

UPDATE n° 3
Bureau for Africa
02 May 2005

Togolese refugees in Benin and Ghana

Number of refugees

The total number of refugees in neighbouring Benin and Ghana has more than doubled over the week end, with nearly 16,500 refugees as of Monday morning, compared to less than 6,500 before the week end.

Togo
Security

The security situation in Togo is reported calm, with no demonstration and acts of violence. Inhabitants expressed scepticism though regarding the evolution of the security situation and the situation remains tense. The German representation in Lomé reportedly advised its nationals to leave the country.

Political and diplomatic initiatives

The ECOWAS diplomatic mission visited Lomé last Saturday and met with political stakeholders from both the Government and the opposition. Faure Gnassingbé travelled to Kinshasa last Saturday where he met with President Kabila, Javier Solana and Louis Michel.

IDPs

The Government rejected the UN request to carry out an assessment of the IDP situation in the country.

Benin

Refugee movements

In Benin, there are 9,075 refugees as of Sunday evening, including a thousand who crossed the border in the last 24 hours. Incidentally, the most recent arrivals are from the capital city, contrary to the first days of the influx, which originated from the border area. Out of the total 9,075, some 2,206 refugees are assisted and 6,869 are assumed to be residing with relatives or host families. UNHCR provided bus transport for 181 refugees to host family/ relatives today.

Assistance

Hilakondji: There are approximately 300 refugees at Hilakondji border. UNHCR is planning to open a transit site at Grand Popo to replace the church grounds transit site at Hilakondji. The transit site will be specifically designated for refugees and include appropriate

water, sanitation, food and health facilities. Once the site is ready, the registration would be taken over by the Ministry of Interior Commission National pour l'Assistance aux Réfugiés (CNAR) in collaboration with UNHCR, as is presently the case at Come and Lokossa.

Lokossa: There are 806 refugees at Lokossa. The camp became operational over the week end. Tents continue to be put up in Lokossa in order to accommodate new arrivals. On Sunday evening, a total number of 88 tents had been installed. UNHCR also carried out an assessment mission to Adjaha today, where 63 people were identified and taken to Lokossa.

Come: There are 1,100 refugees at Come site. The transit centre is operational, with 120 tents set up and occupied. With the exception of unaccompanied minors, no more refugees are scheduled for accommodation at Come for the time being.

Ghana

Refugee movements

Arrivals through the Aflao border post over the past three days have continued at a fairly constant rate, with an average of 2,000 refugees on a daily basis in the last three days. The number of refugees in Ghana as of Sunday evening stands at 7,438 individuals. However, it has been observed at Aflao that arrivals increase in the evening and that some returns to Lomé occur in the morning hours. The joint registration teams are currently working on the consolidation of statistics to take into account a possible "shuttle phenomenon" through Aflao. No significant arrivals were recorded in other areas of Ghana for the past days.

Assistance

Most of the refugees in the Aflao area have been welcomed by relatives and friends, and arrived with belongings, food and funds. While it has been agreed with WFP to position adequate stocks of high-energy biscuits and dry rations in the area, a final decision on the positioning of non-food items and the reinforcement of services will be taken following a further joint Government-UN review due to take place this morning.

In the areas north of Aflao (up to Kejebi), some of the arrivals are running low on provisions. Further to continuous needs assessments, the distribution of food and non-food assistance will now start in a targeted manner through local non-governmental and church organizations, in order to maintain a low key approach and to minimize any potential for triggering adverse reactions.

Activities to establish the identified and assessed camp sites and operational bases started on Saturday 30 April.

Regional developments

Logistics support

The 10 truck convoy from Accra is expected to cross into Burkina Faso this morning as the border with Ghana was closed yesterday. The NFIs loaded included 1,020 tents, 5,000 blankets, 1,000 jerrycans, 1,000 kitchen sets, 5,000 mosquito nets, 5,100 pieces of sanitary cloth, 5,000 sleeping mats and 10,020 pieces of soap (240 g each).

VHF equipment sent from Geneva reached Benin last Saturday and will be installed upon the arrival of the Regional Telecom Officer from Accra Regional Office tomorrow.

Geneva

Emergency team

Two members of the Emergency Roster Team arrived over the week end in Benin. The third ERT member will join the team today.

Logistics and technical support

It was announced in today's task force meeting that the purchase of vehicles for the Benin operation can be done regionally (Ghana) if and when needed.

The Supply Management Services is on the alert and may send tents to Ghana to accommodate refugees as need be.

A Site planner will depart from HQs tomorrow to Ghana to support the operation.

Emergency funds

HQs authorised on Friday 29th April the release from the Operational Reserve of half a million Dollars to support the emergency operation. The funds were released this morning, while the deployment of emergency staff, material

assistance (NFIs) and technical equipment has already started, to meet the immediate need of refugees.

PI and External relations

Over the week end, the Regional PI Officer and a two persons TV crew from Geneva were deployed in Benin.

It was agreed to invite OCHA, UNICEF, ICRC and WFP to the next task force meeting, which will take place on Wednesday 04th May in the morning.