

Update Togo

10 June 2005

Situation and Recent Developments



Newly arrived Refugees in Ghana/UNHCR.

As a consequence of the violence that followed Togo's April 2005 Presidential polls, over 36,000 refugees have fled to Benin and Ghana, the majority of whom are women and children. Recent arrivals in Benin are however mostly young single males between 18 and 25. As at June 8th, the number of refugees stands at 21,084 in Benin, including more than 7,600 refugees assisted in camps, and over 15,000 in Ghana.

In Benin, refugees are still arriving on a daily basis at an average rate of 100-150 persons. In Ghana, there are no new arrivals observed but refugee numbers are still rising as mobile registration teams discover more refugees settled among host communities in small villages across various districts.

The situation in Togo is reported to be calm, but human rights violations are reportedly persisting. An EU Presidency statement issued last week while expressing support for recent initiatives taken by the African Union, nonetheless reiterated its call to the Togolese Government to investigate the acts of violence against the civilian population.

Main Achievements

Early preparedness helped UNHCR intervene without delay and provide humanitarian assistance to Togolese refugees, in coordination with UN Agencies, host governments and NGOs. UNHCR is now planning its post emergency phase response in Benin and Ghana, as well as to support the UN and government efforts to assist IDPs in Togo.

Reception, registration and protection

Since the outbreak of the Togolese crisis, no case of refoulement has been reported. A marked sense of hospitality by the local authorities in Benin and Ghana helped ensure admission, registration and protection for all refugees.

Registration of refugees arriving in Benin is being undertaken by the government and UNHCR. The next step is to properly register the urban refugees registered in Cotonou and elsewhere in Benin. In Ghana, joint mobile registration teams have been deployed to complete the registration of the refugees, including the identification of vulnerable individuals.

Assistance

In Benin, assistance programmes are being implemented, in collaboration with UN agencies and NGOs, to meet the needs of more than 7,600 refugees in camps (construction of shelter, provision of food, drinkable water and sanitation facilities) and some 13,500 refugees hosted by local communities (distribution of NFIs, provision of food and supplementary feeding for the most vulnerables).

Having addressed the basic needs, post emergency activities are now being developed such as educational and recreational activities. To avoid disruption of the school cycle, temporary schools were set up in the two camps of Comé and Agame and teachers are being identified and trained. Communal spaces are being planned for recreational and sports activities for children and young refugees. Refugee committees, representing male and female refugees, have been set up in each sector of the camps, and the establishment of youth committees will follow shortly.

In Ghana, needs assessments in shelter and other infrastructural requirements in the various districts of the Volta Region are being conducted to identify the areas that are most strained. Rapid construction of shelter similar to that used by local communities is progressing well. WFP, UNHCR and other partners are working to ensure the provision of food rations and non food items. Special arrangements to ensure access to health services have been agreed between the Ghana Health Service, WHO, UNHCR and UNICEF.

With respect to education, the Ghana Education Service and UNICEF have recommended absorption into the existing school system as the most sustainable option in responding to Togolese refugee children's educational needs. In order to promote peaceful co-existence between the refugees and host communities, UNICEF and UNHCR are also looking into extending Peace Education programmes to the Volta Region.

Challenges

In Benin, increased attention is given to ensure the **civilian and humanitarian character of the camps.**

Ensuring assistance to urban cases in Cotonou, where the number of registered refugees continues to increase, is also of paramount importance. Many of these refugees are vulnerable and will need food, health and community services support.

The extension of Agame camp is being foreseen as arrivals in the 2 existing camps have exceeded the planned 7,500. Additional needs would include land, shelter, latrines, water and health support.

In Ghana, access to beneficiaries is a constraint as the area of operation spans a wide geographical area over seven districts. Extensive travel is required to cover the distances and to deliver assistance to all grouping of refugees.

Given the particular intermix of refugees with host communities, UNHCR, in agreement with the Government, is undertaking community based assistance.

IDPs in Togo

A UN country team assessment of the IDP situation in Togo, followed by a joint mission of WFP, WHO and UNICEF, unveiled a critical protection situation for 16,000 IDPs, compounded by a serious need for assistance, especially in the food and health sector. The overall needs assessment was evaluated at 1.7 million US dollars.

UNHCR will support, in particular through training, the Togolese authorities in building and strengthening the capacity of the newly established governmental structure in charge of IDPs and Returnees. The Office will also support the response to the needs of IDPs, notably in the provision of non-food items.

UNHCR will open a small office in Lomé to better monitor the current situation and facilitate a possible returnee monitoring operation. For the moment, however, returns to Togo from Benin and Ghana have been very limited.

Financial Requirements

UNHCR proposed a regional operations plan relating to the situation in Togo. Budgetary requirements of USD 4.7 million have been identified to cover activities over eight months.

The office has made an allocation of USD 1,5 million from its operational reserve in support of current interventions financed from unrestricted contributions and, for the moment, two contributions from France and Germany totalling USD 323,415.