

**Benin**  
**Burkina Faso**  
**Cape Verde**  
**Côte d'Ivoire**  
**The Gambia**  
**Ghana**  
**Guinea**  
**Guinea-Bissau**  
**Liberia**  
**Mali**  
**Niger**  
**Nigeria**  
**Senegal**  
**Sierra Leone**  
**Togo**



# West Africa

## | Working environment |

West Africa continues to be characterized by protracted refugee situations, as some countries in the region experience political strife or find it difficult to sustain post-crisis recoveries. The global economic downturn has resulted in an increase in the cost of basic commodities, making it hard for all people in the region, but especially the displaced, to cope. This has led to an increase in migratory movements within the subregion and could propel migration beyond the African continent.

Approximately 150,000 refugees, mainly Ivorians, Ghanaians, Liberians, Mauritians, Senegalese and Togolese, are dispersed in both urban and rural settings in several West African countries. Identifying the most appropriate durable solution for these refugees remains a challenge.

However, it is encouraging that in addition to voluntary repatriation, local integration has become a realistic option for a considerable number of refugees, particularly those who are citizens of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Member States. The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea and Sierra Leone have made a particular effort, with the support of UNHCR and its partners, to integrate refugees.

A major task for UNHCR in the fragile socio-economic context is to strengthen livelihoods as a means of sustaining local integration. UNHCR has also worked to enhance refugees' access to basic needs and services. Additionally, the Office has advocated for more effective utilization of the ECOWAS protocols on free movement, right of residence and establishment so as to secure an alternative legal status for refugees. Resettlement also remains an option, but only on a case-by-case basis.

**A Liberian refugee from Voinjama returns after twice fleeing violence in which she lost her husband and four children.**





In Côte d'Ivoire, the signing of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement in March 2007 has ushered in a new era of political development. Progress in the implementation of this accord has paved the way for the return of the 13,000 Ivorian refugees in other countries in the subregion.

The newly established Government in Mauritania in 2007, helped put in place the conditions for the repatriation of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal. On the basis of the tripartite agreement between the Governments of Mauritania and Senegal and UNHCR in November 2007, it is expected that some 22,000 Mauritanian refugees will have returned home from Senegal by the end of 2009. A tripartite agreement is under discussion with the Governments of Mali and Mauritania for the voluntary repatriation of approximately 10,000 Mauritanian refugees from Mali in late 2010. The remaining 15,000 refugees will be helped to integrate locally in Senegal and Mali.

The recognition of Sierra Leoneans as refugees was rooted in their country's 1991-2002 civil war. Due to fundamental changes in the country, the cessation clause was invoked for Sierra Leonean refugees on 31 December 2008. UNHCR subsequently helped countries of asylum implement the cessation clause, while addressing the concerns of the Sierra Leonean refugee population.

In this context, UNHCR has helped the national eligibility committees in the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Senegal, Liberia and Nigeria, to examine the cases of those who sought exemption from cessation. In collaboration with UNHCR, the Government of Sierra Leone has offered some 5,600 passports to former refugees wishing to integrate locally in their host countries. UNHCR also helped the refugees obtain other legal documents, in addition to providing them with community-based support for livelihood activities, shelter, water and sanitation. The Office has also facilitated the voluntary repatriation of approximately 500 returnees to Sierra Leone.

There have been encouraging signs of peace and stability in Liberia, including the return of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin. These developments have opened the door to the possibility of invoking the cessation clause for some 60,000 Liberians, whose recognition as refugees was rooted in the 1999-2003 civil war in their country. In preparation for the declaration of cessation, UNHCR will in 2010 support voluntary repatriation, local integration and limited resettlement—the latter to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

## | Strategy |

Following the end of large-scale voluntary repatriation, UNHCR will focus on the following strategic priorities in order to protect persons of concern:

- Promoting livelihoods and durable solutions, in particular local integration, in a systematic way.
- Strengthening partnerships with humanitarian and development actors and facilitating the inclusion of refugees in national development plans.
- Building the capacity of government counterparts, NGOs and other stakeholders to protect refugees.

To support these priorities, UNHCR restructured its operations in West Africa. The Regional Representation in Dakar has been strengthened and its areas of responsibility extended to Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

## | Constraints |

The difficult socio-economic conditions in the subregion pose a serious impediment to the self-reliance of refugees. Unlike in Sierra Leone, the lack of availability and access to land in Liberia at times hinders local integration. The unrealistic expectation among refugees, regarding the possibility of resettlement in a third country, makes it difficult to promote other durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation and local integration.

The fragile political balance in several countries has an impact on the priorities of States and the ability to plan for durable solutions. Other challenges include the need to establish partnerships with development actors and the limited capacity of local partners to promote local integration and support livelihoods. The absence or limited capacity of UNHCR in certain countries makes it difficult for the organization to play an active role in inter-agency activities.

## | Operations |

Operations in **Côte d'Ivoire** are described in a separate chapter.

In 2010, operations in West Africa will cover seven refugee populations scattered among 14 countries and living in both rural and urban areas. As UNHCR helps with the strengthening of national asylum systems and the issuance of documentation, it will shift its focus on the promotion of durable solutions and livelihood support. UNHCR's regional and country offices will address the protection needs of some 33,600 refugees and asylum-seekers in urban settings in the 14 West African countries.

Some 8,100 refugees of Ghanaian nationality have lived in **Togo** for many years, dispersed in rural areas in the north of the country. These refugees wish to settle permanently in Togo. UNHCR, in collaboration with the Togolese Government, will help them grow food and assist with the rehabilitation of public facilities. The Office will also help the refugees obtain documentation.

If the 2010 Presidential elections in Togo are held successfully, approximately 3,000 Togolese refugees from Benin and Ghana are expected to return home with the help of UNHCR. They will be provided return packages and reintegration support. In **Benin**, meanwhile, UNHCR will facilitate the socio-economic integration of some 3,350 refugees, mainly from Togo, with increased support for livelihoods and the provision of legal documentation.

With the potential declaration of the cessation clause for Liberian refugees, UNHCR will work with governments and other partners to promote repatriation and local integration as the main durable solutions.

The organized voluntary repatriation of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal is expected to end in December 2009. UNHCR will then proceed to assist some 10,000 Mauritanian refugees, now dispersed in rural areas in Mali, with voluntary repatriation. The remaining Mauritanian refugees in **Senegal** and **Mali** will benefit from local integration programmes, the provision of documentation and livelihood support to help them become self-reliant by the end of 2011.

**Nigeria** hosts some 7,000 refugees, largely of Liberian nationality, scattered in both rural and urban areas. UNHCR will continue to facilitate their local integration by increasing livelihood support. It will also reinforce its partnerships with ECOWAS in protection and the search for durable solutions in West Africa, as well as in enhancing emergency planning and response capacity, in coordination with other UN agencies.

To help the 4,100 refugees, mainly of Liberian nationality, settled in rural areas in **Sierra Leone**, UNHCR will continue to facilitate livelihood activities and provide basic assistance as well as legal documentation.

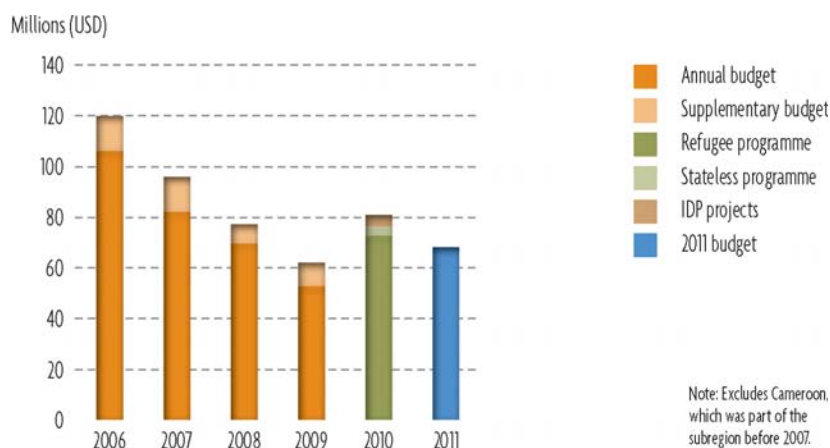
**Guinea-Bissau** and **the Gambia** host about 14,100 Senegalese refugees, largely in rural areas. As there is still no prospect of a resolution to the conflict between Senegalese forces and rebels in the Casamance area, in 2010, the safe return of refugees to Senegal is not foreseen. UNHCR will continue to help them with livelihood programmes and basic needs and services, while assisting the authorities to issue adequate documentation. For that purpose, UNHCR is planning to open an office in Guinea Bissau in early 2010.

UNHCR will participate in inter-agency contingency planning and emergency response plans in the region. Partnerships with humanitarian and development actors will be at the forefront of UNHCR's activities for both emergency activities and the promotion of durable solutions.

## | Financial information |

The end of hostilities in West Africa in recent years has led to a gradual decrease in requirements in the subregion. The increased requirements for 2010-2011 will cover capacity-building activities for governments, particularly for protection activities, reintegration and local integration support.

## UNHCR's budget in West Africa 2006 – 2011



## UNHCR budget for West Africa (USD)

COUNTRY	2009 REVISED BUDGET <sup>1</sup>	2010				2011
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	TOTAL	
Benin	1,555,738	0	0	0	0	0
Côte d'Ivoire	9,596,067	8,694,556	2,733,142	4,615,756	16,043,455	10,630,700
Gambia	640,469	0	0	0	0	0
Ghana	8,056,916	8,557,847	0	0	8,557,847	6,149,000
Guinea	7,088,649	7,269,444	0	0	7,269,444	5,539,800
Guinea-Bissau	77,589	0	0	0	0	0
Liberia	12,130,849	7,534,672	0	0	7,534,672	5,361,200
Mali	108,215	0	0	0	0	0
Nigeria	3,055,167	0	0	0	0	0
Senegal Regional Office <sup>2</sup>	9,266,647	40,736,856	678,780	0	41,415,636	40,448,900
Sierra Leone	4,867,572	0	0	0	0	0
Togo	1,189,407	0	0	0	0	0
Regional activities	4,386,505	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>62,019,790</b>	<b>72,793,375</b>	<b>3,411,922</b>	<b>4,615,756</b>	<b>80,821,054</b>	<b>68,129,600</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes supplementary programme requirements of USD 9,286,040.

<sup>2</sup> Includes activities in Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo.