

COUNTRY OPERATIONS

PLAN

Côte d'Ivoire

Planning Year: 2002

Part I: Executive Committee Summary

(a) Context and Beneficiary Populations

After two years of socio-political tensions and turmoil that culminated in the violent incidents that marred the presidential and legislative elections in October and December 2000, Côte d'Ivoire has entered a period of relative stability. The new Parliament has been functioning since January 2001 and has voted scores of new laws, including a number of organic laws, thus paving the way for the establishment and consolidation of democratic institutions. On the other hand, profound divisions among the society persist and are likely to constitute the main challenge of the reconciliation process launched by the new government. The repercussions of the decline in the economic performance and suspension of external aid continues to be felt and could lead to new social demands and tensions. There is also a lack of cohesion among the military and the other security forces.

Côte d'Ivoire remains in Phase II of the Security Plan. Armed robbery and car hijacking are common occurrences, although the new government has succeeded in containing them to a certain

extent. UN staff, including UNHCR staff, has not been spared by such incidents. UNHCR, together with UNDP, WFP and UNICEF, is a core member of the Security Management Team and as such participates in all its meetings. A Field Security Officer for the UN System in Côte d'Ivoire was appointed last year, shortly before the presidential elections. The position has been extended for another year.

There are two distinct beneficiary refugee populations in Côte d'Ivoire: the Liberian refugees produced by the civil war of last decade, who arrived in successive massive waves and individual asylum-seekers and refugees of urban origin. The Liberian refugees, for the most part, live amongst host communities in an area designated as *Zone d'accueil des réfugiés* (ZAR), in as many as 450 villages. The ZAR is a zone of 40 to 70 km wide bordering Liberia, stretching for over 400 km from north to south and occupying a total area of 21,000 km². The ZAR covers four administrative departments (Danané, Guiglo, Toulepleu and Tabou).

From 1996 onwards many refugees began returning home spontaneously. Between 1997 and end of 2000, a total of 70,500 Liberian refugees were repatriated under UNHCR auspices. During the first quarter of 2001, another 2,041 repatriated under the semi-organized (registration, medical screening and voluntary repatriation kit) modality. Renewed fighting in Lofa County this year led to a new refugee influx in early May. This development led to a suspension of repatriation activities. New arrivals have continued to come steadily, albeit not in large numbers. Thus, as at 30 September 2001, and subject to a new headcount due to be carried out prior to year end, Liberian refugees in the ZAR were estimated to number 121,574 including 6,251 new arrivals. In addition, a small group of 2,114 Sierra Leonean refugees live in the ZAR alongside the Liberian refugees, primarily in Danané. These refugees, in general, have not come directly from Sierra Leone. They were refugees in Liberia or Guinea in some cases and fled together with Liberians.

The composition of the group (Liberians and Sierra Leoneans) is as follows: 44.7% male and 55.3 % female; 18.2% are children between 0 - 4 years of age; 40.1% are children between 5 - 17 years of age; 32.8% are adults aged between 18 - 59 and 8.9% are persons aged 60 and above.

Urban asylum-seekers and refugees live principally in and around Abidjan and Bouaké, the second largest city in the country. As at 30 September 2001, they numbered 2,258. They originate mostly from the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. Recently, UNHCR has registered increasing numbers of asylum-seekers from the Central African Republic. This group is predominantly made of males who represent 55.7% of the entire group. Females represent 44.3%. As for age groups, children between 0 - 4 years of age are only 4.5% of the total caseload and children between 5 - 17 are 23.7%. The vast majority is adults between the 18 - 59 years of age. Only 2% are 60 and above.

Given the socio-political and economic context described above, refugee issues have been overshadowed by domestic concerns and priorities. Moreover, since late December 1999 there have been three changes at the top level of UNHCR's Government counterpart, the *Service d'aide et d'assistance aux réfugiés et apatrides* (SAARA). It is worth noting however that the Government of Côte d'Ivoire has maintained an open-door policy and practice vis-à-vis refugees and asylum-seekers.

At the time of writing this COP, Liberian refugees who, for the most part have been living in Côte d'Ivoire for the past ten years or more, display no intention of returning to Liberia in the near future. Resettlement to a third country, particularly to the United States, has been a durable solution for several thousand and will continue to constitute a solution for many, especially under the family reunification programme of the United States. This year 414 cases/1,301 persons out of 670 cases/5,062 persons interviewed by JVA/INS have been accepted. For the majority,

however, the only durable solution is socio-economic integration in the host country. Crucial to successful medium to long-term integration is the incorporation of refugee children in the education system of Côte d'Ivoire, which is now underway. Of the three traditional durable solutions, local integration is the least favoured by the refugees themselves. This aspect cannot be ignored. It complicates the efforts being undertaken by the Government and UNHCR to integrate the refugees.

In addition to addressing the protection needs and seeking to implement durable solutions for the two groups of refugees described in the preceding paragraphs, UNHCR seeks to establish a legal framework for the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers in Côte d'Ivoire and to build the capacity of government structures dealing with refugees.

Identification issues are at present an overriding concern in the country. A bill of law on identification of nationals and foreigners is about to be adopted and a National Office for Personal Identification, responsible for the documentation of all individuals residing on the territory of Côte d'Ivoire, will soon begin to operate. UNHCR has therefore been intensifying its efforts to guarantee the issuance of personal identity documents to refugees for their legal stay in Côte d'Ivoire. UNHCR continues to advocate for an identity document that will afford the refugees essential rights, such as freedom of movement and the right to work.

Starting in the second half of 2000, following the sharp reduction in UNHCR operational activities, several international and national NGOs have either pulled out of Côte d'Ivoire or ceased to be implementing partners. Altogether, between September 2000 and October 2001, UNHCR's partnership with six NGOs has come to an end. Currently, UNHCR has only two implementing partners. GTZ has been entrusted with the construction of 90 new classrooms to boost the absorption capacity of the existing Ivorian school infrastructure in the ZAR. Caritas Côte d'Ivoire, a longstanding partner, is responsible for

the management of the only existing camp in the country, Niela, as well as for all remaining multi-sectoral activities in the camp and elsewhere (food distribution, shelter, health, community services, small income-generating projects). In 2002 UNHCR will have to pay particular attention to enhancing the management skills and developing the technical expertise of this partner.

The UN System is well represented in Côte d'Ivoire with some agencies, notably UNICEF, ILO and UNHCR having their Regional or Continental Directorates in Abidjan. The socio-political events and the security situation in 2000 contributed to create special ties among the Country Team. Team building has been reinforced this year with the resumption of the Common Country Assessment (CCA) process, which had been suspended before the presidential elections. As was the case last year, UNHCR is participating in the process. This year it is chairing the thematic group on Peace and Security. Likewise, UNHCR will be involved in the UNDAF process, which is due to start prior to year-end. Bearing in mind that one of the principal goals of UNHCR in Côte d'Ivoire is to facilitate the local integration of the Liberian refugee caseload, it is essential that the Office takes an active part in the drawing up of this joint strategic development planning framework.

Of special note is the existing close collaboration between UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF for the effective implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for the integration of refugee children in the Ivorian public primary education system. This collaboration translates itself into concrete actions at the operational level, including joint missions.

(b) Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

Name of Beneficiary Population: Liberian and Sierra Leonean Refugees	
Main Goals: Local Integration in the asylum country	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees become self-reliant in the <i>Zone d'Accueil des Réfugiés (ZAR)</i> and in a Nicla camp. • Communities look after their vulnerable members. • Primary – school – age refugee children are integrated into the Ivorian system through collaboration with WFP and UNICEF.. • The basic needs of refugees are met particularly in terms of health through support for the existing Ivorian facilities/services. • A catalytic role is played with the donor community and development actors for the funding and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational skills training and loans are provided to young refugees and feasible refugee enterprises respectively. • Community development projects will be selected and funded on the basis of their impact on the well – being of the vulnerable refugees. • The Ivorian primary schools have an adequate capacity to incorporate refugee children with support of WFP and UNICEF and the enrolment and effective attendance of refugee children are at least at the same level as Ivorian children. • Hand – over of health and social activities in particular to the Ivorian Government. • Development and poverty reduction programmes and projects funded by bilateral or multilateral institutions

<p>implementation of an area-based development/rehabilitation programme in the ZAR.</p>	<p>duly incorporate needs of the ZAR.</p>
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<p>Name of Beneficiary Population: Urban Refugees and Asylum Seekers</p>	
<p>Main Goals: Enhanced Self-Reliance for Urban Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Côte d'Ivoire</p>	
<p>Principal Objectives</p>	<p>Related Outputs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee have access to basic health services and drugs on the same terms as nationals. • Refugee children and adolescents have access to public schools at the primary and secondary levels on the same terms as nationals. • Job opportunities for young refugees and adults are enhanced through the provision of vocational skills training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees benefit from mass vaccination campaigns against epidemics or preventable diseases. • Refugees have access to the <i>Pharmacies de santé publique</i> where they can buy prescribed drugs at a lower cost. • Certain restrictive requirements for access to Ivorian schools in the particular case of refugees are lifted. • Trained refugees succeed in finding employment.

Theme: Protection-Related Capacity-Building	
Main Goals: Consolidate the protection framework in the host country.	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right of and the treatment of refugees and others of concern to UNHCR according to international standards are enshrined in a refugee law • Asylum claims are swiftly processed by the Government. • Refugees enjoy the protection of their host country fully, namely, by having their stay in Côte d'Ivoire legalised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A final draft is submitted to the National Assembly in time for consideration and adoption at the First Ordinary Session of 2002. • Following the adoption of the refugee law, the National Eligibility Commission is formally established. • The Commission meets regularly to ensure the timely status determination. • Asylum claims database and monitoring system are established with UNHCR's technical assistance. • Identify cards are issued by the Government of Côte d'Ivoire as of the beginning of 2002 under the terms of new identification law. Refugees have the same benefits as the citizens of ECOWAS countries, including the right to work.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refugees' rights are respected by law enforcement agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness-building and training sessions for Government officials and security forces are organised at the central and local levels according to a well defined calendar by UNHCR jointly with its government counterpart, the <i>Service d'aide et d'assistance aux réfugiés</i> (SAARA),
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