

West Africa

Working environment

High rates of unemployment and widespread poverty in West Africa are driving thousands of young people from the region to try their luck as immigrants in Europe. The situation has been aggravated by the high cost of living, which has made food and fuel unaffordable for the poor, and led to protests and civil unrest in many countries.

Political strife has also troubled some States. Senegal's southern Casamance region remains unstable, as peace talks between the Government and armed rebels of the *Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance* (MFDC) have stalled. The political situation in Guinea remains uncertain. In Sierra Leone, the Government is facing significant challenges in rebuilding the economy.

However, asylum policies in most countries in the region are favourable for people of concern. Refugees in the subregion enjoy freedom of movement, and there have been no reports of *refoulement*. UNHCR is working to build the capacity of governments to assume key protection responsibilities such as refugee status determination (RSD).

UNHCR has completed its large-scale voluntary repatriation of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees. Since then, the Office has focused on reintegration activities for residual communities. A subregional local integration programme, mainly for Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees, has been approved and will be coordinated by UNHCR's Regional Office in Dakar, Senegal.

In line with UNHCR's regionalization plans, the Regional Office in Senegal covers Bénin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo. The Office in Côte d'Ivoire will continue to report directly to Headquarters. This arrangement will be reviewed as the situation evolves. Since January 2008, a regional support team based in Dakar has been providing its expertise in the areas of resettlement, registration, refugee women and children, and HIV and AIDS to offices in West and Central Africa.

UNHCR signed agreements with the Governments of Benin, Ghana and Togo which contributed to the repatriation, during the first half of 2008, of Togolese refugees from Ghana and Benin. More Togolese are expected to return by the end of 2008.

To pursue a common approach on durable solutions in West Africa, a subregional project for local integration will be launched in 2009 (see box on the West Africa Local Integration Project). This will build on the existing legal framework governing relations between ECOWAS countries.

Benin

Burkina Faso

Cape Verde

Côte d'Ivoire

The Gambia

Ghana

Guinea

Guinea Bissau

Liberia

Mali

Niger

Nigeria

Senegal

Sierra Leone

Togo



Strategy

UNHCR will focus on local integration for Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees. It will also continue to facilitate the repatriation of individual Togolese, Ivorians, Mauritians, Senegalese and Liberians whenever possible. Other durable solutions such as reintegration for returnees from Côte d'Ivoire and resettlement of eligible refugees will also be pursued.

UNHCR's regional strategy will ensure that, where possible, camps and their facilities are rehabilitated and handed over for use by local communities upon the refugees' departure. The Office will continue to help build national asylum capacity by advocating for appropriate legislation and RSD procedures and supporting community structures and civil society. Furthermore, it will promote higher standards of assistance with regard to HIV and AIDS, sexual and gender-based violence, health and education, as well as for urban refugees.

Building public and private partnerships and multi-sectoral collaboration are core goals for West Africa's HIV and AIDS programme. UNHCR implements integrated HIV and AIDS projects in areas with major concentrations of refugees, returnees and IDPs. Most of these areas are isolated, with limited or no coverage by national programmes. Programmes to combat sexual and gender-based violence have important HIV and AIDS components, such as the provision of post-exposure prophylaxis to survivors of rape.

At the regional level, one of UNHCR's main objectives is to strengthen its partnership with ECOWAS. In addition to monitoring the political and security situation in countries in post-conflict recovery, the Office is collaborating with ECOWAS to promote the local integration of residual groups of refugees in countries of asylum. To this end, it will seek better implementation of the residence provisions of the ECOWAS protocols relating to the free movement of people.

Given relatively unstable political and economic conditions in the subregion, UNHCR will review and update contingency plans to enhance its emergency response capacity. The Office will maintain the regional stockpile of non-food items in Accra and strengthen the capacity of the regional office in Dakar. With regard to IDPs, the Office will collaborate with other UN agencies to fulfil its obligations as the lead agency for protection, camp management and emergency shelter.

Constraints

Refugees, especially those from Liberia and Sierra Leone, are reluctant to integrate locally as they have unrealistic expectations that they will be resettled.

Operations

Operations in the region cover 15 countries. Country programmes in **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Ghana**, **Guinea**, and **Liberia** are described in separate chapters.

Regional Supplementary Programme to achieve the local integration of residual groups of refugees in Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana and Guinea

The context

With the winding down of mass organized return programmes in West Africa, UNHCR is focusing on the local integration of residual groups of refugees in the sub-region. Local integration accounts for 30 per cent of UNHCR programmes in West Africa in 2008 and will account for more than 50 per cent of activities in 2009. A multi-year (2007-2010) regional, rights-oriented and community-based local integration programme for residual groups of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees is already underway.

Despite political, social and economic challenges, the governments and people in the region are receptive to the local integration of refugees. The ECOWAS Treaty and national laws offer a range of legal status alternatives for the residual groups of refugees.

While local integration programmes in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria are included in the 2009 annual programme, important gaps remain unaddressed in Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana and Guinea. A regional supplementary programme of USD 6,671,300 will be implemented under the overall supervision of UNHCR's Regional Office in Dakar.

Main objectives

- Build national legal frameworks for the local integration of refugees using national legislation and ECOWAS protocols.
- Empower refugees and their host communities through self-reliance and capacity-building

activities, rehabilitate the environment and improve living conditions.

- Ensure sustainability of local integration through a coordinated inter-agency approach.

Key targets

- Refugees integrating locally are granted a wider range of rights and entitlements similar to those enjoyed by the citizens in the host country, such as freedom of movement, access to education and the labour market, access to property, access to travel and identity documents and opportunities for family unity.
- Integrating refugees will be less dependent on assistance and will be able to contribute meaningfully to the economic life of the host country.
- Refugees live without discrimination or exploitation.

Strategy and activities

In 2009, protection, livelihood and community development activities will be implemented at the country level and regionally through cross-border activities and other initiatives aimed at consolidating peace and stability in the Mano River Union. These activities also focus on HIV and AIDS, peace and reconciliation and youth employment.

Local integration activities are detailed in the regional overview and the country chapters for Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana and Guinea of this Appeal.

In **Benin**, UNHCR's main goals are to find durable solutions for camp-based and urban refugees and to build national protection capacity. In 2009, the Office expects that half of the 4,300 refugees and asylum-seekers from Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Togo will repatriate voluntarily. UNHCR will continue to gradually transfer to national institutions various protection tasks, such as RSD.

UNHCR will stop its assistance programmes in the Agamè and Kpomasse refugee sites by the end of 2008, instead emphasizing local integration and the strategic use of resettlement. Voluntary repatriation will be pursued if developments in countries of origin permit. In Benin and Ghana, UNHCR will also facilitate the local integration of some Togolese refugees not willing to repatriate.

Given the improving political situation in **Togo**, some 6,800 Togolese refugees in Ghana and Benin are expected to return home in late 2008. A mass information campaign will let them learn about

conditions in Togo so that they can make well-informed decisions on return. Returnees will benefit from a reintegration programme supported by other UN agencies, the European Union and the Togolese High Commissioner for Repatriation and Humanitarian Action.

Nigeria hosts some 8,460 refugees and 700 asylum-seekers from Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Sudan. New conflicts in Cameroon and rebel incursions in Chad led to the arrival of almost 6,000 asylum-seekers. UNHCR will monitor the rights of minorities and others persons with specific needs. It will also work with the Nigerian Government, ECOWAS, the UN Country Team and other humanitarian bodies to try and prevent ethnic and communal conflicts by fostering peace and reconciliation programmes.

UNHCR will make effective and strategic use of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and Goods, Right of Residence and Establishment. This will help in the local integration of the residual caseloads of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in the concerned countries.

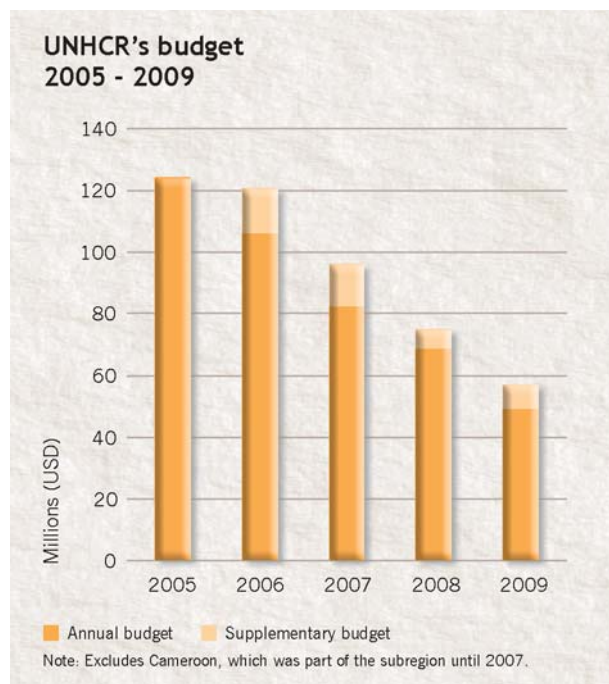
In 2009, the regional office in **Senegal** will focus on providing local integration opportunities for the residual caseloads of Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees. These groups will be assisted to obtain national passports and valid residence permits to remain in their countries of asylum in West Africa. In Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Mali, and Senegal, the Office will assist national eligibility commissions and implement income-generating activities and educational projects to help refugees achieve self-reliance.

Despite political uncertainty in Mauritania, which brought down the Government in August 2008, the voluntary repatriation of Mauritanian refugees in **Mali** and **Senegal** has continued. Some 24,000 Mauritanian refugees in Senegal will voluntarily return in 2008 and 2009. Some 4,670 people repatriated in the first half of 2008, and the movement will continue after the rainy season ends in September. A community-based local integration programme will be implemented for the residual group in Senegal, which is estimated at 10,000 persons. Pending a profiling exercise in Mali, UNHCR plans to repatriate some 2,000 Mauritanian refugees in 2009.

Senegalese refugees in **Guinea Bissau** (6,000) and The **Gambia** (6,900), especially women and vulnerable groups, will benefit from agricultural and income-generation projects in rural areas. Women and young people outside the formal education system will also be offered vocational training.

Financial information

Since 2005, the Annual Programme Budgets for UNHCR's operations in West Africa have decreased as durable solutions were found for the majority of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees through voluntary repatriation. Furthermore, the supplementary programme budgets have decreased from 2006 to 2008 as a result of the decline in the number of IDPs in the areas where UNHCR is operating. However, supplementary programme budget will increase in 2009 mainly due to the new sub-regional project for the local integration of Liberian refugees in West Africa.



Countries	Budget (USD)					
	2008			2009		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
Benin	1,452,423	0	1,452,423	1,325,238	0	1,325,238
Côte d'Ivoire	7,241,611	2,336,449	9,578,060	6,493,798	1,882,587	8,376,385
Gambia	71,237	0	71,237	91,477	548,492	639,969
Ghana	6,137,528	0	6,137,528	5,543,193	2,354,878	7,898,071
Guinea	7,009,896	0	7,009,896	5,559,416	1,454,130	7,013,546
Liberia	20,627,460	3,049,920	23,677,380	9,953,213	0	9,953,213
Mali	96,253	0	96,253	108,215	0	108,215
Nigeria	2,866,236	0	2,866,236	3,220,330	0	3,220,330
Senegal ¹	6,504,729	158,066	6,662,795	6,965,772	1,903,401	8,869,173
Sierra Leone	6,575,657	150,000	6,725,657	4,008,743	0	4,008,743
Togo	461,138	0	461,138	1,076,957	0	1,076,957
Regional activities ²	6,452,060	0	6,452,060	4,550,800	0	4,550,800
Total	65,496,228	5,694,435	71,190,663	48,897,152	8,143,488	57,040,640

¹ Includes the Regional Support Hub in Dakar.

² Includes care and maintenance, voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement assistance for urban refugees managed by the regional office in Senegal.

Note: Supplementary programme budgets exclude 7 per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.