



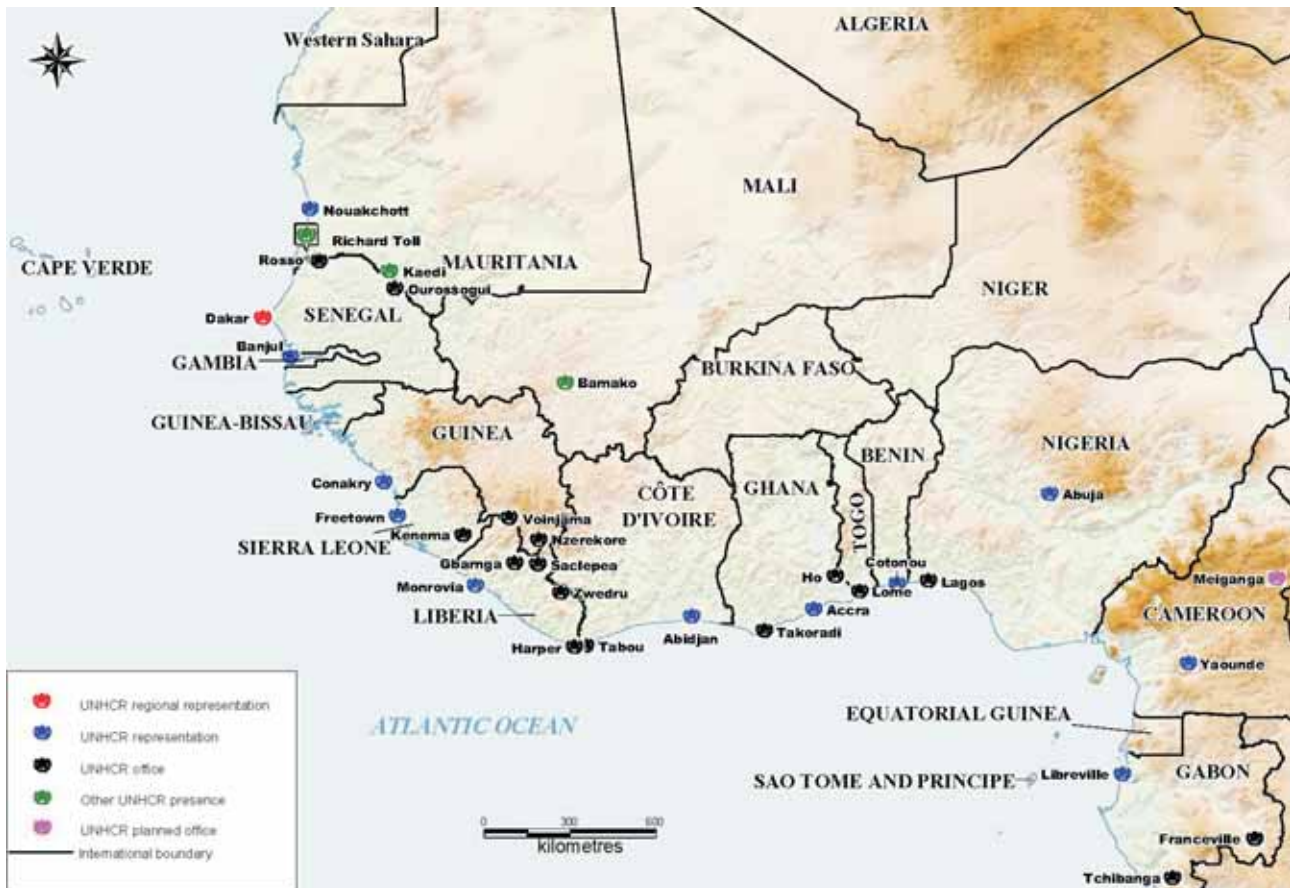
Benin  
Burkina Faso  
Cape Verde  
Côte d'Ivoire  
The Gambia  
Ghana  
Guinea  
Guinea-Bissau  
Liberia  
Mali  
Niger  
Nigeria  
Senegal  
Sierra Leone  
Togo

## West Africa

### Working environment

The general situation in West Africa improved in 2007, but insecurity in Guinea and political tensions in several other countries were reasons for concern. Working within the complex migration environment of the region, UNHCR has focused on voluntary repatriation and local integration as the main solutions for refugees, with third-country resettlement a more limited option. Now, with the drawing down of its large-scale repatriation and reintegration operations, and in accordance with its regionalization plans, UNHCR's structure in West Africa will change.

The situation in Guinea took a turn for the worse in February, with general strikes leading to the declaration of a state of emergency and the implementation of martial law. These events dealt a serious blow to the already impoverished economy of the country. Meanwhile, Senegal's southern Casamance region remains unstable, as peace talks between the Government and armed rebels of the *Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance* (MFDC) have stalled.



On a more positive note, large-scale organized repatriation to Liberia was officially completed in June 2007, with 112,000 Liberian refugees assisted to return home. Virtually all of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Liberia have returned to their places of origin and UNHCR will consolidate and phase-out reintegration activities in the country by the end of 2008.

In Côte d'Ivoire, prospects for stability improved with the signing of the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement in March. The accord paves the way for the return of Ivorian refugees abroad and some 700,000 people displaced within the country. The new Government has implemented some of the key aspects of the March agreement, but has yet to set a date for national elections.

The political situation in Sierra Leone appears to have stabilized. Ernest Bai Koroma was elected president in a second round of elections in September. The National Electoral Commission and international observers deemed the polls free and fair. But security is still fragile and the country faces significant challenges in rebuilding its shattered economy.

Following the signing of agreements with the Governments of Benin, Ghana and Togo in April, UNHCR helped some 900 Togolese refugees repatriate voluntarily from Benin. In Ghana, 1,600 Togolese refugees have registered to return home by the end of 2007.

Local integration will be the main durable solution for some 40,000 Liberian and 13,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in the region, mainly in the Mano River Union countries (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea), as well as Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, The Gambia and Nigeria. Working with other UN agencies, government counterparts, non-governmental organizations, and regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), UNHCR has adopted a field-driven approach to local integration. This emphasizes: (i) sustainable access to secure legal status for refugees; (ii) rehabilitation of former refugee camps (restoration of infrastructure and handover to Governments to benefit local communities); and (iii) support for the economic development of refugee-hosting communities. UNHCR, ECOWAS, and the Governments of Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone have signed an agreement on the transition from refugee to secure-residence status.

With the phase-out of repatriation and reintegration in West Africa, and implementation of institutional reforms which call for UNHCR's decentralization through regionalization, regional support functions will move from Accra, Ghana, to a new Regional Office for West Africa in Dakar, Senegal. As of January 2008, a multi-sectoral team in the regional office will provide technical support for West and Central Africa and guide UNHCR operations on resettlement, registration, refugee women and children, as well as HIV and AIDS. As the Dakar team sets priorities at the regional level, the West Africa desk at UNHCR's Headquarters will be reduced.

The Gambia, Mali, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau already fall under the regional office in Dakar. By mid-2008, the Benin office and the country operations it supervises (Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo), as well as Nigeria and Sierra Leone will also report directly to the Regional Office in Dakar. Ghana, Guinea and Liberia will follow suit in January 2009. However, due to the complexity of the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, the office there will continue to report directly to Headquarters. This arrangement will be reviewed as the situation evolves.

## Strategy

Despite the general phase-out of repatriation in West Africa, UNHCR will continue to facilitate it where appropriate. Potential beneficiaries include Mauritanian refugees in Senegal and Mali; Togolese in Benin and Ghana; Senegalese in The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau; and Ivorians in Guinea and Liberia. Other durable solutions will also be pursued, among them local integration for Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees,

reintegration for returnees from Côte d'Ivoire and resettlement of refugees meeting prescribed criteria.

UNHCR's regional strategy will ensure that, where possible, camps and their facilities are rehabilitated and handed over for use by local communities upon the refugees' departure. The Office will continue to help build national asylum capacity: it will advocate for appropriate legislation and refugee status determination (RSD) procedures, and support community structures and civil society. Furthermore, it will streamline assistance standards for HIV and AIDS, sexual and gender-based violence, health, education and urban refugees.

At the regional level, one of UNHCR's main objectives is to strengthen its partnership with ECOWAS. In addition to monitoring the political and security situation in countries in post-conflict recovery, UNHCR is collaborating with ECOWAS to promote the local integration of residual groups of refugees in countries of asylum. To this end, it will seek better implementation of the residence provisions of the ECOWAS protocols relating to the free movement of people.



Liberia. Weary but happy Liberians clamber off lorries that brought them back home from Sierra Leone at the end of UNHCR's Liberian repatriation programme.

In light of the still relatively unsettled conditions in the region, UNHCR will review and update contingency plans to enhance its emergency response capacity. In this context, the Office will maintain the regional stockpile of non-food items in Accra. With regard to IDPs, UNHCR will collaborate with other UN agencies to fulfil its obligations as the lead agency for protection, camp management and emergency shelter.

Building strategic partnerships, stimulating public and private partnerships and strengthening multi-sectoral collaboration are core goals for West Africa's HIV and AIDS programme. UNHCR implements integrated HIV and AIDS projects in areas with major concentrations of refugees, returnees and IDPs to benefit them and their host communities. Most of these areas are isolated, with limited or no coverage by national AIDS-control programmes. UNHCR will therefore be a catalyst to attract better and more easily available services.

At the same time, UNHCR is increasing efforts to foster peaceful cohabitation and manage conflict. It aims to reduce discrimination against refugees who integrate locally and people living with HIV and AIDS. Most programmes to combat sexual and gender-based violence have important HIV and AIDS components, such as the provision of post-exposure prophylaxis to survivors of rape. UNHCR has strong ties to regional advocates for unlimited access to services and treatment for all people.

## Constraints

Due to unrealistic expectations of third-country resettlement, most Liberian refugees reject alternative durable solutions. This reluctance to make use of the new and highly favourable opportunities for local integration in the region is a major challenge facing UNHCR and host countries. The threat of new instability in the region hampers UNHCR's search for solutions.

## Operations

Operations in the region cover 16 countries. Country programmes in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are described in separate chapters.

UNHCR's regional representation in **Benin** will address the needs of some 4,000 refugees and 700 asylum-seekers from Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Togo. As of July 2008 responsibility for operations in the four countries will shift to the Regional Office in Dakar. The Office will focus on two main areas: finding durable

solutions for camp-based and urban refugees and building national protection capacity. Unlike in the past, in 2008 UNHCR will play a purely supportive and supervisory role as refugee status determination activities in the four countries will be carried out by national institutions.

UNHCR aims to close the Kpomasse refugee site in 2008 through the strategic use of resettlement and increased emphasis on local integration. Voluntary repatriation will be pursued if developments in countries of origin permit.

Assuming the situation in **Togo** continues to improve and the September general elections are conducted successfully, 4,500 Togolese refugees may go home in 2008 from Benin. UNHCR will keep the refugees well informed about the situation in Togo so that they can make a voluntary decision regarding return. UNHCR will also facilitate the local integration of some 500 Togolese refugees not willing to repatriate. In Togo, UNHCR will facilitate the reintegration of an estimated 7,500 returnees from Ghana and Benin, seeking the support of other UN agencies, the European Union and the Togolese High Commissioner for Repatriation and Humanitarian Action.

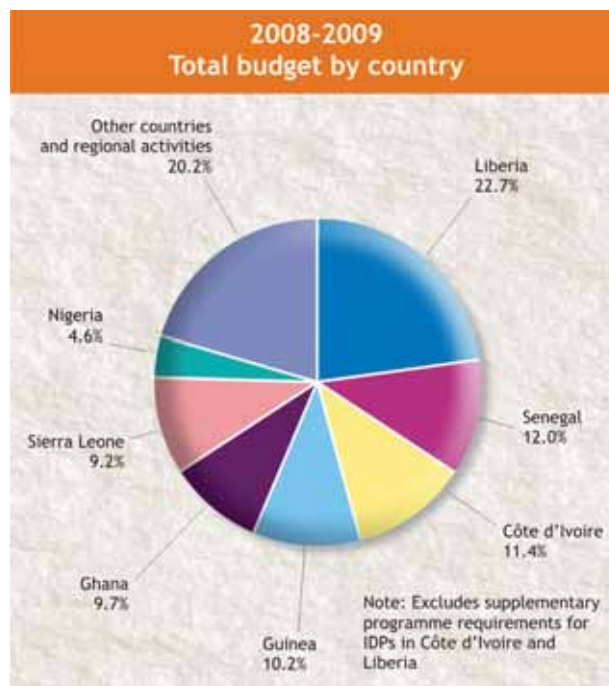
**Nigeria** hosts more than 6,500 refugees and approximately 250 asylum-seekers, mainly from Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad and Sudan. Working with the Nigerian Government's humanitarian bodies, ECOWAS, the UN Country Team and others, UNHCR will seek to prevent ethnic and communal conflict by fostering peace and reconciliation. It will also try to see that the rights of minorities and others with specific needs are respected, including the rights of 10,000 returnees from Cameroon and other communities in the Sardauna local government area of Taraba State. Towards this goal, it will seek to empower some 10,000 returnees from Cameroon and other communities in the Sardauna local government area of Taraba State.

To help the local integration of the residual caseloads of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in Nigeria, UNHCR will push for more effective utilization of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and Goods, Right of Residence and Establishment.

The Regional Office in Dakar will work for the local integration of the residual caseloads of Sierra Leonean, Liberian and Mauritanian refugees. These groups will be assisted to obtain national passports and valid residence permits to stay in their country of asylum. In **Senegal** and **Mali**, UNHCR will assist the national eligibility commissions to implement income-generating activities and educational projects to help refugees achieve self-reliance.

Solutions might be at hand for long-staying Mauritanian refugees in Mali and Senegal. A recent profiling exercise conducted by UNHCR and Senegal Government agencies found that some 24,000 Mauritanians in Senegal wish to return home. UNHCR expects to have assisted some 7,000 of these refugees to repatriate in 2007, and the remaining population in 2008.

In Guinea-Bissau, agricultural and income-generation projects will help Senegalese refugees in rural areas become self-reliant. Women and young people outside the formal education system will be offered vocational training. In **The Gambia**, Senegalese refugees living in the Sibanor area will be encouraged to cultivate their own fields to feed themselves.



Budget (USD)							
Country	2007			2008			2009
	Annual Programme Budget	Supp. Programme Budget	Total	Annual Programme Budget	Supp. Programme Budget	Total	Annual Programme Budget
Benin	1,991,092	0	1,991,092	1,452,423	0	1,452,423	838,010
Côte d'Ivoire	7,013,640	2,349,737	9,363,377	7,241,611	0	7,241,611	5,891,612
The Gambia	0	0	0	71,237	0	71,237	71,237
Ghana	9,642,754	0	9,642,754	6,137,528	0	6,137,528	5,032,326
Guinea	9,559,914	0	9,559,914	7,009,896	0	7,009,896	4,690,268
Liberia	32,265,201	11,023,119	43,288,320	20,627,460	0	20,627,460	5,415,452
Mali	0	0	0	96,253	0	96,253	96,253
Nigeria	2,983,129	0	2,983,129	2,866,236	0	2,866,236	2,466,235
Senegal <sup>1</sup>	2,007,213	384,807	2,392,020	6,504,729	1,075,123	7,579,852	6,190,646
Sierra Leone	11,971,696	0	11,971,696	6,575,657	0	6,575,657	4,000,742
Togo	252,774	0	252,774	461,138	0	461,138	461,138
Regional activities <sup>2</sup>	6,253,013	0	6,253,013	6,452,060	0	6,452,060	13,197,248
<b>Total</b>	<b>83,940,426</b>	<b>13,757,663</b>	<b>97,698,089</b>	<b>65,496,228</b>	<b>1,075,123</b>	<b>66,571,351</b>	<b>48,351,167</b>

<sup>1</sup> The 2008 and 2009 Annual Programme Budget includes costs for regional support functions in West and Central Africa, which were previously reported under the Regional Support Hub in Ghana.

<sup>2</sup> Includes care and maintenance, voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement assistance for urban refugees in Benin and Senegal.

Note: The Supplementary Programme Budget excludes a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.