

Gulf of Guinea Joint Response Plan

for refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, and host communities

January
December
2024

Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo Regional Chapeau



@OIM/2023

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Refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, and host communities

Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo



KEY FIGURES

202,000

Projected refugee
population/asylum
seekers



47,000

Internally
Displaced
Persons



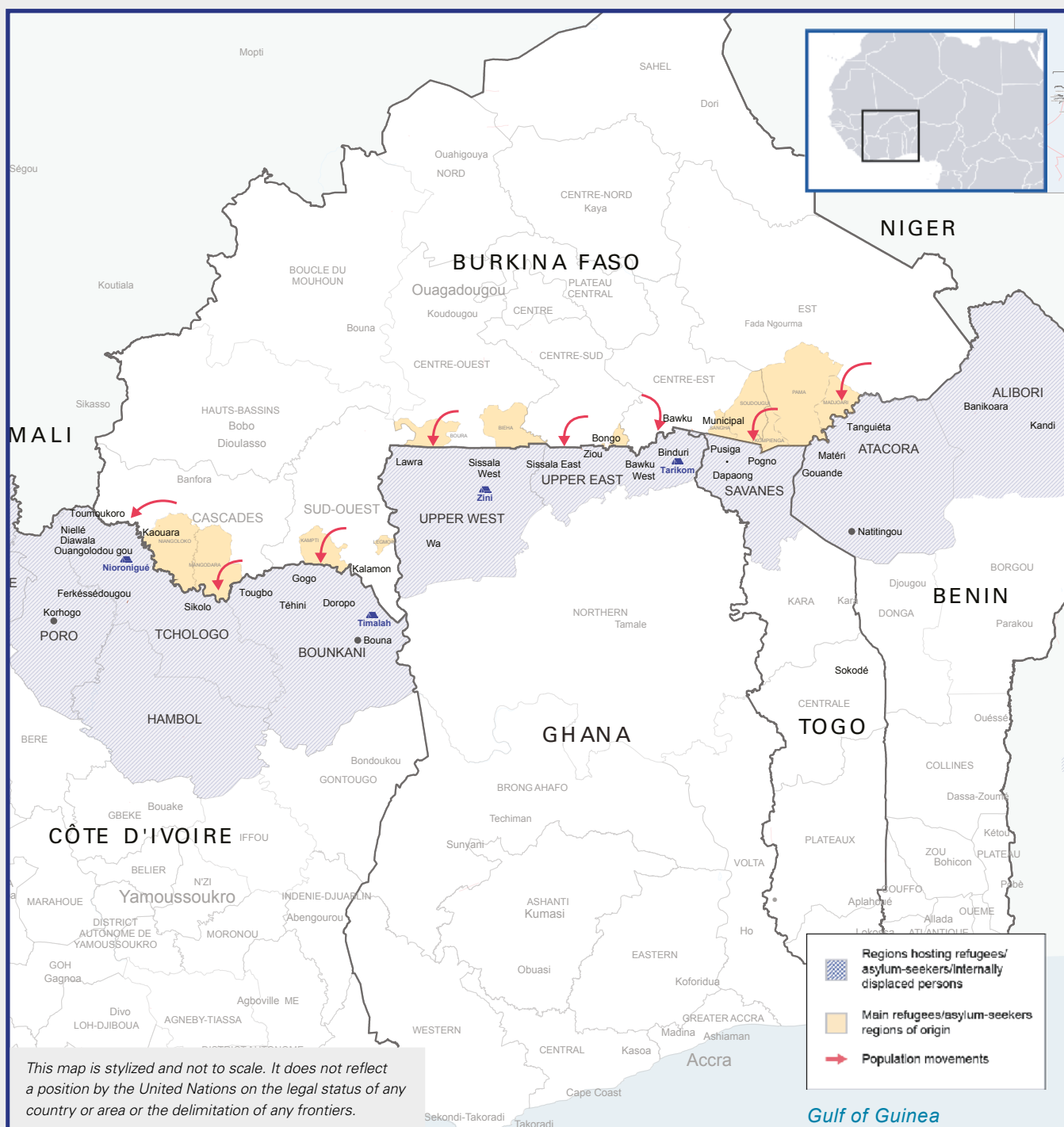
317,000

Host-community
members to be
reached



142.5 USD (millions)

Financial
requirements





Context

Since 2012, armed conflict has escalated in the central Sahel, leading to a continuous increase in forced displacement. Currently, 2.8 million people are internally displaced across Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, countries which also host 411,190 refugees including those originating from the central Sahel.

While these movements were initially limited to the sub-region, in recent years the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Burkina Faso has generated refugee movements towards Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. The number of asylum seekers arriving in the northern regions of these four countries, rose to 87,000 at the start of 2024, of which 89% were from Burkina Faso, the majority, women and children.

Despite this context, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo preserved access to territory and asylum for the forcibly displaced, confirming a long-standing tradition of hospitality as demonstrated by the existence of national asylum frameworks and institutions in the four countries.

From the onset, the forcibly displaced were received by local communities in the northern regions of these countries and integrated by local authorities into national systems. These communities face constraints marked by inadequate infrastructure, limited services, and few socio-economic opportunities. Food and nutrition security are worsening, with the number of food insecure people soaring from 480,000 in 2020 to over 3.9 million in November 2023. In the northern regions, particularly in municipalities hosting asylum seekers, over 20 per cent of the population face food insecurity. Essential public services and infrastructure are strained, leading to reduced functionality and heightened pressure on education and health systems. The closure of schools due to insecurity further jeopardizes children and adolescents.

The proximity to conflict, along with the additional responsibility of hosting refugees, asylum seekers, and supporting internally displaced persons, is intensifying pre-existing vulnerabilities and stretching the capacity of communities to cope. At the same time hosting refugees can yield benefits for these communities cultivating resilience and solidarity in the face of adversity.

The central Sahel crisis is a multi-dimensional regional crisis, and the role of the coastal countries is pivotal, not only in mitigating the current spillover effects, but extending to fostering peace and social cohesion. At this critical juncture, it is imperative to invest in strengthening these communities, to enhance their capacity to withstand shocks and foster resilience while protecting and assisting forcibly displaced populations and seeking solutions to their displacement.

The interconnected nature of the crisis calls for a comprehensive and cooperative approach among all actors. This requires coordinated intervention involving humanitarian and development actors to support and work with national authorities to find sustainable solutions.

The Gulf of Guinea Joint Response Plan led by WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM is a humanitarian response plan that interacts with existing development interventions in the northern regions of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. Its aim is to support national authorities to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development interventions by ensuring complementarity with development initiatives.

Partners will operate within the framework of national development and resilience plans, using and strengthening existing coordination mechanisms, to better support governments and authorities in their strategic efforts to protect and provide services to all people impacted, while consolidating localization efforts.

Regional Response Strategy

In close cooperation with the respective governments, partners designed this 12-month response plan around a common methodology, centering on four essential strategic pillars.



Data and Analysis:

Streamlining data collection processes and analysis



Assistance:

Coordination of emergency response efforts



Prevention:

Embracing a community centric approach



Protection:

Mainstream protection principles into existing practices

While each country's response is customized to its specific context, these overarching pillars drive and unify the four distinct country chapters that articulate the multi-sectoral response for refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and host communities in the northern regions of the Benin, Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo.

The country responses are also underpinned by cross-cutting principles and priorities, which are mainstreamed in all country responses, including protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, accountability to affected populations, climate resilience and localization.



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Intervention areas



Data and analysis

Data collection will be streamlined for a more cohesive approach to humanitarian and development programming and response. Timely, comprehensive, quality data and information will be collected, harmonized and analysed to support evidence-based programming, monitoring, and service delivery by all response partners. Information will be shared among partners and between countries in the region to support the humanitarian response.

Within this framework, the following actions will be undertaken:

Improvement of information management systems

Review and capacity assessment of basic services in key host areas, working closely with local authorities and government agencies, and building on existing national and local development plans

Monitoring of market and malnutrition trends, building on existing sector analysis of nutrition and food security and vulnerability

Strengthening of the protection monitoring system to inform appropriate programming, advocacy and response.

Regular emergency risk analysis and risk monitoring



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Assistance

Coordination of emergency response to respond effectively to immediate and critical needs during emergency situations and lay the groundwork for a smoother transition to development programmes.

Coordinated interventions will be triggered in areas with difficult humanitarian access with the presence or absence of local partners and/or state structures, and in areas with increased movements of populations in support of the actions of other actors.

Within this framework, the following actions will be undertaken:

Systematic sharing of alerts, information and analysis of current and new humanitarian situation

Coordination of an Inter-Agency, multisectoral response with a minimum package of activities agreed amongst the four agencies and as per respective sector leadership and capacity

Advocacy and resource mobilization for a minimum standby capacity for humanitarian response

Joint implementation of partnerships and localization of assistance delivery where feasible



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Prevention



A community centric approach will be adopted to foster community integration and resilience-building. This is intended to proactively anticipate and prevent shocks to safeguard development gains and create preconditions for development interventions.

Efforts will be made to systematize a conflict-sensitive perspective in country programming and dynamically adjust portfolios to invest in prevention within the sub-region. Partners will prioritize interventions rooted in local solutions, emphasizing simplicity and effectiveness in implementation. This will foster synergies among humanitarian, development, and peaceful coexistence efforts, specifically targeting prevention interventions at the community level.

The aim is to strengthen the resilience of individuals and households, communities and institutional systems. The response aims to reinforce national systems and strengthen services to improve responsiveness, inclusion, accountability to at-risk communities, and strengthen social cohesion within and between communities.

Within this framework, the following actions will be undertaken:

Fostering climate-resilient agriculture and livelihoods

Ensuring continuous access to inclusive and quality essential social services (such as health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, education, birth registration, protection from violence, and shock-responsive social protection)

Encouraging active, inclusive, and gender-transformative community engagement

Promoting risk-informed governance within a supportive policy environment.



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Protection



Enhance the protection environment, mainstream and promote protection principles to ensure meaningful access, safety, and dignity in all interventions.

WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM will support authorities, civil society and community-based structures to ensure refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and host communities can enjoy their rights.

UNHCR recommends that authorities in coastal countries consider using prima facie recognition or merging registration and Refugee Status Determination procedures, due to the objective existence of events seriously disturbing public order in the Central Sahel, as defined in Article I of the OAU Refugee Convention of 1969, and specific incidents leading to group displacements.

Government and community-based services supporting child protection and gender-based protection and prevention will also be supported.

Within this framework, the following actions will be undertaken:

Biometric registration and documentation of refugees/asylum seekers, and the identification of those with specific needs, will be prioritized to facilitate referrals and their inclusion in national services, including child protection

Prevention and response to gender-based violence

Strengthening protection systems, referral pathways and case management

Mental health and psychosocial support and care

Civil registration and birth certificates

Provision of necessary care and support to victims of violence including gender-based violence

Support to peaceful coexistence, and two-way communication with communities

Education will be supported and reinforced in reception areas and host communities in close collaboration with relevant Ministries to address the protection needs of all, including refugees/asylum seekers.



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Response to Date

The implementation of the response to changing needs has required authorities, UN agencies and partners to scale up their presence in the most affected areas, adjust or establish adequate coordination mechanisms to meet newly emerging needs, and adapt activities while facing the challenge of limited available funding.

Humanitarian Peace Development Nexus

Authorities have remained committed to accepting refugees/asylum seekers on their territory and played a leading role in the response since arrivals began in December 2021. In response to the evolving situation and increasing needs in the northern regions, governments, supported by development and humanitarian actors, have designed development and peacebuilding plans and initiatives. These measures aim to address the escalating needs and mitigate the potential risks to long-term development interventions, thereby preventing the emergence of a damaging cycle of instability.

National development agendas focus primarily on economic growth, basic infrastructure and services (health, education, access to water), and governance. This Joint Response Plan seeks to complement nexus-oriented efforts as it aligns with the objectives of mid and long-term initiatives as articulated at the country level, that enhance the capacities of local communities and authorities to prevent and manage conflicts, foster social inclusion and cohesion, and provide basic services and livelihood opportunities, especially for the most vulnerable groups. Partners will continue to seek and encourage further development investments that are urgently needed to strengthen national systems to avoid the creation of parallel and unsustainable response models and to link to broader development investments that are outside of the plan.



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Country Context

As of December 2023, **Benin** hosted an estimated 15,000 refugees and asylum-seekers (10,510 registered) mostly from Burkina Faso and Togo, with a further 8,785 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) registered for by the National Civil Protection Agency (ANPC). Most of the population is concentrated in the departments of Alibori and Atacora. To better monitor and respond to the increasing influx, humanitarian and development actors are expanding their presence and capacity in the north. Agencies are also supporting people in the north through national and cross-border programmes aimed at building resilience and social cohesion.

Côte d'Ivoire was the first among the coastal countries to receive Burkinabe refugees and asylum seekers in April 2021. As of December 2023, there were an estimated number of 45,000 asylum-seekers from Burkina Faso, of whom 36,729 were registered. While over 14,000 refugees and asylum-seekers were relocated to government-established sites in Nioronigou and Timalah as of December, a significant number chose to remain in border villages. To support the Government's effort for local development, UN agencies and NGOs have developed a response plan based on the triple nexus approach. The *Plan de Résilience Nord-Est*¹ supports the ability of individuals, households, communities, local institutions and systems to absorb and recover from shocks, while continuing to function and adapt in a way that supports long-term prospects for sustainable development, peace and security.

In **Ghana**, the Upper East and Upper West Regions are facing a refugee influx for the first time. As of December, an estimated number of 15,000 asylum-seekers and refugees from Burkina Faso had arrived. To respond to this situation and better support the regional authorities, the Ghana Refugee Board (GRB), in agreement with key government stakeholders, has established a presence in both the Upper East and the Upper West Regions and secured land for reception centres and settlements. Ghana has an enabling policy for the integration of refugees into national services. The overarching goal is therefore to enhance the absorption capacity of existing national services.

UN agencies and NGOs have increased their presence in the north to support the Government's initiatives and preparedness to assist and protect refugees, asylum seekers and host communities. The humanitarian response aims to bridge the gap between the initial humanitarian needs and the development needs in the north, enabling the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the national system.

As of December, **Togo** hosted an estimated number of 37,917² refugees and asylum seekers in the Savanes region, of whom approximately 60 % of those registered are women and children. The impact of the central Sahel crisis has also led to the internal displacement of 18,428³ people within the northern prefectures of Togo. Refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons are living with host communities, and the provision of services has been adapted accordingly to contribute to peaceful coexistence and social cohesion among all affected communities. In early 2022, the Government developed an Emergency Programme for the Resilience of the Savanes Region (*Programme d'Urgence pour la Résilience dans la Région des Savanes, PURS*) to strengthen the resilience of the affected population in the north of the country. The authorities have recently completed a census of all displaced people in the Savanes region, which should soon provide a more accurate picture of the situation.

Partnership and Coordination

At the regional level, the Joint Response Plan is led and coordinated among WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM to ensure joint strategic planning, advocacy, and resource mobilization.

At country level coordination, working closely with the respective governments, mechanisms have been adapted or set up to steer the response's implementation and ensure information sharing with all partners. This helps partners to work efficiently together to maximize the response, avoid duplications and better link up to existing longer-term coordination mechanisms to encourage development actors to be part of the response as soon as possible.



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¹ [Plan de Résilience Nord-Est](#)

² The number of forcibly displaced people in northern Togo is likely to be revised soon, according to the results of a recent government census.

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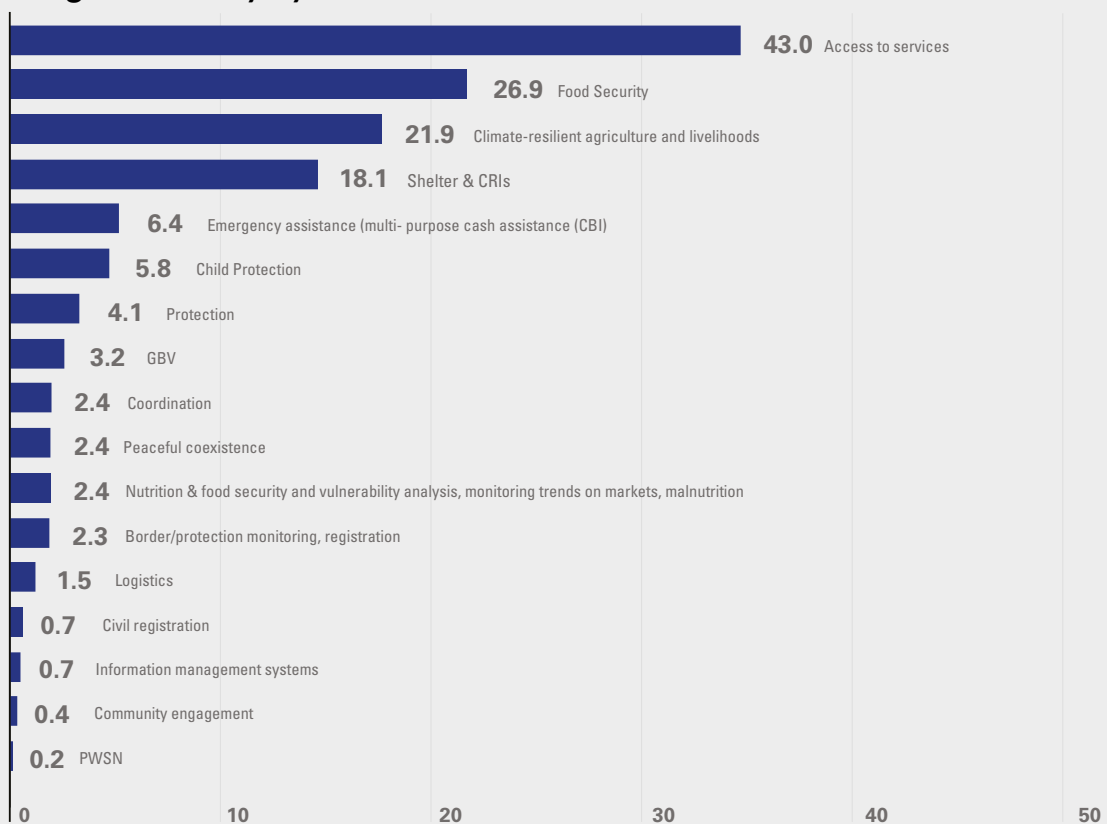
Financial Requirements for 2024

\$ 142.5 (millions)



| Country | Benin | Cote d'Ivoire | Ghana | Togo |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Requirements in US\$ | \$25,706,000 | \$50,930,000 | \$25,532,315 | \$40,300,421 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Analyze | Assist | Prevent | Protect | Other |
| \$5,405,790 | \$54,031,335 | \$65,351,862 | \$13,713,516 | \$3,966,233 |

Budget Summary by Sector



Budget Summary by Partner

| Partner (UN Agencies) | Acronym/Short Title | Requirements in US\$ |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|
| World Food Programme | WFP | 50,107,424 |
| United Nations Children's Fund | UNICEF | 41,977,250 |
| United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees | UNHCR | 25,548,693 |
| International Organization for Migration | IOM | 16,030,000 |
| Others | | 8,805,369 |
| Total | | 142,468,736 |

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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