

# OPERATIONS UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## **BENIN: TOGOLESE REFUGEES**

11 May 2005

*The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.*

### **In Brief**

**Appeal No. 05EA010; Operations Update no. 1; Period covered: 5 May to 10 May 2005; Appeal coverage: 0%; Note: a number of donors have expressed interest in supporting this operation; an updated list of contributions will be provided with the next Operations Update to be issued shortly.**

#### **Appeal history:**

- Launched on 5 May 2005 for CHF 906,321 (USD 755,900 or EUR 585,100) for 4 months to assist 10,000 beneficiaries.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 135,000.

**Outstanding needs: CHF 906,321 (USD 755,900 or EUR 585,100)**

**Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: Nigeria sub-regional programmes, Annual Appeal no. 05AA025**

**Operational Summary:** A Federation field representative is being deployed to continue the very effective assessment, coordination, national society support, and contingency planning work already underway (given the current situation a decision has been taken to delay the immediate deployment of a full Field Assessment and Coordination Team, or FACT). A decision on complementing the team in the logistics and finance/administration sectors will be taken shortly, depending on the assessment of the evolving situation.

The Federation continues to operate as lead agency for the Movement in Benin and Ghana, while the ICRC is operating as lead agency in Togo, working closely with the Togolese Red Cross in their response. In Benin, immediate issues relate to agreeing with UNHCR on a longer-term partnership and role for the national society, and continuing to support the Benin Red Cross in effectively dealing with this refugee situation. This is viewed as an opportunity to improve their overall capacity and to potentially resolving recent institutional constraints. In Ghana, the immediate issues involve setting up two refugee camps (UNHCR managed), one for 3,000 persons, the other for 700; coming to an agreement with UNHCR on a partnership and role for the national society, with initial considerations for involvement in the sectors of health, camp management, and relief item distribution. The related issue of including Ghana in an expanded and revised Emergency Appeal will also be considered.

Despite the current calm in Togo, security concerns do exist, and further population displacements could occur. Donors are encouraged to support this operation and the effective and timely work already undertaken by the Federation team in support of the Benin Red Cross. The Federation is actively exploring the use of regional resources (personnel), and is encouraged by the potential for positive change at the national society level related to image building, strategic planning (emergency phase versus long-term response), contingency planning, and organizational development.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

## Background

The death of Togo's President Gnassingbé Eyadéma on Saturday 5 February 2005 has prompted a period of political transition, and instability, in the country. Elections were held on 24 April 2005, resulting in the confirmation of Faure Gnassingbé as the new President. The outcome has been contested by the opposition, leading to severe unrest in some parts of the country, and provoking population movements to neighboring countries. As of 10 May 2005, reports indicate a total of over 23,000 Togolese have departed Togo, with over 12,000 seeking refuge, protection, and assistance in neighboring Benin, and almost 11,000 in Ghana. The three countries that border Togo (Benin, Ghana and Burkina Faso) all face the potential for further substantial refugee movements. The border with Benin has the highest level of population movement from Togo to date. As refugees arrive at the Togo-Benin border, they are screened by UNHCR and then sent to refugee camps for further assistance. The border with Ghana is very close to the Togolese capital of Lomé. Burkina Faso has reported little movement as their borders remain closed and are strictly monitored and enforced. The Burkinabe Red Cross has teams on standby in border towns.

Responding to a request from the Benin Red Cross, the Federation launched this Emergency Appeal to support the national society in delivering immediate assistance to the Togolese refugees, assisting in coordination activities with UN agencies, NGO's, and other actors, and in formulating contingency plans to respond to further population movements. This is in line with the interagency national contingency plan for a response to refugee influxes that defines the role of the Red Cross of Benin to include the provision of registration, emergency feeding, shelter and medical services. Under this plan, the Red Cross of Benin is collaborating with UN agencies and national authorities to coordinate actions to address the needs of over 10,000 Togolese refugees who have fled their country.

## Operational developments

In **Togo**, the situation is characterized as calm but there is tension and concern over the potential for further unrest as the new government is inaugurated. This concern appears significant enough to generate further spontaneous, but perhaps limited, population movements. The general circulation of the population is apparently unhampered despite security road blocks along the main routes. There is however apparently little vehicle traffic in and out of the country. Security is tight as the authorities monitor the situation closely. The ICRC (lead agency for the Movement in Togo) has been assisted by the Togolese Red Cross in evacuations of vulnerable groups or persons. Should the situation necessitate their immediate release, ICRC contingency stocks are available in Liberia.

## Benin: Togolese refugees; Appeal no. 05EA010; Operations Update no. 1

In **Benin**, the Government is coordinating the response to the refugee operation through the Ministry of Health. The Red Cross, UNHCR, UNICEF and Caritas are the main humanitarian actors active in the camps. Latest figures indicate over 12,000 refugees have been registered at the transit centre in Hillacondji, with a population breakdown (initial assessment) of:

- 3,440 men.
- 3,512 women (161 pregnant).
- 3,976 children (85 unaccompanied).

Information and other details on the number of urban refugees in Cotonou and other parts of Benin remains scarce or difficult to confirm. Some are reportedly staying with relatives, or hanging around the UNHCR office in Cotonou. Latest reports (as of 8 May) indicate a total of some 1,412 refugees are accommodated in Come camp, and another 3,170 in Agame camp. The refugees in Athieme have been relocated.

In **Ghana**, there is free movement into and out of the Aflao village border crossing. Given the close political and ethnic ties between Togo and Ghana, the Government of Ghana is apparently hesitant to recognize Togolese as refugees. The Ghana Red Cross national staff and volunteers are managing the operation quite well, coordinating closely with UNHCR. UNHCR is providing basic food and non-food items, while the national society, with support from the Federation, is assisting with distributions of food (rice, sugar, vegetable oil, salt, beans and gari) and essential non-food items (mats, jerry cans, buckets, plates, soap). Support also includes working with the Ministry of Health to mobilize vaccinations for over 30 children (measles, polio, TB).

### Federation Coordination

During the early stages of this crisis, the Federation composed an assessment/evaluation team of three experienced delegates and a regional disaster response team (RDRT) member. They were deployed to Benin to assist the national society in organizing the immediate response. In the immediate term, and due to other engagements, this team is being relieved while three 3 members of the supporting ERDAC team (from the Federation's central Africa regional delegation) will remain for another week. Therefore, while a decision has been taken to delay the immediate deployment of a Field Assessment and Coordination team (FACT), a Federation representative is being deployed to continue the assessment, coordination, support to the national society, and contingency planning work. A decision on additional support in the sectors of logistics and finance/administration will be taken shortly, depending on the assessment of the evolving situation.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action - objectives, progress, impact, constraints

**Objective: The Red Cross of Benin will fulfill its auxiliary role through working with relevant government bodies and UN agencies to register, transport, accommodate and provide relief items for 10,000 Togolese refugees in the Hilacondji transit camp, and the Agame and Comé refugee camps, with support from the Federation.**

### Activities planned and being implemented:

- volunteers continue to work with UNHCR officials to register refugee case loads at the Hilacondji transit centre, and providing first aid services at Hilacondji and other transit centres.
- registered refugees are being transferred to designated camps in Comé and Agame.
- volunteers continue to work closely with authorities and Ministry of Health officials to provide medical care to sick refugees arriving at the Hilacondji transit centre.
- volunteers are supporting UNHCR to distribute food and non-food items to refugees in transit (details to be provided in follow-up Operations Updates to be issued shortly).
- national society volunteers and their team leaders continue working with UNHCR to facilitate the transfer of registered refugees to designated camps in Comé and Agame.
- the national society continues working with ICRC related to tracing services.
- The Red Cross of Benin national headquarters and the Federation is putting in place the necessary mechanism to ensure an efficient management of, reporting on and monitoring of, this refugee operation.

## Benin: Togolese refugees; Appeal no. 05EA010; Operations Update no. 1

### Comé refugee camp

- 20 volunteers are assisting health workers and teams to provide medical care to sick refugees in the Comé camp.
- volunteers are supporting UNHCR to distribute basic food and non-food items to refugees in transit.
- the national society is making efforts to sensitize and educate refugees to promote good sanitation and hygiene.

### Agamé refugee camp

- volunteers continue assistance with re-registration and settlement/resettlement of 2,500 refugees, in compliance with UNHCR guidelines (as lead agency for refugees).
- the national society teams are providing the necessary expertise to support refugee camp planning and management.
- through support from the Federation, the national society is procuring and distributing limited quantities of mats, buckets, and utensils to meet the needs of 2,500 refugees.
- distribution of food and non-food items (provided by the UNHCR) is being organized to 2,500 refugees.
- kitchen sets and supplementary food (vegetable cooking oil, salt and other condiments) to complement the food supplied by UNHCR/WFP is being procured and delivered.
- auxiliary first aid services are being provided to 2,500 refugees.
- medical care is being organized, and, where necessary, referrals of patients to the general hospitals in and around Cotonou.
- nutritional surveillance is being organized, and the support necessary to malnourished children.
- psychological support is being provided to refugees.
- sensitizations and educational activities are being organized to promote good camp sanitation and hygiene.
- regular fumigation of the camps is being arranged.
- distributions of impregnated mosquito nets to families in the camp are being carried out.
- UNICEF is being assisted in efforts to provide 20 latrines in the camp.
- Collaboration is taking place with UNICEF and the Belgian Red Cross in meeting the urgent needs of 81 unaccompanied children.

### Athieme transit camp

Red Cross of Benin volunteers:

- continue working with UNHCR officials and local authorities to register refugee case loads arriving at the village of Athieme.
- are providing first aid services to the arriving refugees.
- are working closely with authorities and Ministry of Health officials to provide medical care to refugees in need.
- are supporting UNHCR in the distribution of food and non-food items.
- are working with their team leaders and UNHCR to facilitate the transfer of refugees from Athieme to designated camps in Comé and Agame.

### Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement -- Principles and initiatives

In Benin, during the course of delivering humanitarian assistance, the Red Cross of Benin staff and volunteers are sensitizing the refugees on peace and conflict resolution, promoting the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and advocating on behalf of the refugees.

### National Society Capacity Building

With support from the Federation, and in preparation for a potential larger influx of refugees, the Red Cross of Benin is preparing its volunteers in areas prone to refugee influxes and work with the UNHCR, local authorities and NGOs in these areas to address the needs of new refugee caseloads. The Red Cross of Benin headquarters and branches is participating in coordination meetings to assess the situation in Togo, and is prepared to use its extensive and reliable volunteer network to monitor and respond (where appropriate) to any new refugee influxes. The Red Cross of Benin disaster management department is assessing the response capacities of its branches in an effort to ensure that they are equipped and ready to respond.

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