under strain.

UNHCR continued to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Chadian refugees from **Cameroon**. Following “go-and-see” visits in February, some 2,300 refugees returned home in eight convoys. Plans to organise further visits to returnee sites, and subsequently repatriate the remaining refugees before the end of the year, were delayed by budgetary difficulties. The number of asylum-seekers (mainly from the DRC) continued to increase steadily over the year. Some 72 people were accepted for resettlement in third countries. A total of 14 micro-projects were implemented to facilitate the local integration of urban refugees.

Fighting in north-western DRC triggered population movements up and down the Oubangui River, and across it into the **Central African Republic**. Over 9,000 persons crossed into the country during the year, most of them settling in border towns and villages along the Oubangui. The Government allocated a suitable site to accommodate them at Moulangi. At the

same time, the deteriorating security situation in southern Chad, combined with funding difficulties, delayed the organised repatriation of Chadian refugees. Other activities, such as material assistance to vulnerable Sudanese refugees and needy urban refugees, skills training for refugee women, local integration of the Congolese (DRC) refugees and durable solutions for Rwandan refugees, were adversely affected by financial constraints and a fuel crisis since April which led to a dramatic increase in operating costs. Despite these problems, several important achievements were recorded. The majority of some 35,000 Sudanese refugees attained some level of self-sufficiency; some 300 Chadian refugees were able to repatriate; 3,280 students were helped to attend primary school and another 216 to attend secondary school; 12 separated children received housing assistance, food and education; training was provided in income-generating activities (tailoring, soap-making, the use and repair of sewing machines) and micro-credits were made available for women; 20 refugees were evacuated to Bangui for medical treatment; 120 needy urban refugees were given 300 kitchen sets, blankets and tents; and four persons were resettled in third countries. A multi-sectoral assessment mission was dispatched to develop UNHCR’s exit strategy for some 35,000 Sudanese



refugees in the Mboki settlement where assistance has been given over a decade.

The political and military situation in **Chad** deteriorated with the resurgence of rebel activity in the northern and southern parts of the country, but this did not prevent Chadian refugees from voluntarily repatriating from the Central African Republic (300) and Cameroon (2,300). The lack of security did however affect the implementation of reintegration programmes for returnees in the south of the country, to the extent that only 58 per cent of returnees benefited. Assistance to the remaining Chadian refugees in the asylum countries is being reduced as the refugees gain greater self-reliance through micro-projects, increased food security and access to services in host communities. There have been some efforts to make Sudanese refugees in Chad self-sufficient in food production, but they face very poor soil and a lack of insecticides. A large number of Sudanese refugees in western Chad repatriated spontaneously: as many as 5,000 out of an estimated 17,000 may have gone back to Sudan during 2000.

There were some 18,000 refugees in **Gabon** in 2000, the overwhelming majority of them from the Republic of the Congo. Pending the promotion of large-scale voluntary repatriation, UNHCR has been providing protection and assistance. UNHCR's activities during 2000 included the setting up of an extensive logistics network through which food was distributed to refugees, as well as 4,000 mosquito nets, 24 metric tons of soap, 2,700 blankets and 2,700 jerrycans. Tools and materials were provided for the refugees to construct their own shelter, as well as seeds and farming tools in order to give them an opportunity to be less dependent on donated food. Wells and latrines were built or renovated in Nyanga and Haut-Ogooué. Due to budgetary constraints, some important projects, such as the building of schools, had to be cancelled, leaving over 600 refugee children without education. UNHCR nevertheless managed to enrol over 2,000 refugee children in Gabonese schools during the 2000-2001 academic year. In addition, UNHCR helped 70 students attend secondary school, 45 attend university and 15 attend vocational training. Other sectors affected by the budgetary reduction were housing and health services for urban refugees. Basic medicines, however, were purchased through NGO partners for distribution in clinics serving refugees. A refugee protection seminar aimed at key government officials has been credited with having reduced harassment of refugees in urban areas by law enforcement officers.

In **Gambia**, UNHCR continued to assist over 700 Senegalese refugees from Casamance, as well as over 1,000 refugees from Sierra Leone and 150 vulnerable

urban refugees, out of over 12,000 refugees, most of whom are mainly urban refugees from Sierra Leone and Senegal. A verification and re-registration exercise launched jointly with the Government and national NGOs was successfully carried out for all refugees in the camps as well as in urban areas. As the two camps for Senegalese refugees were too close to the border with Senegal, an alternative site was identified at Bambali (more than 100 km away from the border) where a new camp will accommodate the refugees who will be transferred from the other camps. Refugees in the camps benefited from accommodation, community services, food distribution, health, agricultural and income-generating activities. All refugee children in the camps attended national primary schools. A total of 445 children were helped with books, registration fees, uniforms and funding to attend school. Assistance to urban refugees was limited to the most vulnerable, who received basic food and health services. Refugees continued to benefit from support geared towards local integration and self-sufficiency. In 2000, the office in Gambia became an independent UNHCR office from a small unit within the UNDP office.

In **Ghana**, most of the assistance previously provided to Liberian refugees in Buduburam camp was terminated in June, in line with a regional policy to gradually phase out assistance to Liberian refugees. Refugee students due to sit secondary school examinations continued to receive assistance up to November. In March, the Ghana Refugee Board began to screen Liberian refugees to identify those still in need of international protection. Protection and assistance activities continued mainly for Sierra Leonean refugees living in Krisan camp. The number of pupils at the camp school increased from 330 in January to 390 in December. More than 1,000 refugees were actively involved in farming and income-generating activities. Due to lack of funds, only 35 houses were built (80 had been planned). Some 1,000 urban refugees were assisted with temporary accommodation, transport and food. A third transit centre was provided in Accra to accommodate asylum-seekers awaiting the outcome of their applications.

The repatriation of refugees from Guinea to **Guinea-Bissau** finally came to a conclusion. Some 470 refugees returned home from Guinea with UNHCR's assistance and the remaining 1,280 came back spontaneously. Meanwhile, the number of refugees in the country was put at 7,600 following their registration in August (comprising 6,550 Senegalese from Casamance and 1,050 urban refugees). UNHCR continued to assist some 700 Senegalese refugees at the site in Jolmeté by providing access to drinking water, health services, medicines and



primary education. The planned relocation of Senegalese refugees from the border to Jolmeté could not be implemented as the refugees resisted the move. More than 300 urban refugees received protection and medical assistance in Bissau. The office in Guinea-Bissau was closed at the end of December as planned, following the successful completion of the repatriation from Guinea.

UNHCR provided international protection and assistance to some 2,400 refugees in **Mali**, most of whom are Sierra Leoneans (65 per cent) and Liberians (20 per cent). Basic humanitarian assistance was provided to refugees and asylum-seekers through three NGO partners. Unfortunately, the budget for an estimated 2,300 refugees could not be increased to reflect the higher actual number of refugees and therefore the quality of assistance suffered. Two refugees repatriated and 50 refugees were resettled during 2000. Although most refugees in Mali are socially integrated into the local population, and have engaged in small income-generating activities such as hairdressing, tailoring, building, tie-dyeing and soap-making, they are not economically self-sufficient. A total of 280 students received educational grants in 2000.

The return to democracy in **Niger** in late 1999 was a promising development for the 3,500 returnees (mainly from Algeria and Burkina Faso) who originate from the country's northern and eastern provinces. Assistance to them took the form of community-based initiatives and training, which also benefited as many as 15,000 local residents in returnee areas. In Tahoua and the Agadez region, small-scale agricultural activities were made possible by the drilling of wells. Educational grants were given to 48 students. Two protection workshops for law enforcement and immigration officers were organised in Niamey and Zinder. UNHCR assisted the National Eligibility Committee to reduce the backlog of asylum requests.

As a result of religious tensions in **Nigeria**, the registration - for voluntary repatriation - of some 3,000 Chadian refugees living in the north of the country was postponed. In 2000, Nigeria hosted some 7,300 refugees, of whom UNHCR assisted some 4,300. In Oru camp (the only refugee camp in Nigeria, 120 km west of Lagos) there were over 1,800 refugees, mainly Sierra Leoneans. They received help with education, skills training and income-generating activities. Particular attention was paid to the educational needs of refugee women: some 70 per cent of the beneficiaries of vocational training in the camp were women. Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS issues in the refugee camp were addressed by means of a counselling programme and the provision of information booklets. Following the completion of organised repatriation, assistance to the remaining Liberian refugees ended in June

(except for 410 vulnerable individuals who continued to receive food and medical attention). Only the most needy urban refugees received allowances. Educational grants were awarded to 34 refugees, and seven were helped with micro-credits.

**Senegal** was home to some 21,000, mostly Mauritanian, refugees. UNHCR continued to encourage local integration among Mauritanian refugees in the Senegal River Valley, while providing limited education and medical assistance. The issue of identity cards for this group was not resolved with the authorities who argued that they had never been granted permanent refugee status, and subsequently, the registration campaign launched in May was suspended. The refugees will now have to lodge new claims before the National Eligibility Committee. Despite an increase in the number of sessions of the Committee to three per month, some 1,950 asylum applications were still pending at the end of the year. Training was conducted to reinforce the resources of the Eligibility Committee. UNHCR also continued to protect and assist a growing number of urban refugees and asylum-seekers with, among others, medical costs, educational grants and support to start income-generating activities. The voluntary repatriation of the Senegalese refugees from Casamance was not possible in 2000.

In **Togo**, an agreement was finally reached for the establishment of a national electoral commission to facilitate democratisation. At the end of 2000, Togo hosted about 12,200 refugees, the majority of them being Ghanaians living in rural areas of the north. Although they are considered fully integrated, some of them have expressed the desire to return to Ghana. UNHCR planned a registration mission to the area to ascertain the exact number of refugees who wish to repatriate. Out of more than 1,000 urban refugees, 770 received help with health services, subsistence allowances and educational fees, and grants were provided for micro-projects. Ten income-generating projects were funded by UNHCR. Four Rwandan refugees were resettled and one repatriated voluntarily. There were two cases of family reunification.

## FUNDING

Although the overall budget for the region remained largely unaffected by the need to prioritise activities, lack of additional funding obliged UNHCR to accommodate new needs by reducing other, already planned activities. Lack of funds in Côte d'Ivoire slowed down repatriation movements and by the time organised repatriation ended in June, more than 3,800 refugees who had registered for voluntary repatriation were still

awaiting departure. Some of UNHCR's NGO partners had to pre-finance their activities. Reintegration activities in Liberia were also affected.

The 2000 Global Appeal included three boxes describing the situations of Sierra Leonean, Chadian and Liberian refugees, with total financial requirements for the year amounting to USD 48,670,703, USD 3,050,000 and USD 22,013,975 respectively. The boxes were intended to summarise UNHCR's strategy, to highlight the complexity and regional

nature of these refugee situations and to facilitate the transition from former Special Programmes to the unified budget structure, which was launched on 1 January 2000. Earmarked contributions received for these refugee situations are reflected in the table at the end of this Regional Overview. Total expenditure for the three situations in 2000 amounted to USD 39,178,379, USD 1,886,989 and USD 21,694,315 respectively. A description of the corresponding activities may be found in the Operations section of this Overview and in the relevant country chapters following it.

Voluntary Contributions - Restricted (USD)					
Donor	Earmarking <sup>1</sup>	Annual Programme Budget		Supplementary Programme Budget	
		Income	Contribution	Income	Contribution
Belgium	West and Central Africa	428,844	428,844	0	0
Canada	Sierra Leone	0	0	655,172	655,172
Denmark	West and Central Africa	1,387,283	1,387,283	0	0
	Guinea	536,969	536,969	0	0
	Liberia	536,968	536,968	0	0
	Cote d'Ivoire	536,968	536,968	0	0
Finland	Guinea	314,252	314,252	0	0
	Sierra Leone	310,596	310,596	0	0
France	Sierra Leone	0	0	145,051	145,051
	Liberia	145,051	145,051	0	0
Germany	Guinea	610,371	610,371	0	0
	Liberia	333,726	333,726	0	0
	Niger	181,092	181,092	0	0
	Cote d'Ivoire	178,901	178,901	0	0
Italy	Guinea	362,680	362,680	0	0
Japan	Burkina Faso	30,000	30,000	0	0
	Benin	150,000	150,000	0	0
	Central African Republic	430,000	430,000	0	0
	Chad	130,000	130,000	0	0
	Cameroon	90,000	90,000	0	0
	Gabon	40,000	40,000	0	0
	Gambia	120,000	120,000	0	0
	Ghana	180,000	180,000	0	0
	Guinea-Bissau	50,000	50,000	0	0
	Guinea	4,050,000	4,050,000	0	0
	Cote d'Ivoire	1,260,000	1,260,000	0	0
	Niger	30,000	30,000	0	0
	Liberia	4,130,000	4,130,000	0	0
	Mali	40,000	40,000	0	0
	Nigeria	190,000	190,000	0	0
	Senegal	220,000	220,000	0	0
	Sierra Leone	0	0	1,200,000	1,200,000
Togo	60,000	60,000	0	0	
West and Central Africa	110,000	110,000	0	0	
Norway	Guinea	49,756	49,756	0	0
	Sierra Leone	535,088	535,088	1,300,026	1,300,026
	West and Central Africa	0	0	643,777	643,777
Sweden	Guinea	50,000	50,000	0	0
	West and Central Africa	3,941,441	3,941,441	1,514,429	1,514,429
Switzerland	Sierra Leone	0	0	666,667	666,667
United Kingdom	Guinea	2,177,068	2,177,068	0	0
	Liberia	714,286	714,286	0	0

Voluntary Contributions - Restricted (USD)					
Donor	Earmarking <sup>1</sup>	Annual Programme Budget		Supplementary Programme Budget	
		Income	Contribution	Income	Contribution
		United States of America	Benin	145,000	145,000
	Central African Republic	590,000	590,000	0	0
	Gabon	780,000	780,000	0	0
	Gambia	115,000	115,000	0	0
	Guinea	4,700,000	4,700,000	0	0
	Nigeria	170,000	170,000	0	0
	Senegal	200,000	200,000	0	0
	Cote d'Ivoire	1,165,000	1,165,000	0	0
	West and Central Africa	3,610,000	3,610,000	2,000,000	2,000,000
European Commission	Guinea	1,512,323	1,617,375	0	0
	Liberia	445,680	462,107	0	0
<i>España con ACNUR (SPA)</i>	Liberia	93,479	156,992	0	0
UK for UNHCR (GBR)	Liberia	3,268	3,268	0	0
	Sierra Leone	2,575	2,575	0	0
<i>Jomas (JPN)</i>	West and Central Africa	0	0	28,037	28,037
Private Donors Italy	Liberia	469	469	0	0
	Sierra Leone	31,117	31,117	0	0
Private Donors Japan	West and Central Africa	0	0	523	523
	Sierra Leone	0	0	46	46
<b>Total<sup>2</sup></b>		<b>38,205,251</b>	<b>38,390,243</b>	<b>8,153,728</b>	<b>8,153,728</b>

<sup>1</sup>For more information on the various earmarkings, please refer to the Donor Profiles.

<sup>2</sup>Total funds available for obligation in the region also included unearmarked voluntary contributions, broadly earmarked contributions, opening balances and adjustments.

Budget and Expenditure (USD)						
Country	Revised Budget			Expenditure		
	Annual Programme Budget and Trust Funds	Supplementary Programme Budget	Total	Annual Programme Budget and Trust Funds	Supplementary Programme Budget	Total
	Benin	1,106,429	0	1,106,429	1,015,043	0
Burkina Faso	272,285	0	272,285	259,857	0	259,857
Cameroon	985,086	0	985,086	897,880	0	897,880
Central African Republic	3,181,037	0	3,181,037	2,877,089	0	2,877,089
Chad	1,786,587	0	1,786,587	1,777,990	0	1,777,990
Côte d'Ivoire	6,319,247	0	6,319,247	6,025,305	0	6,025,305
Gabon	2,599,438	0	2,599,438	2,293,524	0	2,293,524
Gambia	859,662	0	859,662	781,216	0	781,216
Ghana	1,103,398	0	1,103,398	896,440	0	896,440
Guinea	26,407,469	2,326,402	28,733,871	24,665,234	2,307,278	26,972,512
Guinea-Bissau	437,445	0	437,445	401,832	0	401,832
Liberia	16,959,940	1,800,000	18,759,940	15,584,827	900,000	16,484,827
Mali	311,954	0	311,954	302,612	0	302,612
Niger	272,523	0	272,523	258,910	0	258,910
Nigeria	1,125,647	0	1,125,647	1,032,597	0	1,032,597
Senegal	1,501,553	0	1,501,553	1,271,750	0	1,271,750
Sierra Leone	941,439	9,380,111	10,321,550	832,471	6,664,135	7,496,606
Togo	372,815	0	372,815	299,543	0	299,543
Regional Projects <sup>1</sup>	664,547	0	664,547	656,400	0	656,400
Regional Director's Office (Côte d'Ivoire)	4,452,252	0	4,452,252	4,105,430	0	4,105,430
Liaison Unit at Headquarters	891,926		891,926	878,137		878,137
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,552,679</b>	<b>13,506,513</b>	<b>86,059,192</b>	<b>67,114,087</b>	<b>9,871,413</b>	<b>76,985,500</b>

<sup>1</sup>Covers voluntary repatriation assistance, resettlement assistance in West African countries and scholarships for refugee students.