

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

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IN SHORT



Main Objectives

- Facilitate the return of Liberian refugees wishing to repatriate and conduct a review of the status of the remaining refugees to identify potential candidates for local integration or resettlement.
- Phase out UNHCR's assistance to Liberian refugees and hand over health and educational services to the Government.
- Initially facilitate and later promote the voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees, security and other conditions permitting.
- Help those who cannot repatriate with access to basic services in their host communities.
- Help the Government draft and then implement a national law on refugees. Ensure that the situation of urban refugees is examined by a national eligibility committee. Support these refugees with health and educational services and continue to promote their self-reliance within local communities.

Planning Figures		
Population	Jan. 2000	Dec. 2000
Liberian Refugees*	67,000	42,000
Sierra Leonean Refugees	1,500	1,200
Urban Refugees**	1,200	3,000
Total	69,700	46,700

* UNHCR estimates that 25,000 Liberian refugees will repatriate in 2000, of whom 10,000 will be assisted with a repatriation package and 15,000 spontaneous returnees.
 ** UNHCR expects that an increasing number of urban asylum-seekers will be granted refugee status in 2000.

**Total Requirements
USD 8,855,356**



*The presence of UNHCR offices in Vahun, Kolahun and Voinjama is being reviewed.
 ** Refugees are being relocated from Kolahun camp to Sinje.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

The political and economic situation in Côte d'Ivoire is relatively stable, but the long-standing presence of refugees has taken its toll on the country's limited resources, and on the environment in areas hosting refugees. The local population is showing some reluctance to host those still unable to repatriate voluntarily. It is hard to tell how the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for October 2000 might affect refugees and asylum-seekers.

With the conclusion of organised repatriation for Liberian refugees in 1999, and in view of increased Government involvement in refugee matters, direct assistance to this group has been gradually reduced. An example is UNHCR's English education programme for Liberian refugee children, which came to an end in July 1999. As the remaining refugees will either repatriate voluntarily or benefit from a local integration project, they are expected to become increasingly responsible for their own future.

The improving political and security situation in Sierra Leone may pave the way for the return of some of the refugees from this group. However, UNHCR is cautious about promoting voluntary repatriation until unhindered access has been established in areas of return and the returnees' safety can be guaranteed.

Constraints

The main constraint to UNHCR's operation in Côte d'Ivoire has been the slow international response to calls for assistance in the reconstruction and development of neighbouring Liberia, whence the majority of the refugees originate. This has delayed their repatriation, as areas of return have not been adequately equipped to cater for them. Refugees in asylum countries such as Côte d'Ivoire are well informed about conditions in their home countries and prefer to wait in exile where basic services such as education, health and water are available.

The absence of a national law on refugees has at times had adverse effects on UNHCR's ability to provide international protection for refugees. The process of handing over to the Government the provision of basic services for Liberian refugees has not been as smooth as hoped, particularly in education, where a nationwide crisis has so far pre-

vented full integration of Liberian refugee children into state schools.

STRATEGY

Liberian Refugees

At the conclusion of organised repatriation to Liberia in December 1999, UNHCR will conduct a registration exercise to determine how many Liberian refugees still remain in the country and identify the most appropriate lasting solution for them. Depending on individual circumstances, one of three options will be proposed: voluntary repatriation to Liberia, local settlement in Côte d'Ivoire, or resettlement in a third country. Only those refugees who face security problems in Liberia or are unable to integrate locally will be offered the third option. All eligible refugees will receive identity cards regardless of their place of residence.

Liberian refugees who wish to repatriate will receive a repatriation package consisting of one plastic sheet, one jerry can, one kitchen set, two blankets and two sleeping mats per family. Only the most vulnerable refugees will still be offered some form of transportation assistance. A smooth return will require the rehabilitation of the Prolo ferry pier on the Liberian side and the repair of roads in Liberia after the rainy season.

Building on the progress achieved in the repatriation programme, assistance will be reduced. UNHCR will however continue to support the approximately 15,000 Liberians in Nicla camp who arrived in Côte d'Ivoire in September 1998. That means health and community services, and agricultural implements, as well as projects fostering income-generation and hence self-sufficiency.

Needy refugee women will be helped to improve their literacy skills, participate in health education, family planning and income-generating activities. UNHCR will also continue to pay special attention to disabled refugee women, single-parent households and vulnerable young women and girls who may otherwise fall prey to prostitution.

Refugee children will continue to attend French classes and gradually integrate into the Ivorian school system. Limited capacity in Ivorian schools

has however compelled UNHCR to maintain educational facilities for these children during the coming academic year. Specialised care will be provided for unaccompanied minors. This includes material assistance, help with family reunification and repatriation. So far, some 275 unaccompanied refugee children have been identified in the *zone d'accueil* (reception area).

A four-year environmental rehabilitation programme was established in 1997 in the refugee host area for reforestation, energy-saving measures and soil conservation. The programme targets 550 hectares, of which 500 hectares have already been covered. In 2000, the programme will focus on the remaining 50 hectares and emphasise training in soil conservation, energy-saving stove construction and charcoal production. Some 5,400 refugee women will be involved in these activities.

UNHCR expects that by the end of 2000, the majority of the Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire will have repatriated voluntarily, and the reintegration programme for the remaining refugees will be well underway. Those unable to benefit from either option will be found an alternative lasting solution in the form of resettlement.

Sierra Leonean Refugees

Sierra Leonean refugees fled to Côte d'Ivoire along with Liberian refugees in 1990. It was only during the 1997 census that they were identified as such. They have since continued to receive the same level of assistance as that provided to the Liberian refugees.

The protection strategy for Sierra Leonean refugees will largely depend on security conditions in the

country of origin. Should the situation further improve, UNHCR will begin to facilitate the return of Sierra Leoneans currently hosted by various countries in West and Central Africa, including Côte d'Ivoire.

Meanwhile, UNHCR will continue to protect and assist approximately 1,500 Sierra Leonean refugees in the *zone d'accueil*. The emphasis will be on self-sufficiency through income-generating activities. It is expected that by the end of 2000, these refugees will either be safely returned to their homes in Sierra Leone or will have received sufficient protection and support to set them on the path to complete self-reliance where they currently reside.

Urban Refugees

UNHCR is actively pursuing a dialogue with the Government on expanding state bodies to determine the official status of refugees and to respond to refugee needs. This will allow UNHCR to play more of an advisory role and help establish an effective protection network within Ivorian civil society. Should such a law be promulgated in 2000, UNHCR will launch an extensive training programme on refugee issues for these partners.

Most urban refugees in Côte d'Ivoire originate from the Great Lakes (Rwandans, Burundians and Congolese). UNHCR ensures that these refugees have access to adequate health and education services and promotes their participation in income-generating activities. Their needs are re-assessed every six months. Due to the relatively high cost of living in Abidjan, UNHCR believes that a local settlement programme would allow recognised refugees increased opportunities for self-sufficiency.



ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management Structure

UNHCR's Regional Directorate for West and Central Africa based in Abidjan is in charge of 19 countries in addition to Côte d'Ivoire. The responsibilities of the Regional Directorate are described in the regional overview on West and Central Africa.

In 2000, fifty-seven staff (ten international and 47 national) will work exclusively on the refugee programme in Côte d'Ivoire. The Branch Office in Abidjan is responsible for coordination with other UN agencies, NGOs, donor embassies and other organisations. It also oversees field activities conducted from offices in Tabou (435 km from Abidjan), Danane (600 km from Abidjan) and Guiglo. The former two are expected to close by 30 June 2000. The field-office in Guiglo monitors the refugee camp at Nicla.

Coordination

UNHCR will coordinate closely with other UN agencies, particularly WFP. Contacts will also be maintained with ICRC and IFRC. Regular coordination meetings will be organised with the Government, NGOs and refugee leaders to discuss the refugee programme and ensure that services and assistance are delivered as effectively as possible. As part of UNHCR's exit strategy, alternative services will be set up and run by the Government, local organisations and NGOs.

Offices

Abidjan
Danane
Guiglo
Tabou

Partners

Government Agencies

Comité national de coordination de l'aide aux réfugiés libériens

NGOs

Adventist Development Rescue Agency
Association de soutien à l'autopromotion sanitaire et urbaine
CARITAS
CI-ECOLOGIE
International Rescue Committee
Société de développement des forêts

Other

United Nations Volunteers

Budget (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	1,330,732
Community Services	201,028
Crop Production	77,200
Domestic Needs/ Household Support	181,096
Education	63,126
Forestry	183,800
Health/Nutrition	216,470
Income Generation	71,428
Legal Assistance	250,464
Operational Support (to Agencies)	349,821
Sanitation	34,558
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	42,135
Transport/Logistics	186,970
Water (non-agricultural)	32,604
Total Operations	3,221,432
Programme Support*	5,633,924
Total	8,855,356

* Includes costs related to the Regional Directorate for West and Central Africa in Abidjan.