

# West Africa

## Major developments

In 2005, the general situation in West Africa continued to improve. UNHCR continued to facilitate the safe and dignified return and reintegration of Liberian refugees to their country of origin, where elections took place peacefully. During the year, almost 38,000 Liberian refugees chose to be repatriated under the auspices of UNHCR, mainly from Guinea, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire and, to a lesser extent, from Ghana and Nigeria, while 150,000 returned spontaneously. Furthermore, some 260,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) returned to their places of origin, most of them with UNHCR's assistance.

Political violence surrounding presidential elections in Togo in April 2005 led to the exodus of nearly 40,000 refugees to Benin and Ghana. UNHCR assisted those refugees who, at the end of the year, did not consider the political scene in Togo sufficiently changed to assure repatriation in safety and dignity.

In 2005, the overall number of persons of concern to UNHCR decreased in West Africa from 465,000 at the beginning of the year to 371,000 at year's end.

## Challenges and concerns

In general terms, the socio-economic situation remains a major concern for most of the populations in West Africa. In this context of extreme poverty and massive youth unemployment, many refugees and returnees find it extremely difficult to settle locally or to reintegrate in their place of origin without UNHCR's support.

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

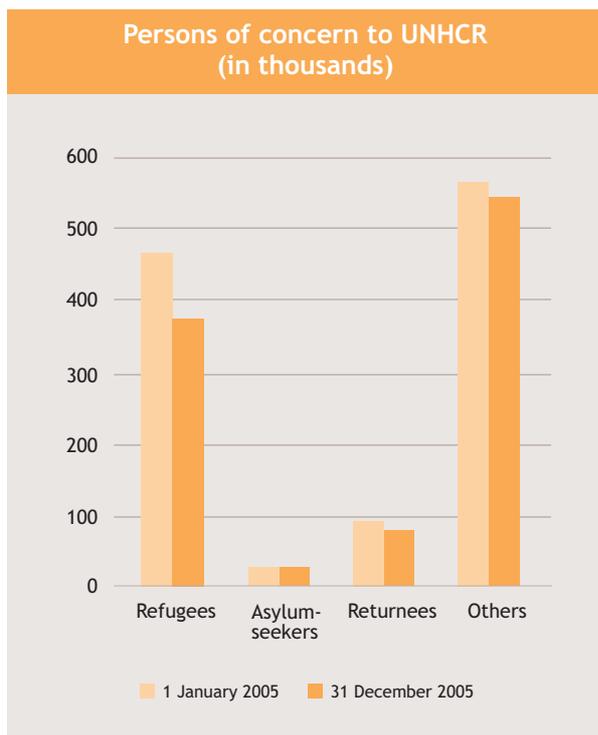


In camp situations, such as in Guinea or Sierra Leone, food rations have been reduced below standard levels as a result of decreasing contributions or disruptions in the food pipeline. Joint efforts are being made with WFP to find appropriate solutions to this situation.

One of the main challenges for UNHCR in the region was the relatively slow return of Liberian refugees. Many opted to wait for the end of the electoral process before deciding whether to return. The very limited availability

of basic services following 14 years of civil war also acted as a disincentive. Moreover, many refugees still hoped that resettlement to third countries would be an option.

Growing tensions in Chad and Central African Republic (CAR) border areas highlighted the need for preparations to be in place in Cameroon. Contingency plans were updated in close cooperation with the local authorities and the UN Country Team. International concern also remained focused on Nigeria, with recurrent communal violence and inter-religious conflicts, and on Guinea, where the economic and social situation was very fragile. Despite continuous discussions with all stakeholders in 2005, no change was observed in the situation of nearly 26,000 Mauritanian refugees in Senegal and Mali.



## Progress towards solutions

UNHCR phased out its reintegration programmes for Sierra Leonean returnees at the end of 2005, handing over responsibility to the Government of Sierra Leone and development agencies. In various countries, including Guinea, Liberia, Ghana, and Nigeria, there were residual groups of Sierra Leonean refugees, for whom UNHCR promoted local integration, pending the decision to invoke the cessation clause for their refugee status. In Guinea, over 200 Sierra Leoneans, having benefited from multifaceted support, integrated in urban or rural areas of their choice.

UNHCR also worked throughout West Africa to find practical and realistic solutions for urban refugees coming from the subregion and other parts of Africa. In response to environmental degradation in certain refugee-impacted areas, UNHCR supported rehabilitation initiatives, often through new partnerships.

The improvement of the political and security situation in Liberia has allowed UNHCR to facilitate the return of some 38,000 Liberian refugees from neighbouring countries. However, resettlement programmes have, in some cases, impacted negatively on repatriation trends. It is therefore envisaged that when the promotional phase of repatriation is declared, most resettlement programmes for Liberian refugees will stop.

## Operations

This section outlines UNHCR's activities in West Africa by country, except for Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone, which are described in separate country chapters.

Since 2002 the Regional Office in **Benin** has coordinated operations for Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo. In Benin, UNHCR sought to shift its emphasis away from care and maintenance and towards local integration and self-reliance, as part of a drive towards durable solutions. The organization's efforts were backed up by the Government of Benin, which had a very hospitable attitude towards the refugee population and allowed refugees to integrate into the local community, giving them access to education and other social services, as well as employment.

As a consequence of the violence that followed Togo's April 2005 presidential elections, some 26,600 Togolese

refugees fled to Benin. Some 11,600 were subsequently assisted in Comé and Agamé camps by UNHCR in collaboration with UN agencies and NGOs. Refugees living outside the camps, in particular those with special needs, also had access to assistance and health and educational services.

Despite encouraging reconciliatory efforts by the Togolese Government to create a more peaceful environment for an eventual repatriation of Togolese refugees from Benin, UNHCR had to prolong assistance to these refugees throughout 2005 as voluntary repatriation was still not an option.

In the two camps set up in the aftermath of the April emergency, Lokossa and Comé, emergency tents were gradually replaced by semi-permanent dwellings from August onwards: some 300 houses were built by refugees under the technical supervision of a partner. Each refugee received 15 to 20 litres of water per day. Training courses on hygiene were organized regularly and involved personnel from the Ministry of Health. Three HIV/AIDS sensitization campaigns were organized in collaboration with the Ministry. Refugee committees were set up and youth committees were established. At the beginning of the new school year, over 1,950 children were registered and 51 teachers recruited from among the refugee population. Of the 238 unaccompanied minors registered at the beginning of the crisis, 95 were reunited with their families.

Partners – governmental, UN agencies and NGOs – played a crucial complementary role, as they took on essential activities in the sectors of health, water, sanitation, education and community services.

In addition to the post-emergency assistance for some 26,600 Togolese refugees, the Office continued to

Budget and expenditure (USD)		
Country	Final budget	Expenditure
	Annual programme budget	
Benin	2,131,047	1,911,769
Cameroon	2,464,691	2,317,940
Côte d'Ivoire	11,422,605	10,842,693
Gambia	759,291	648,191
Ghana	9,075,796	8,446,235
Guinea	19,811,872	18,403,993
Liberia	46,380,006	46,041,581
Nigeria	2,943,213	2,843,811
Senegal	2,113,388	1,852,693
Sierra Leone	23,488,763	22,112,066
Regional projects <sup>1</sup>	6,065,031	5,141,823
<b>Total</b>	<b>126,655,703</b>	<b>120,562,795</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes local settlement, emergency assistance, voluntary repatriation and resettlement assistance for urban refugees in the region, as well as scholarships for refugee students.

provide protection and assistance to some 3,700 refugees, mainly from Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Republic of the Congo (RoC), Rwanda and to 1,500 asylum-seekers from central African countries. UNHCR helped qualified refugee teachers to find employment in secondary schools in the North of Benin. UNHCR initiated a database of refugees' skills, which was used to promote employment in local and international companies. The education programme included primary and secondary education for all refugee children and university scholarships were granted to 27 students (18 of these under the DAFI scheme). In 2005, of 129 asylum-seekers, 83 were granted refugee status. Some 77 refugees were assisted to return to Burundi, CAR, Chad, and RoC while 26 others were resettled in Canada, Denmark and the United States.

In 2005, **Burkina Faso** hosted some 500 refugees and 600 asylum-seekers originating from central African countries. Despite UNHCR's efforts to find durable solutions for refugees in this economically depressed country, many skilled refugees failed to find work. At the end of 2005, the number of refugees benefiting from the UNHCR-sponsored local settlement scheme was reduced from 75 to 39 (as 36 persons left the country). Five refugees from Burundi and RoC were assisted to return home and two refugees were resettled in Canada. Some 257 refugees received medical assistance, and sanitary materials were distributed to some 100 refugee women. The Office helped 69 refugee children with primary education, 35 refugees with secondary education and another 35 with vocational training. Three refugee status determination (RSD) sessions were held during the year and 33 asylum-seekers were granted refugee status. The Strengthening Protection Capacity Project was piloted, among other African countries, in Benin and Burkina Faso in 2005. It helped strengthen the Government's capacities to receive and protect refugees by, *inter alia*, providing a comprehensive analysis of the gaps in refugee protection in the host state, and identifying strategies to fill these gaps through a process of national and regional consultations.

UNHCR's programme in **Cameroon** in 2005 covered 9,700 Nigerian *prima facie* refugees settled since 2002 in the North-West of the country and some 41,000 urban refugees settled in Yaoundé and Douala, mainly from Chad, CAR, DRC, Liberia, RoC, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. Owing to insecurity in Chad and CAR in 2005, the number of asylum-seekers in Cameroon significantly increased, bringing the total to 6,600.

The adoption of a refugee law by Parliament in July 2005 was an important development for which UNHCR had advocated intensively throughout 2004. A first draft was submitted to the Government in September 2004. Pending the adoption of a decree, UNHCR carried out

the registration of asylum-seekers and RSD. In order to improve RSD procedures, many activities were partly or fully transferred from the Cameroon Red Cross to UNHCR during the second half of 2005. In December new eligibility officers and RSD assistants were recruited and trained. Following a Project Profile mission in June 2005, UNHCR started to register urban refugees in its database. This will continue in 2006.

Major repatriation movements took place in 2005 for Nigerian refugees recognized on a *prima facie* basis and who had settled in North-West Cameroon since 2002. A tripartite agreement between the two countries and UNHCR was signed in April 2005. By December 2005, over 7,700 Nigerian refugees had been repatriated and the Project Profile database updated accordingly. UNHCR continued to provide domestic and shelter items, health care and basic primary education; and rehabilitated the water system for some 9,700 remaining Nigerian refugees in the North-West of Cameroon.

UNHCR provided humanitarian assistance to urban refugees with specific needs in 2005. With the opening of a well-equipped medical centre, health care for this group was improved. In 2005, support for primary education was provided to almost 3,000 refugee children, while secondary education assistance was extended to 128 refugees and professional skills training to 34 others. Additionally, 36 urban refugees were assisted to return to their countries of origin and 95 others were resettled.

In 2005, the Office in The **Gambia** hosted some 7,400 refugees mainly from Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and several central African countries. The Office continued to assist the Government in addressing refugee protection issues, especially as the draft refugee bill had not yet passed into law.

In May 2005, Senegalese refugees based in Bambali refugee camp left the camp and reportedly settled spontaneously among the local population in the West. As a result, UNHCR officially handed over the Basse and Bambali camps to the authorities in August. Over 2,200 refugees benefited from services such as education, health, microfinance, skills training, and individual documentation. Only 40 Liberian refugees repatriated voluntarily and were assisted to return home. Apart from the 5,200 Senegalese refugees in the West, the refugee population in the country is now urban-based. UNHCR successfully negotiated with the Government for the recognition of the remaining 6,000 Sierra Leoneans as refugees. Over 700 refugee women received sanitary materials and roughly 450 refugee students received primary and secondary school fees and uniforms. While 133 refugees received microfinance loans and training in basic computer skills, hairdressing and management

courses were established for refugees at the UNHCR Refugee Counselling Centre. The Centre also provided information on HIV/AIDS.

In **Guinea Bissau**, the Office continued to strengthen its self-reliance activities for refugees by gradually phasing down its assistance to some 7,300 Senegalese refugees living in Jolmète site. Refugees benefited from services ranging from medical assistance, education, and vocational apprenticeships to agricultural microcredit schemes. Refugee committees were involved in the design and establishment of these activities, ensuring that the needs of refugee women were adequately addressed. In collaboration with an NGO partner, the Office initiated a mine awareness campaign with a view to the eventual return of the refugees in the Casamance area. Training activities on international refugee law were conducted for the host authorities, immigration and security officials, and partners. In Dakar, UNHCR trained the members of its governmental counterpart on refugee matters, including refugee status adjudication, on a monthly basis.

**Mali** hosted some 12,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, mainly from Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania and Sierra Leone. UNHCR's regular programme aimed at helping refugees to become self-sufficient in both urban and rural areas. In December 2005, Loulouni, one of the two camps hosting Ivorian refugees, was closed, owing to the fall in numbers of refugees living there. The remaining refugees were transferred to Faragouran. In addition, capacity building for legal protection was developed by UNHCR with the *Commission Nationale Chargée des Réfugiés*. UNHCR activities in education focused on providing support to schools through the supply of textbooks, furniture and school fees for 52 refugee children. Income-generating activities, ranging from small-scale trading in foodstuffs to second-hand clothes shops, were carried out for 16 refugee widows.

Awareness activities on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and HIV/AIDS reached a record audience. In the framework of the regional assistance programme for Ivorian refugees, food was provided by WFP in the Loulouni and Faragouran camps. Mali also received over 970 asylum-seekers; in 2005, 238 applications were processed and 31 people were granted refugee status. Training sessions on the rights of refugees and emergency management were provided to UNHCR's NGO and government partners, particularly local authorities near the border with Côte d'Ivoire. UNHCR submitted 103 applications for resettlement to Canada through the Accra Regional Resettlement Hub.

Intensive efforts were made to assess potential durable solutions for long-staying Mauritanian refugees. The Office continued to provide international protection and

life-sustaining assistance for this group, since repatriation and resettlement as durable solutions remained politically sensitive.

In 2005, **Niger** hosted 48 asylum-seekers and 301 refugees, of whom 106 were Chadians living in Gouré. The National Eligibility Committee still met regularly despite the low number of applications and seven asylum applications were examined, resulting in two asylum-seekers receiving refugee status. Under the repatriation programme, 31 Chadians received assistance to return to their country of origin. One refugee from RoC was resettled in Finland. Vocational training was provided to nine urban refugees, 22 refugee children received scholarships for primary education, 20 for secondary education and one for post-secondary education.

**Nigeria** hosted some 11,800 persons of concern, comprising over 5,700 camp-based refugees, 5,800 urban refugees and 300 asylum seekers. They are mainly from Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, RoC and Sudan. UNHCR pursued durable solutions through the voluntary repatriation of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees and supported self-reliance and skills-building initiatives aimed at helping the local integration and naturalization of the remaining population.

The voluntary repatriation of Liberians was delayed, partly due to two civil aircraft crashes in October and December 2005, and only 229 Liberians repatriated. A total of 24 Sierra Leoneans repatriated, while over 1,600 continued to require legal and financial assistance for local integration, as well as consideration of eligible cases for resettlement. In addition, 38 refugees of various nationalities were resettled.

To prepare the reintegration of some Nigerian returnees from Cameroon into Taraba State (7,700 refugees returned from Cameroon), the Office focused on reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in close collaboration with the Government and other UN development agencies already established in the area. UNHCR also started peace education activities in the returnee areas in conjunction with a specialized institute. A feasibility study on local integration of refugees in Nigeria was conducted, setting the stage for the local integration work plan for 2006.

In Oru Camp, over 5,700 refugees received basic health care, sanitation and education. Food was distributed for children under 12 years of age, serious medical cases and the elderly. Kerosene was supplied to households and sanitary materials to more than 1,000 women in the camp on a monthly basis. Medical subsidies and assistance were also provided to those with special needs such as the disabled and patients with tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. In addition to health education, counselling on health-related

problems, family planning, SGBV and HIV/AIDS counselling were also provided. Secondary education was provided to over 230 refugees while 27 others received technical education and 17 vocational training. Through its partner, UNHCR ran vocational training courses in tailoring, catering, hairdressing, tie and dye, secretarial skills and English for over 200, mostly female, students. Seventeen groups of five urban refugee women in Lagos, and 19 groups of ten refugee women from Oru Camp were organized and assisted to run small business enterprises. In 2005, 180 families were given access to land while 350 households remained involved with agriculture activities.

UNHCR's office in Abuja, being accredited to ECOWAS HQ, continued to work actively with the Government, ECOWAS and the UN Country Team to fulfil its international protection mandate. As part of the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations, UNHCR took part in discussions at various levels with ECOWAS. In particular, UNHCR jointly organized training with ECOWAS on emergency management and UNHCR's Code of Conduct for personnel of ECOWAS' Executive Secretariat and humanitarian bodies of its member States.

The Office in **Senegal** coordinated operations in Guinea Bissau, Mali and Senegal. Senegal hosted almost 19,700 refugees and 2,000 asylum-seekers, mainly from Mauritania and the remainder from other central African countries.

UNHCR continued to focus on strengthening the protection of the urban refugees, ensuring that basic assistance provided to them met minimum standards. Skills training, income-generating activities and education were provided to refugee women. Some 25 urban refugees, eight of them women, received microcredit assistance. Educational support was provided to over 250 refugees. Four Sierra Leonean and three Liberian refugees were assisted to repatriate and 89 refugees were resettled in Canada and the United States.

UNHCR continued its efforts to find durable solutions for the Mauritanian refugees living in Senegal and Mali since 1989. The Office proposed a political approach through diplomatic exchanges involving the three



Benin: UNHCR registers Togolese refugees and hands out wristbands near the border town of Hilakondji. *UNHCR / J. Björqvinnsson*

Governments. Individual micro-projects were offered to 410 refugees, while seven women's agricultural cooperatives were assisted to grow maize, rice, hot peppers and other crops, benefiting 275 families. Ninety Mauritians were resettled in Canada, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States.

In 2005, **Togo** hosted 8,800 refugees and 200 asylum-seekers. UNHCR provided assistance to over 1,200 urban refugees, mainly from central African countries: 287 refugees received medical assistance, 254 children received primary and secondary education and 59 vocational training. Ten students who had received scholarships found employment. Under the repatriation programme, ten refugees from Rwanda and two from Burundi were assisted to return home and 21 refugees were resettled in Canada. During the year, 34 asylum-seekers were granted refugee status. Some 10,000 rural refugees from Ghana living in northern Togo integrated locally.

Following the violence during Togo's April 2005 presidential elections, a UN Country Team assessment of the internal displacement situation in the country, followed by a joint WFP, WHO and UNICEF mission, uncovered urgent needs for protection and assistance, especially in the food and health sectors. Within the overall UN Country Team effort, UNHCR helped the Togolese authorities to build the capacity of the newly-established governmental structure in charge of IDPs and returnees. UNHCR also provided assistance to IDPs in Togo and non-food items were distributed to some 10,000 people. The latest inter-agency assessment figures show a fall in the number of IDPs, from 10,000 during the early days of the crisis to 3,000. With further assistance, such as rehabilitation of shelter, it is expected that more IDPs will return to their places of origin.

## Funding

UNHCR's annual programme budget for West Africa benefited from substantial earmarked contributions (65 per cent of the approved budget). In particular, the Liberia situation, which received contributions amounting to 71 per cent of its budget, continued to attract the highest interest from the donor community.

As in previous years, close collaboration and coordination between UNHCR and other UN agencies in all operations was reflected through the Consolidated Appeal Process in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and during the Togo crisis.

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)		
Earmarking <sup>1</sup>	Donor	Annual programme budget
<b>West Africa</b>		
	Australia	62,480
	Canada	1,815,494
	Denmark	2,529,511
	European Commission	1,266,586
	Finland	1,807,045
	France	259,403
	Japan	4,200,000
	Japan Association for UNHCR	113,708
	Luxembourg	901,442
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Italy	158,213
	Monaco	30,000
	Sweden	10,590,015
	United Kingdom	2,099,124
	United States	650,000
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>26,483,022</b>
<b>Benin</b>		
	France	194,217
	Germany	129,366
	Liechtenstein	38,760
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>362,343</b>
<b>Cameroon</b>		
	<i>Association française de soutien à l'UNHCR</i>	67,579
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Italy	103,791
	USA for UNHCR	100,000
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>271,370</b>
<b>Côte d'Ivoire</b>		
	Germany	184,017
	Netherlands	361,000
	Sweden	496,278
	United States	1,650,000
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>2,691,295</b> ➔

Earmarking <sup>1</sup>	Donor	Annual programme budget
<b>Ghana</b>		
	Australia	120,000
	Italy	258,732
	United Kingdom	68,391
	United States	1,947,400
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>2,394,523</b>
<b>Guinea</b>		
	European Commission	347,561
	France	128,868
	Germany	187,396
	Italy	388,098
	Norway	1,269,841
	United Kingdom	355,872
	United States	3,450,000
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>6,127,636</b>
<b>Liberia</b>		
	Belgium	588,235
	<i>Deutsche Stiftung für UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe</i>	35,294
	European Commission	5,382,620
	Germany	964,555
	Japan	6,971,429
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Canada	52,113
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Italy	159,600
	Miscellaneous donors / Private donors in Switzerland	620
	Netherlands	1,807,000
	Sinitus AG	100,000
	Spain	584,581
	<i>Stichting Vluchteling</i>	162,309
	Switzerland	1,197,964
	United States	13,200,000
	USA for UNHCR	1,200
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>31,207,521</b>
<b>Senegal</b>		
	United States	77,600
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>77,600</b>
<b>Sierra Leone</b>		
	European Commission	412,843
	Germany	395,551
	Italy	323,415
	Japan	2,500,000
	<i>Rissho Kosei Kan</i>	57,692
	Spain	1,222,636
	<i>Stichting Vluchteling</i>	18,293
	Switzerland	416,667
	United States	3,944,200
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>9,291,297</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>78,906,608</b>

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the earmarking, please refer to the donor profiles.