

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

16 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. 2; Period covered: 10-16 May 2005; Appeal coverage: 0%. ([Click here to go directly to the attached Contributions List, also available on the website](#)). Please note that several national societies have indicated that support is forthcoming for this appeal; this will be reflected in the list of contributions to be updated on the web 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 (includes Benin, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo and sub-regional office) – http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA025.pdf

Operational Summary: UNHCR reports (13 May) that while the exodus from Togo slowed considerably in recent days, limited groups of previously undetected arrivals have been discovered in remote areas of Benin and Ghana. The total number estimated to have sought refuge and assistance has now reached 26,203, including 15,337 refugees in Benin and 10,866 in Ghana.

Two significant events that occurred during the reporting period were:

- the formal launch of the Government of Benin Appeal for Togolese refugees in Benin on Thursday 12 May, and
- the European Parliament declaration that they considered the vote in Togo to have been irregular, and therefore would not recognize the result. This could either calm the situation in the short-term, opening an opportunity for national conciliation talks, or potentially provide further impetus for the opposition, with more unrest, and eventually increased population movements.

The current calm in Togo, however, continues, but security concerns remain, and contingency updating activities are underway to prepare for further population movements. In Benin and Ghana, UNHCR reports (13 May) that while the exodus from Togo slowed considerably in recent days, limited groups of previously undetected arrivals have been discovered in remote areas of Benin and Ghana. The total number of people estimated to have sought refuge and assistance has now reached 26,203: 15,337 in Benin and 10,866 in Ghana. More than half of the Togolese in Benin are staying with host families, while over 5,000 have been moved to the camps of Comé (1,344 refugees) and Lokossa (3,773 refugees).

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Compared to other larger refugee operations, this is currently a relatively small one, with a very manageable beneficiary caseload (some 5,000) in a country that is receptive, welcoming and friendly, and with the camps located in an accessible area with very good infrastructure. From initial assessments and reports, there are relatively limited protection or security problems or issues (though this should be watched as the situation in Togo develops and potential accusations of cross border influence may inevitably arise). Immediate issues to be addressed in Benin are concluding a partnership agreement with UNHCR (including consideration of taking on the responsibility for further sectoral activities), completing the latrine construction activities already underway, improving camp drainage as the rains increase, and identifying a Federation representative to provide the required support to the national society related to monitoring and control.

Donors are encouraged to continue to provide timely and generous support for this Emergency Appeal, and the effective work already undertaken by the Federation team in support of the Red Cross of Benin and its volunteers.

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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 prompted a period of political transition in the country, leading to unrest and instability. Elections were held on 24 April 2005, resulting in the confirmation of Faure Gnassingbé, his son, 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 13 May 2005, a total of over 26,000 Togolese are estimated to have departed Togo, with over 15,000 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.

Responding to a request from the Red Cross of Benin,¹ 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

¹ Red Cross of Benin – <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=209>

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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. And despite the challenges faced by the national society leadership and governance, the Federation is generally encouraged and considers this an opportunity to influence positive change within the national society in the areas of image building, strategic planning (emergency phase versus long-term response), contingency planning, financial development, and organizational development.

Operational developments

Overall: In **Togo**, the situation continues to be characterized as calm, but tension and concern apparently remain over the potential for further unrest as efforts for national conciliation progress. This concern appears significant enough to generate further spontaneous, but generally limited, population movements. Traffic in and out of the country apparently remains fairly controlled. Security also remains tight as the authorities monitor the situation closely. According to ICRC (lead agency for the Movement in Togo), contingency stocks are available in Liberia, to be deployed in the event the situation worsens.

UNHCR reports (13 May) that while the exodus from Togo slowed considerably in recent days, limited groups of previously undetected arrivals have been discovered in remote areas of Benin and Ghana. The total number of people estimated to have sought refuge and assistance has now reached 26,203, with 15,337 in Benin, and 10,866 in Ghana.

In **Benin**, UNHCR has reportedly found some 1,000 Togolese refugees living in four villages in the Tchetti area, in the middle of the country, some 195kms from Cotonou and approximately 5 kms from the Togo-Benin border. Many are reportedly sleeping in public buildings (with the permission from the local authorities), while others are staying with host families. The refugees have declined to move to camps, and requested assistance to stay among their family and friends. Caritas has distributed food in the area, while the Ministry of Health has given out mosquito nets. Health centres have been asked to provide free medical care.

More than half of the Togolese in Benin are staying with host families, while over 5,000 are now registered in the camps of Come and Agame (Lokossa), with a total of 1,344 and 3,773 refugees respectively. Facilities at both camps have been upgraded, with UNICEF building additional latrines, showers and taps, working with the Red Cross of Benin and other agencies. Another 3 hectares of land are being cleared at the Agame (Lokossa) camp to transfer more refugees from other areas such as the Hilakondji transit centre.

The Government continues to coordinate the response to the refugee operation through the Ministry of Health. The Red Cross, UNHCR, UNICEF and Caritas remain the main humanitarian actors active in the camps. The Red Cross of Benin, supported by the Federation's RDRT/ERDAC, has generated the following updated and detailed breakdown²:

Agamé (Lokosso) camp:

- The total population as of 13 May 13, 2005 is 4,177 people (note: this is a Red Cross-generated figure, and the discrepancy with UNHCR estimates will be discussed in the coming week).
- 1,360 women (46 pregnant, 15 will deliver imminently).
- 1,820 men.
- 997 children under-five (28 under-one, and 37 unaccompanied).
- 12 sick persons are in need of special treatment, assistance and follow-up (3 have been admitted to the Lokossa health center).

Comé camp:

- Total population: 1,344
- 450 women.
- 565 men.
- 329 children under five.

² These statistics on current camp populations are being evaluated and will be updated.

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In **Ghana** a mobile assessment team comprised of UNHCR, government and non-government organizations' representatives reportedly found more Togolese refugees in remote and inaccessible parts of the border. This could possibly boost Ghana's refugee number to 12,800. Efforts are underway to deliver assistance to this group in the form of food and non-food assistance. Most of the Togolese in Ghana are reportedly living with relatives and friends, and there is a need to provide food supplies and relief items such as mats, jerry cans, mosquito nets and soap.

Federation Coordination

Most recently (Friday 13 May) the Federation assessment team divided duties between two key tasks: a meeting with UNHCR to further discuss a proposed or draft partnership agreement; and an assessment of the Agame and Come refugee camps. The assessment was preceded on Friday morning (13 May) by an effective government-organized and inter-agency coordination meeting in Lokosso (prefecture). The Red Cross of Benin staff and volunteers, with the constructive support of the three Federation regional disaster response team (RDRT or ERDAC) members, are performing effectively, and are recognized by the government authorities and the other agencies (UN) involved in this effort.

The Federation continues to operate as lead agency for the Movement in Benin and Ghana; the ICRC is operating as lead agency in Togo, working closely with the Togolese Red Cross. The possible inclusion of Ghana in this current Emergency Appeal (revised) remains under consideration, and is pending the evolution of the situation and further assessments in Ghana to be carried out shortly.

The Federation is adjusting the size and scope of the team assisting the Red Cross of Benin to manage this operation. The initial assessment/evaluation team of three experienced delegates and three regional disaster response team (RDRT/ERDAC) members are either returning to their regular assignments or being integrated into a longer-term team. The specific structure of this team will largely depend on the scope of a formal agreement with UNHCR, and the sectoral activities to be assumed by the Red Cross of Benin. A decision on additional support in the sectors of logistics and finance/administration will be taken shortly, depending on the assessment of this evolving situation.

The Federation field assessment leader is currently engaged in continuing the assessment, coordination, national society support, and contingency planning work already underway.

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 some 10,000 Togolese refugees in the Hilacondji transit camp, and the Agame and Com  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 (as necessary).
- registered refugees continue being transferred to designated camps in Com  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 (see distribution details below).
- national society volunteers and their team leaders continue working with UNHCR to facilitate the transfer of registered refugees to designated camps in Com  and Agame.
- The Red Cross of Benin national headquarters and the Federation is now focused on putting in place the necessary structures and mechanism to ensure an efficient longer-term management of, reporting on, and monitoring of, this refugee operation.

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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 immediate needs (see distribution details below).
- distribution of food and non-food items (provided by the UNHCR) is being organized.
- kitchen sets and supplementary food (vegetable cooking oil, salt and other condiments) to complement the food supplied by UNHCR/WFP was procured, delivered, and distributed.
- auxiliary first aid services are being provided to refugees, complementary to the health services provided by the local authorities.
- medical care is being organized, and, where necessary, referrals of patients to the general hospitals in Agame.
- nutritional surveillance is being organized, and the support necessary to malnourished children.
- 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.
- A coordinated effort is underway with UNICEF to provide latrines in the camp (in line with Sphere standards).

Distributions of non-food items procured and distributed by the Federation and Red Cross of Benin:

Items					Total
	Hilacondji (transit camp)	Athiémé	Agame	Contingency stock	
Mats	25	25	150	0	200
Cups	1,000	200	2,000	300	3,500
Buckets	25	25	230	0	280
Soap	1,020	240	2,040	420	3,720
Jerry cans	25	25	230	0	
Spoons	1,000	200	2,000	180	4,380

In addition to the listed activities above, the following sectoral interventions have taken place:

- **Overall:** following the somewhat normal unsettled stage common during the initial urgent phase of refugee operations (arrival, registration, and immediate relief item and food distributions), the refugees and camps have begun to settle down into a longer-term structure. Refugees have accepted the conditions, and are being helped by the Red cross to organize into community teams to facilitate camp management. Camp infrastructure is being improved on a daily basis; including drainage works to divert water as the heavy rains are coming. The provision of electricity and, therefore, lighting in the camps is a definite advantage, not least for protection and security issues.
- **1. Health:** health support is currently being provided by the government with small (tented) dispensaries in the camps. This has been adequate for the short-term or urgent phase of the operation, but in the longer-term there needs to be a more considered approach to this sector as the local health personnel staffing the dispensaries are overwhelmed. The Red Cross may be asked, and may consider, becoming involved in health, but this depends on the partnership proposal from UNHCR, and further discussions with Geneva. The input of the Federation's health delegate in Chad in this sector will be very useful.

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- 2. Water: water distribution points have been organized by the local authorities, and UNICEF is supporting these efforts. The water supply is good.
- 3. Sanitation: garbage containers are being provided (UNICEF). Disposal of the refuse from these containers is being organized with refugee community leaders. The organization of the construction of latrines has been an issue (different standards and types of latrines being constructed). These are being resolved, and a meeting is planned in Agame on Tuesday (17 May) with UNHCR and other agencies to arrive at a consensus approach. The Red Cross of Benin is adhering to SPHERE standards.
- 4. Shelter: UNHCR has made family tents available (planned 10 persons to a tent) in the Agame (and Come) camps. In Agame (Lokosso) camp, there are currently a total of 483 tents (some used for administration and camp management). The tents are adequate, and there are apparently more stocks available should they be needed.
- 5. Food and Nutrition: WFP is providing basic food, and Caritas has been given the responsibility of distribution. The refugee's nutrition status is good. Any potential cases or indications of malnutrition are being managed effectively with UNHCR.
- 6. Security Situation: no security risks to staff; there are scattered reports of security concerns in the camps, but these appear under control and are being addressed as required (within UNHCR's protection mandate).

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 working 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 are making efforts to participate 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.

[Contributions List below; click here to return to the title page.](#)

