

West Africa

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

| Working environment |

Although there have been signs of growing stability in some parts of West Africa, the social and political situation in several countries remains fragile. Upcoming elections may also contribute to this instability, as in Benin, for instance, which until recently was considered relatively stable, but now faces political turmoil due to financial and institutional crises exacerbated by preparations for presidential and parliamentary elections.

In Sierra Leone and Liberia, two countries still recovering from recent conflicts, the potential for insecurity has risen in the run-up to elections in September and October 2010, respectively. Elections in Nigeria in 2011 may also generate tensions that could affect the region.

Like other countries in the Sahel, Mali and Niger are confronting a major climatic and food-security crisis that is already generating inter-community clashes in Niger. Similarly, as a result of three years of unresolved conflict between communities in their areas of origin, asylum-seekers from Ghana have been seeking refuge in Togo.



In addition, activities of Al Qaeda further threaten the security situation in the subregion. The first half of 2010 also witnessed an increase in the insecurity in southern Senegal's Casamance region, where peace talks between the Government and the *Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance* (MFDC) have not yet resulted in a positive outcome.

The growth of population movements in West Africa has been exacerbated by recurrent natural disasters (floods and drought), protracted refugee situations and chronic poverty. In total, there are more than 850,000 people of concern to UNHCR in the subregion, including some 149,000 refugees and 520,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs).

A former refugee who has lost her husband and four children during the war in Liberia returns home to a house built by UNHCR.



Strategy in 2011

In 2011, UNHCR will focus on:

- Promoting livelihoods and durable solutions, in particular, local integration.
- Implementing a durable solutions strategy for protracted refugee situations through local integration within the framework of the Protocol on Free Movements, Right of Residence and Establishment adopted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).
- Strengthening partnerships with humanitarian and development actors to facilitate the inclusion of refugees in national development plans and enhance emergency-preparedness and response capacity in the region.
- Building the protection capacity of government counterparts, NGOs and other stakeholders.
- Strengthening the protection of refugees and other persons of concern within mixed migratory flows and furthering the implementation of UNHCR's 10-Point Plan of Action in the subregion.

With the invocation of the cessation clause for Liberian refugees at the end of 2011 and the possibility of a similar development for refugees from Rwanda, UNHCR will pay special attention to these two groups. Durable solutions, mainly voluntary repatriation and local integration, will be promoted for both.

Constraints

The main challenges faced by UNHCR in West Africa are linked to the difficult socio-economic conditions and fragile political

and security contexts in several countries, which reduce the prospects of local integration for refugees.

The continued postponement of presidential elections, for instance, in Côte d'Ivoire, has prevented repatriation. Similarly, the political stalemate in Mauritania has not allowed for the repatriation of some 8,000 refugees from Senegal or 10,000 from Mali to be completed. In Ghana, the newly-created Ghana Refugee Board has suffered a delay in beginning its work of refugee status determination (RSD) and this in turn is delaying the development of a government strategy for local integration.

Many refugees continue to focus their attention exclusively on resettlement. Stimulating their interest in other durable solutions, namely local integration and voluntary repatriation, remains a challenge. This poses an additional problem in terms of protection and self-reliance for the most vulnerable, since many of these resettlement-seeking refugees aim to discourage others from pursuing self-reliance programmes.

Shortages of capacity and resources in some countries are hampering UNHCR's efforts to support urban refugees, particularly with regard to livelihoods and local integration.

Operations

UNHCR's operations in **Côte d'Ivoire** and **Liberia** are described in separate chapters.

In 2011, UNHCR's operations in the subregion will address the needs of over 149,000 refugees living both in rural and urban areas. As from the end of that year, the Office expects to be able to scale down its activities, following the application of the cessation clause to Liberian refugees. Meanwhile, thousands of Ivorians are expected to return to their homes, following the October 2010 elections in Côte d'Ivoire.

However, refugees will remain in all 15 countries and will require continued support from UNHCR. The challenge for UNHCR will be to find the resources to continue its protection and durable solutions, and to remain a credible actor within the UN system and with other stakeholders in West Africa.

Local integration, including through naturalization, will remain the most relevant durable solution in the West African context. This approach is firmly supported by a number of regional legal instruments and entities, namely the African Union, ECOWAS, the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa and the Mano River Union.

UNHCR will aim in 2011 to promote self-reliance to allow refugees to achieve full legal, social and economic local integration in West Africa; to build partnerships for self-reliance and local integration with development actors; and to strengthen the capacities of its staff and that of its partners, particularly local NGOs.

Nigeria hosts more than 8,600 refugees, mainly from Liberia. Through a community-based approach, UNHCR will assist both refugees and local populations whose resources are strained by the refugees' presence. UNHCR will also continue to foster its partnership with the ECOWAS Commission, and seek to bring refugee protection and solutions into the mainstream of regional policies. With the support of the African Development Bank, UNHCR has joined ECOWAS in a two-year project promoting peace and development in the region, with a particular focus on solutions for Liberian and Senegalese refugees.

Benin has more than 7,100 persons of concern to UNHCR, mostly Togolese refugees. The Office will continue to strengthen national protection capacities and pursue durable solutions for these people. It will also work closely with other stakeholders within the UN Delivering as One initiative.

In **Guinea**, UNHCR is assisting some 15,800 refugees, the majority from Liberia. The strategy for 2011 is to focus on durable solutions, notably local integration. UNHCR will work in close cooperation with the Government and development partners to build local capacities, and prepare for a scaling down of its presence.

UNHCR will continue to promote local integration for Liberian refugees in **Sierra Leone** through self-reliance activities and legal assistance, with a specific focus on the most vulnerable people of concern. Addressing the challenges of access to employment and social housing will remain important, in particular, for urban refugees, and will require advocacy and cooperation with development actors.

In **Togo**, the elections that have been held in 2010 have not yielded the expected return of refugees from Benin and Ghana. The country is still hosting more than 13,000 refugees, mostly

from Ghana and living in rural areas. UNHCR will continue to focus on livelihoods and socio-economic integration for this group. Furthermore, the volatile security situation will require the implementation of peacebuilding projects.

More than 13,600 refugees live in **Ghana**, mostly in semi-rural areas. UNHCR aims to build national protection capacity and promote livelihoods activities to empower them. As part of its exit strategy, the Office will also seek to ensure that refugees are included in development programmes.

In addition to smaller urban refugee groups of different nationalities, **Guinea-Bissau** and the **Gambia** host a total of some 15,000 Senegalese refugees, largely in rural areas. In light of the situation in the Casamance region, safe return to Senegal for these people is not yet an option. UNHCR will strengthen livelihoods programmes and respond to basic needs while helping the authorities to issue adequate documentation. UNHCR will also strive to integrate refugees into national services and development programmes.

UNHCR will have a permanent presence in **Niger** and **Burkina Faso** in 2011, in order to improve its monitoring capacity and its participation in UN efforts in these countries.

In **Senegal**, some 7,700 Mauritanian refugees are awaiting repatriation. Following discussions in July 2010 between the Governments of Senegal and Mauritania, it is expected that some 2,500 Mauritians will return, but the fate of the remaining 5,200 remains unclear. In **Mali**, UNHCR will seek a solution to allow 10,000 Mauritanian refugees to return home.

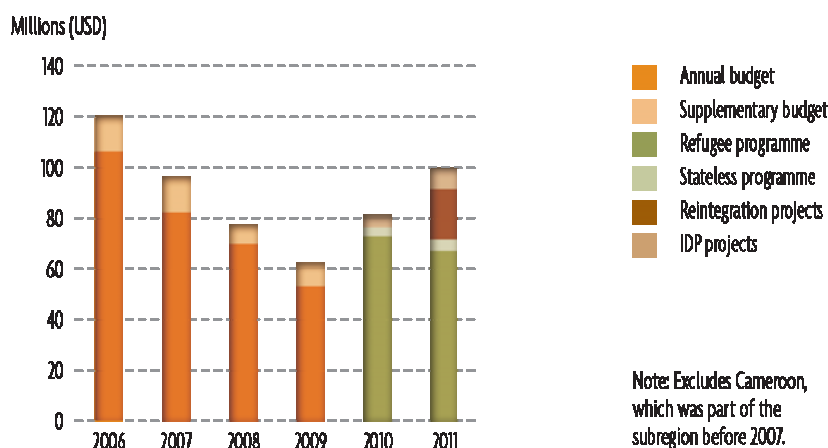
UNHCR will also continue to play an active role in the various regional groups dealing with emergencies and contingency planning, the Consolidated Appeals Processes, protection, mixed migration and HIV and AIDs. It will also play a part in the UN Development Group for West Africa.

Financial information

UNHCR's budget for West Africa in 2011 amounts to USD 99.2 million, up from USD 80.8 million in 2010. This increase reflects the planned adjustments to operations as a result of the forthcoming invocation of cessation for Liberian refugees across the subregion and the overall extension of the area covered by the Regional Office in Dakar.

UNHCR will further reinforce its durable solutions strategy in West Africa to promote all remaining opportunities for voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees with a view to complete assisted repatriation and to reinforce local integration activities before disengagement at the end of 2011.

UNHCR's budget in West Africa 2006 – 2011



UNHCR budget for West Africa (USD)

OPERATION	2010 REVISED BUDGET	2011				TOTAL
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	REINTEGRATION PROJECTS PILLAR 3	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	
Côte d'Ivoire	16,064,792	12,526,922	4,308,244	1,599,966	8,098,884	26,534,016
Ghana	8,587,847	4,311,330	0	1,764,317	0	6,075,647
Guinea	7,299,444	2,648,826	0	2,911,646	0	5,560,472
Liberia	7,652,592	5,382,632	0	5,283,254	0	10,665,886
Senegal Regional Office¹	41,530,635	41,774,899	734,910	7,888,856	0	50,398,665
Total	81,135,310	66,644,609	5,043,154	19,448,039	8,098,884	99,234,686

¹ Includes activities in Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo.