

West and Central Africa

Benin
Burkina Faso
Cameroon
Cape Verde
Central African
Republic
Chad
Côte d'Ivoire
Equatorial Guinea
Gabon
Gambia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Liberia
Mali
Niger
Nigeria
Sao Tomé and Príncipe
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Togo

Recent Developments

A year after the humanitarian crisis triggered in September 2000 by intensified cross-border incursions in Guinea, there is some cause for optimism in the Mano River countries (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone). The political dialogue within the Mano River Union resumed with a series of ministerial meetings, and a summit meeting of Heads of State is now scheduled for January 2002. In Sierra Leone, the peace process has steadily advanced with the ongoing deployment of UNAMSIL to RUF-held territories and with the disarmament of the RUF (Revolutionary United Front) and the CDF (Civil Defence Force) fighters. The date for presidential and parliamentary elections has been set for 14 May 2002. For UNHCR, this could result in an eventual shift of emphasis from the ongoing facilitated repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees to the promotion of large-scale voluntary repatriation. In Guinea, some 58,000 refugees, mainly Sierra Leoneans, have been relocated from the Parrot's Beak and Forecariah to the new camps near Kissidougou and Dabola where their physical safety and protection can be ensured and where they have access to material assistance. Some 6,000 Liberian refugees were also moved from border areas and towns in N'zérékoré to the Kola camp. In late August 2001, UNHCR started facilitating the movement of Sierra Leonean refugees from the new camps to the Mambya transit centre, from where they are repatriated through Conakry by boat to Freetown. The Government of Liberia officially re-opened its borders with Guinea and Sierra Leone in late September 2001. Despite these positive developments, insecurity in Lofa County in Liberia continues to be a major concern with Liberian refugees still fleeing into Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

In other countries in the sub-region, UNHCR successfully oversaw the voluntary repatriation of Chadian refugees in mid-August. UNHCR has thus assisted the return of more than 7,000 Chadian refugees, mainly from Cameroon and the Central African Republic (CAR) since the beginning of the voluntary repatriation operation

in 1999. In September 2001, a tripartite agreement was signed between the Governments of the Republic of the

Congo (RoC) and Gabon and UNHCR on the voluntary repatriation of refugees to RoC. The security situation in CAR remains highly volatile in the aftermath of the failed coup d'état in May 2001. The situation was aggravated by the killing of a UN

Field Safety Officer in Bangui in July, and a large number of asylum-seekers continue to arrive in the

D e m o c r a t i c
Republic of the
Congo (DRC),
Cameroon and
Gabon. The reconciliation process in Côte d'Ivoire, which had been fraught with uncertainties following the presidential elections in October 2000, is progressing.



Strategic Objectives

As a result of prioritisation, UNHCR's offices in seven countries – Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, the Gambia, Mali, Niger and Togo – will be closed by the end of December 2001. UNHCR has adopted a 'cluster' approach whereby activities in countries without a UNHCR presence will be managed by four cluster offices with a sub-regional coverage – Benin, CAR, Gabon and Senegal. UNHCR's presence in the sub-region will thus be reduced from offices in 17 countries in 2001 to ten country offices in 2002.

In this context, UNHCR aims to eventually secure greater involvement of the respective governments in refugee matters and to consolidate and harmonise assistance programmes throughout the sub-region, with a particular focus on urban refugees. UNHCR will institute a more comprehensive and integrated approach to refugee and returnee matters through increased co-operation with sub-regional organisations such as the African Development Bank, ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and the UN West Africa Office, which will be established in Dakar in early 2002. Other main goals will be to pursue voluntary repatriation operations, especially to Liberia, RoC and Sierra Leone, and to strengthen

preparedness for possible emergencies by updating contingency plans and establishing an initial response mechanism (such as stockpiles of non-food items) both at the country and regional levels. A Plan of Operation for the repatriation and reintegration of Sierra Leonean refugees has been developed, outlining UNHCR's phased approach to the repatriation operation as favourable conditions evolve. Should the security situation in Liberia improve, UNHCR plans to support the voluntary repatriation of some 5,000 Liberian refugees from various countries of asylum on an individual basis. No major reintegration in Liberia is presently envisaged for 2002. However, the strategic objectives for Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees will be subject to review according to developments.

Efforts will be intensified to establish refugee status determination (RSD) procedures in those parts of the sub-region where they do not yet exist. National authorities will be provided with RSD training focusing on the effective application of recognition criteria and treatment of asylum-seekers. Registration and verification exercises will also be pursued as a priority activity in the sub-region. Assistance programmes will strive to promote self-sufficiency for refugees, through income-generating activities, vocational training and support for education. These activities, designed to empower women and to

ensure coherence and continuity of educational opportunities (especially with repatriation in mind), will be undertaken in close co-operation with several different actors. The educational activities (including peace education) will hopefully contribute to ending the cycle of violence. Training on children's rights based on Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) will continue for UNHCR, governments, operational partners and refugees. This will also contribute to the capacity-building process, particularly in those countries where UNHCR will no longer have a presence, and to inter-agency co-operation. Following the recent sub-regional workshops involving children, a wide-ranging series of activities is envisaged, with youth participation. These activities will make the authorities, implementing partners, and the wider refugee community, more conscious of the need to protect children. A forthcoming sub-regional assessment on refugee children and sexual and gender-based violence will investigate the scale of the problem and will be used to strengthen the programmes run by the child protection agencies. Increased emphasis is being placed on HIV/AIDS education, for refugees in general and adolescents in particular.

Ensuring security is a paramount consideration not only for refugees and returnees but also for the staff of UNHCR and operational partners. Given that the primary responsibility for safety of humanitarian staff, refugees and returnees, lies with government, UNHCR will make every effort to facilitate the discharge of such responsibilities by making appropriate support arrangements and by ensuring regular liaison and exchange of information with security officials.

Operations

UNHCR's country programmes in **Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone** are described in separate chapters.

The office in **Benin** assists over 2,300 urban refugees (mainly in Cotonou and in Kpomassè) out of some 4,500 refugees from the Great Lakes region and Togo. Vulnerable groups, including single women, the elderly and the handicapped, will be assisted through vocational training, education and income-generating activities. The resettlement pilot project which started in 1998 will continue for over 200 persons including some 150 already being resettled. Some 60 refugees will receive

Benin: Refugees from Nigeria in Cotonou region. *UNHCR/S. Errington.*



grants for study at university level. The office in Benin will also be responsible for UNHCR's activities in **Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo**. In Burkina Faso, there are some 760 urban refugees and asylum-seekers of various nationalities, including 72 who have been resettled in the country under the pilot project. Some 500 of those will be assisted by UNHCR. Of over 12,000 refugees in Togo, some 11,000 Ghanaian refugees settled in northern Togo are considered to be fully integrated into local communities. Some 740 urban refugees will receive assistance mainly in the areas of education and health. In Niger, a reintegration project which is in its last year will be implemented for 3,500 returnees from Algeria and Burkina Faso. The project also benefits the local population in host communities. Assistance will be provided to some 800 urban refugees and asylum-seekers and some 60 refugee students will be given scholarships to pursue their studies at various levels.

In the **Central African Republic (CAR)**, UNHCR continues to seek durable solutions for roughly 47,000 refugees of various nationalities. For some 35,000 Sudanese refugees who have lived in Mboki for more than ten years, the Office will continue to implement a strategy developed in 2000 to stimulate economic activities, generate income and develop capital in the refugee settlement area, with a view to the eventual withdrawal of UNHCR's assistance. In this context, UNHCR will provide repairs and maintenance of roads and bridges to Mboki town and micro-credit projects, particularly for women. A local settlement programme will be implemented for some 2,000 refugees from DRC in Molangue. Assistance includes the provision of seeds and agricultural tools, food, water and health facilities, education for children, training in the management of small-scale business and income-generating activities such as soap-making, bread-baking and tailoring. While over 9,000 urban refugees and asylum-seekers are assured of international protection, only those in need will receive material assistance in the areas of primary health, education and income generation. The Office also supports the National Eligibility Commission. Some 220 students will benefit from scholarships at secondary and university levels. UNHCR provides technical support to advocate for an environmental project and awareness-raising among refugee populations in Mboki and Molangue. During the attempted coup of late May 2001, nine refugees were killed, most of them Rwandan, and the Government of the CAR has requested the repatriation of all Rwandan refugees. UNHCR will pursue resettlement options for those refugees-at-risk. In addition, the office in CAR will take up responsibilities for UNHCR's activities in **Chad** where assistance is planned for some 1,000 urban refugees.

Côte d'Ivoire hosts some 125,800 refugees, of whom 115,500 are Liberian refugees who fled their country more than ten years ago, and the majority of whom live in harmony with local populations in the so-called *Zone d'Accueil des Réfugiés* (ZAR), comprising over 200 villages spread along the western border

with Liberia. In addition, some 7,000 Liberian new arrivals have been registered since May 2001. There are also some 2,100 Sierra Leoneans in ZAR and another 1,200 from 27 other countries, mainly from the Great Lakes region, in urban centres such as Abidjan. A new refugee census in the ZAR is taking place in November and December 2001. In 2002, UNHCR will work closely with UN sister agencies to consolidate local integration of refugees by ensuring access to basic health care, providing skills training for those too old to attend primary school, and ensuring access to existing credit schemes and other income-generating activities. These strategies will be refined on the basis of the forthcoming results of an independent evaluation of the protracted Liberian refugee situation carried out in August 2001. As from the school year 2001/2002, Liberian refugee children have access to Ivorian public schools on the same terms as nationals in ZAR. The Office will continue to negotiate urban refugee children's access to public schools. Basic health care and primary education will continue to be provided to roughly 6,000 Liberian refugees living in Nicla camp, the only refugee camp in Côte d'Ivoire. Food assistance will be given by WFP to over 2,000 Liberian refugees who have most recently arrived in the country (i.e. since the resumption of the conflict in Lofa County in Liberia in May 2001) and have been transferred to Nicla camp. The main protection objectives in 2002 will be the adoption of refugee legislation, which will be linked to the issuance of identity cards to all refugees in Côte d'Ivoire, and capacity-building for the Government.

Some 21,000 refugees and asylum-seekers are officially registered in **Gabon**. Of those, some 17,500 are from RoC and the rest from 26 different countries. Some 16,000 reside in southern provinces bordering RoC, mainly Nyanga, Ngounie and Haut Ogooué, and others in Libreville. UNHCR will provide assistance to some 16,000 refugees in the country with the emphasis on primary education (registration fees, books and uniforms for refugee children). Secondary education and vocational training will be provided for 300 refugees. Other priorities include income-generating activities, social services for vulnerable groups and primary health care. UNHCR will work closely with other UN agencies and, in particular, with the *Programme National de Lutte contre le SIDA* (PNLS), a government institution specialised in issues related to HIV/AIDS. This will focus on an information campaign and the distribution of condoms in areas with a high concentration of refugees. UNHCR will regard voluntary repatriation for refugees from RoC as the preferred durable solution, provided that the security situation there continues to improve. A repatriation programme is initially planned for some 6,000 refugees. In parallel, efforts will be made for the resettlement of individual refugees from RoC who are deemed to be at-risk. UNHCR will continue to provide assistance to strengthen the capacity of the National Refugee Committee and will organise training and seminars for the relevant governmental officials in order to

raise awareness on issues related to refugees and asylum-seekers. Upon closure of the office in **Cameroon**, the office in Gabon will also oversee implementation of the assistance programme for some 2,500 urban refugees of mixed origin in the country. The office in Gabon is also covering **Equatorial Guinea** and **São Tomé and Príncipe**.

Some 12,000 refugees live in **Ghana**, most of them from Liberia and Sierra Leone. Assistance will be provided to some 3,000 Sierra Leoneans and others including over 400 Togolese (ex-military, ex-militia and ex-politicians) in Krisan camp in order to enhance self-sufficiency through skills training, small business assistance grants and agricultural activities. At the same time food assistance will be gradually reduced. Sierra Leonean refugees willing to repatriate will be assisted to return home. Following the screening exercise, some 4,000 Liberian refugees are still in need of international protection. As the focus turns increasingly to those living in Krisan camp, assistance for urban refugees will be scaled down to some 1,000 persons most in need. Over 120 refugee students in secondary, post-secondary and tertiary institutions will be assisted. UNHCR will support the Ghana Refugee Board, its government counterpart, in dealing with the backlog of applications for asylum. The new members of the Board will be trained by UNHCR on operational modalities for protection while the Office takes on an advocacy role.

Nigeria hosts some 7,200 refugees, the majority from Chad, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Of those, some 2,900 will receive material assistance from UNHCR in 2002. Some 2,100 refugees in the Oru camp, mainly Sierra Leoneans and Liberians, will be provided with relief items, shelter, medical assistance, water and sanitation and a primary school for some 200 pupils. Food assistance will be targeted to individuals and groups most in need. Efforts will continue to engage refugees in activities which increase self-sufficiency, such as start-up finance for fish-breeding, tailoring, chicken-farming and small-scale agriculture. Some 800 urban refugees will be assisted with medical care and education. The Office will, whenever possible, support the return of Sierra Leonean refugees during 2002. In the latter part of 2002, the office in Lagos, like other UN agencies, will relocate to the capital Abuja. This calls for strengthening the presence of the National Commission for Refugees in Lagos as well as NGOs, so that UNHCR's direct implementation of refugee-related activities in Lagos can eventually be phased out. The move to Abuja should enhance co-operation with ECOWAS.

In **Senegal**, there are some 20,000 Mauritanian refugees, over 1,000 urban refugees, mainly Liberians and Sierra Leoneans, and a few from the Great Lakes region. For Mauritanian refugees, most of whom settled for more than a decade ago in four districts along the Senegal River Valley and have been locally integrated, UNHCR's prime objective is to formalise their legal status in the country. In this context, UNHCR will

continue to negotiate with the authorities for the resumption of the registration exercise and issuance of identity cards (suspended in May 2000) and will also assist those wishing to be naturalised. Assistance to enhance self-sufficiency will be provided to urban refugees, paying special attention to the needs of women, the elderly, the handicapped and separated children. Over 150 refugee students will be provided with opportunities to pursue secondary and higher education. The office in Dakar will also cover UNHCR's activities in **Cape Verde**, **the Gambia**, **Guinea-Bissau** and **Mali**. In the Gambia, out of 8,500 refugees mainly from Sierra Leone and Senegal (Casamance), UNHCR assists 1,000 Sierra Leoneans in Kundam camp and 500 Senegalese in Bambali camp as well as a limited number of urban refugees. In Guinea-Bissau, of a total of 7,200 refugees, most of whom originate from Casamance, Senegal, UNHCR will continue to assist some 550 refugees in Jolmete camp and over 1,000 urban refugees. In Mali, where there are some 9,300 refugees and asylum-seekers mainly from Mauritania, Sierra Leone and Liberia, limited assistance will be provided for urban refugees. UNHCR will provide support and training to the respective National Eligibility Committees in order to enhance their capacity to deal with refugee-related matters in the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Senegal.

BUDGET (USD)

Country	Annual Programme
Regional Office (Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan)	3,864,398
Benin	300,100
Burkina Faso	50,000
Cameroon	154,000
Central African Republic	2,276,759
Chad	100,000
Côte d'Ivoire	2,120,878
Gabon	4,552,696
Gambia	305,000
Ghana	2,127,076
Guinea	24,591,972
Liberia	6,737,148
Niger	133,000
Nigeria	1,010,278
Senegal	1,105,838
Sierra Leone	14,959,111
Togo	30,000
Regional Activities ¹	1,473,000
Total	65,891,254

¹Includes care and maintenance, voluntary repatriation and resettlement assistance for urban refugees, as well as scholarships for refugee students in West African countries.