

# Multi-Country Office Senegal

January - March 2022

As 94% of refugees and asylum seekers in MCO countries are in a **protracted situation**, capacity building for Governments is a priority to facilitate UNHCR's exit in the various MCO operations while **strengthening asylum systems** and helping PoCs to improve their **self-reliance**.

MCO Senegal continues to **provide durable solutions** and assistance to refugees **focusing on voluntary return, local integration, and complementary pathways**.

Specific effort is placed on **addressing the issue of statelessness** in line with pledges made by MCO countries during the **High-level segment on Statelessness** in 2019.

## KEY STATISTICS

**46,379** (as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021)

Refugees (39,162) and asylum-seekers (7,217) are hosted in Benin, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

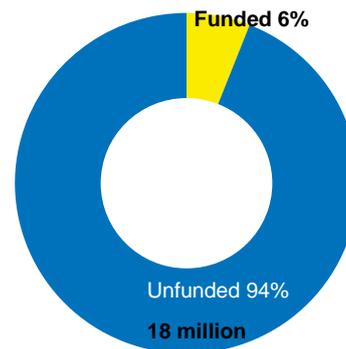
**162**

Households were interviewed by the emergency team composed of, among others, GAFNA, the Gambia Food and Nutrition Association, and a UNHCR partner in the Gambia during the emergency needs-assessment mid-March following the civil unrest in the Casamance region in Senegal, which uprooted in the Gambia some 5,400 IDPs and forced to Senegal flee some 1,500 refugees.

## FUNDING (AS OF 20 APRIL 2022)

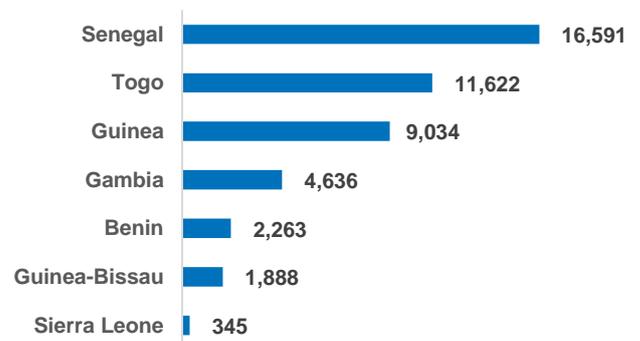
**USD 19,4 million**

Requested for the MCO Senegal operation



## POPULATION OF CONCERN

### Host Countries



\* Above-mentioned figures include refugees and asylum-seekers



Refugee verification exercise in Dakar, Senegal, in February 2022.  
@UNHCR/GosiaCourtay

# Update on Achievements

## Operational Context

- On June 30th, the **cessation of refugee status for Ivorian refugees** will take place. Cote D'Ivoire has become stable and all Ivorian refugees are asked to choose their durable solution. UNHCR supports the governments to pass a law on the cessation and facilitate the return or local integration of Ivoirians.
- **Guinea** was affected by a coup d'état last October. 7 months after the coup in Guinea, former President Alpha Condé is released. The interim president, Mamady Doumbouya, head of the military junta, has still not put together a transition timeline. However, the ECOWAS ultimatum had expired, increasing the possibility of sanctions.
- **In Guinea**, the **MCO Senegal** Representative, Monique Ekoko, and other UNHCR colleagues underwent a mission to Conakry to meet with key stakeholders and discuss the durable solutions roadmap for Ivorian refugees. While meeting with the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, as well as the Minister of Security and the Minister of Justice, they touched upon the issues of Ivoirians voluntary repatriation and local integration; and the situation of the Kouankan camp, which after the entry into force of the cessation clause will be managed by the local authorities. They also discussed mainstreaming refugees into national programs; granting biometric identity cards to remaining refugees; organizing a workshop on the local integration strategy; as well as issues of naturalization and statelessness.
- **Senegal** has launched a military operation on 13 March in the north of Casamance. This action follows the clashes that occurred on 24 January between Senegalese soldiers from the ECOWAS force in the Gambia, and combatants from the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC). Following the military operation at the border with **the Gambia**, arrivals of displaced persons in the Foni districts started on 13 March. Both UNHCR's partners, the Gambia Commission for Refugees (GCR) and GAFNA are part of a multisector commission that has carried out a rapid assessment of the situation together with the Gambia Immigration Department, Ministry of Interior, Civil protection and emergency coordination bodies and WFP. Government of the Gambia has already unlocked some 85,000 EUR for relief response and militarized the border. Additional relief needs will be informed by the rapid assessment being carried out by the authorities and with participation of UNCHR's partners GCR and GAFNA.

## Achievements



### PROTECTION

## Achievements and Impact

- **In Guinea**, on 14-18 March, UNHCR and partners delivered a 3-day refugee status determination training workshop for 8 refugee status eligibility officers as well as 2 interpreters, who will be responsible for processing exemption requests for Ivorian refugees. In addition, on 21 March a session on the code of conduct was organized for new lawyers and interpreters who will work on exemption

requests received from Ivorian refugees. The workshops aimed at training members of both committees and legal examiners on the concept and principles of the exemption, as well as approving the Exemption Standard Operating Procedures together with the exemption assessment form that will be used during the process. Participants also agreed on the workplan to ensure that all exemption requests are examined at first instance before 30 June 2022.



*Participants in the training workshop @UNCHR*

- **In Togo**, On 15-18 February, UNHCR Togo, as well as UNHCR MCO Senegal and RB colleagues delivered a training workshop for Togolese national authorities and others on the exemption procedure as part of the implementation of the roadmap on solutions for Ivorian refugees. While recalling the conclusions and recommendations of the Abidjan meeting, the workshop allowed the participants to discuss key tools facilitating the SOP implementation, review the procedure for registering people wishing to be exempted and identify the gaps.
- **In the Gambia**, on 23 - 25 February, UNHCR partner, GAFNA, helped to organize a 3-day leadership and management training for urban refugee leaders. 15 refugees, including 8 women, attended the training facilitated by the Social Development Fund trainer.
- **In Senegal**, UNHCR delivered a full day training session on international protection for 43 officers originating from 14 African countries currently participating in the 2021-2022 Application Course for the Gendarmerie Officers (CAOG) in Ouakam. The course aims to prepare the participants for Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) commonly called External Operations (OPEX).



*Participants in the training session @UNHCR*

- **In the Gambia**, GAFNA organized a three day sensitization of stakeholders in school management and development during the period 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> March for schools located in the urban area. The aim of the sensitization activity is to widen the knowledge of participants on COVID-19 and to encourage them to further sensitize their students and teachers and to encourage them to take their COVID vaccines.



*Pictures of Participants of the sensitization workshop @UNHCR*



## **DURABLE SOLUTIONS**

### **Achievements and Impact**

- **In Benin**, the MCO Representative, Monique Ekoko, and other UNHCR colleagues undertook a mission to Cotonou on 9-12 February to initiate discussions on the implementation of durable solutions for Ivorian refugees, including the declaration of cessation, facilitation of repatriation, and issues of long-term residence permits. The UNHCR delegation met with the Minister of the Interior and Security concerning the question of residence permits and voluntary returns, and with the

Minister of Justice with reference to the naturalization procedure. The Government agreed on the principle of facilitating the issuance of 10-year residence permits by exempting refugees from submitting certain documents, such as passports. UNHCR also met with refugees to promote voluntary returns, and with the RC to discuss the issues of security in the north; the initiative to hold a workshop to draw up a contingency plan; and a joint mission with the other UN agencies concerning security issues.



*Meeting with the Minister of Justice @UNHCR*

- On 15 February, the Government of **Benin** published the declaration of cessation for Ivorian refugees in its official journal. As per the Abidjan joint declaration made in September 2021 and UNHCR recommendation, the cessation will take effect on 30 June 2022.
- **In Guinea**, During the reporting period, the MCO Senegal Representative, Monique Ekoko, and other UNHCR colleagues underwent a mission to Conakry to meet with the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, as well as the Minister of Security and the Minister of Justice. They touched upon the issues of Ivorians voluntary repatriation and local integration; and the situation of the Kouankan camp, as well as mainstreaming refugees into national programs; granting biometric identity cards to remaining refugees; organizing a workshop on the local integration strategy and of naturalization and statelessness. Ministers reiterated their commitment to the roadmap.
- On 1 February, UNHCR and partners organized a voluntary repatriation of 38 families (198 individuals) to Cote d'Ivoire. Furthermore, UNHCR and partners facilitated the 1st repatriation convoy in 2022 composed of 25 families (85 individuals), who have left **Guinea** for Ivory Coast. Due to being tested for Covid-19, 6 refugees from 5 families totaling 25 individuals were unable to join the repatriation convoy. Living in the Kouankan 2 camp, they were referred to the Nzérékoré treatment center.



*Families participating in the repatriation @UNHCR*

- **In Senegal**, UNHCR and partners launched on 18 January the information and awareness-raising campaign on voluntary returns for Ivorian refugees in Senegal, which will be carried out through a variety of channels, such as making phone calls to interested refugees, distributing flyers on the voluntary repatriation process, as well as placing ads in local newspapers and websites, among others.
- **In Togo**, on 24-26 February, Xavier Creach, Deputy Director of the UNHCR Regional Bureau and Monique Ekoko, Representative of the UNHCR Multi-Country Office Senegal undertook a mission to Togo. They were received by the Togo's Prime Minister, Victoire Sidémého Dzidudu Tomegah Dogbe. During the meeting they discussed the refugee status cessation for Ivorian refugees, underlining the need to facilitate obtaining residence permits for those who are willing to locally integrate; durable solutions for the 8,513 Ghanaian refugees at risk of statelessness who are eligible for the Togolese nationality based on jus soli; as well as the closure of the Avépozo refugee camp requesting to postpone it until September 2022 taking into account the cutoff date of the status cessation for Ivorian refugees. The UNHCR delegation also met with the Minister of Human Rights, Citizenship Training, Relations with the Institutions, and Government Spokesperson, as well as with the Keeper of the Seals, Minister of Justice and Legislation. The UNHCR delegation also visited the Avépozo refugee camp on 24 February, where they met with refugees.



*Meeting with Prime Minister of Togo @UNHCR*

- In **Togo**, a voluntary repatriation convoy of 51 refugees and 42 asylum seekers to Côte d'Ivoire took place on 25 March. 94 people arrived in Côte d'Ivoire and were greeted at the airport by UNHCR Abidjan staff. Preparations continue for the 68th voluntary repatriation convoy of Ivorian refugees. The files in progress of constitutions will be transmitted shortly to the DGDN for the establishment of the safe-conduct.



*Pictures of the 67<sup>th</sup> convoy at the Airport of Lomé*



## STATELESSNESS

### Achievements and Impact

- In **Guinea**, on 27 January, the Government announced its intention to organize the census of population to better plan public policies. UNHCR is currently working with the authorities to include in the upcoming census the issues of statelessness.
- In the **Gambia**, UNHCR partner, the Gambia Commission for Refugees (GCR), hosted on 23 February a validation workshop on the statelessness study conducted in the Gambia in 2017.
- While the registration and issuance of birth certificates has become free in **Togo** since 1 January 2022, the details of the procedure have been clarified in a decree issued mid-February. According to the new procedure, birth declarations registered within 45 days after the birth are free, while the State will reimburse FCFA 1000 each municipality for the cost of issuing the documents. Between the period of 13-23 February, the Ivorian Directorate for Aid and Assistance to Refugees and Stateless Persons (DAARA), assisted 207 children to transcribe and distribute their birth certificates, and to assess the available documentation with the objective to issue passports for those opting for local integration.
- In **Guinea Bissau**, As requested by the Government, UNHCR delivered to the National Assembly 115 printed copies of the revised Law of Refugees and Statelessness.

**EDUCATION****Achievements and Impact**

- **In Benin**, on 18 February, in an official ceremony newly selected DAFI students received their books and other relevant documents. The project has started in Benin in 2020 and is currently supporting 22 students.
- **In the Gambia**, On the occasion of 8 March, the International Women's Day, the DAFI Club organized an event "Gender Equality. Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow " marked by speeches, poems and other celebrations. Participants included German Embassy, the Gambia Commission for Refugees, as well as the public TV station and other local journalists.
- In the Gambia, on 9-10 February, UNHCR partner, GAFNA, carried out a monitoring field mission in certain schools located in refugee host communities. The mission aimed at obtaining information on refugee students' enrolment in the examination classes, as well as speak with refugee children concerning their performance and any education issues they may be facing. During meetings with refugees, GAFNA briefed them about educational opportunities, such as the DAFI scholarship programme and other educational support for students qualified for university and other type of advance tertiary education courses.



*Meetings with refugee pupils in the Gambia @UNHCR*

- UNHCR partner, GAFNA, organized a DAFI students orientation session on 15 February aimed at discussing the DAFI scholarship prerequisites and provide related information.

**HEALTH****Achievements and Impact**

- As **the Gambia** has recently witnessed an increase in COVID-19 cases due to the Omicron variant, UNHCR partners are reminding the field staff and refugees to be mindful of the COVID-19 precautionary measures.
- **In Senegal**, UNHCR partner, Green Village Foundation (GVF) has finalized the set up a Covid-19 vaccination platform for refugees in coordination with the Gaspard CAMARA health center.
- **In Guinea**, UNHCR and its partners have been closely following a case of gender-based violence against a 11-year-old refugee girl in Conakry. Survival of rape, she

is currently receiving medical assistance and continues attending school. Her perpetrator is in custody awaiting legal proceedings.

- On 13 January, UNHCR donated a total of 21,000 rapid Covid19 tests to the Ministry of Health. The ceremony took place at the Direction Nationale du Laboratoire in the presence of the UN Resident Coordinator, UNHCR colleagues, civil servants and other guests.



*Participants during the donation event @UNHCR*



## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE

### Achievements and Impact

- **In Benin**, On 25 February, UNHCR partners distributed self-reliance assistance, including equipment, such as computer engineering, sewing and pastry, as well as cash to five refugees who participated in vocational training in 2021
- On 13-16 March, UNHCR partner, **the Gambia** Commission for Refugees (GCR), conducted an awareness raising session on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) for rural refugees, opinion, and community leaders. On that occasion, GCR established a helpline and shared its number with refugees to help report misconduct, SEA incidents as well as to provide advice. In addition, Efforts are mounting to respond to the crisis of the displacements of population caused by the fighting between the Senegalese soldiers and the MFDC separatists of Casamance. The National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) during the weekend (26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022) started distribution of both food and non-food items targeting 500 households. Other UN agencies including UNHCR through GAFNA are also in high gear of preparations to provide support to the affected populations. According to NDMA, there were new arrivals / asylum seekers in one of the border villages of Alla Kunda.



*Pictures of the distribution exercise taking place @UNHCR*

- The **Sierra Leone's** Human Rights Commission (HRCSL) has launched a public inquiry into the conduct of law enforcement officials, police and military, including unnecessary and disproportionate use of force, illegal detention, harassment, sexual misconduct and violence against civilians.
- On 17 March, UNHCR in partnership with CNRRPD and PUMA (Emergency program for the modernization of border axes and territories) inaugurated a House of Culture, Citizenship and Good Neighborhood in **Dagana**. In addition to the House funded by UNHCR at the amount of FCFA 27 million, PUMA offered to refugees and local populations a 1ha gardening area equipped with an irrigation system powered by solar energy, and gardening seeds.



Official inauguration ceremony of the House of Culture, Citizenship and Good Neighborhood in in Dagana.

## Working in partnership

- UNHCR **Guinea** and its governmental partner, the National Commission for the Integration and Monitoring of Refugees (CNISR), have jointly elaborated a work plan for the implementation of the roadmap on durable solutions for Ivorian refugees, which will now be further discussed with the MCO Senegal colleagues.
- Mid-April, UNHCR **Togo**, in collaboration with UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO, offered a donation of various supplies and food to Ivorian refugees in the Avépozo camp. Chaired by the Minister of Social Action, in support of refugees during the implementation of sustainable solutions and the approach of the effectiveness of the cessation clause. The Resident Coordinator in Togo attended the ceremony.



Donation offered by UNHCR and other partners @UNHCR

- **MCO Senegal** continued traditional partnerships with national and international NGOs in its operations and strengthened alliances with the public and private sectors as well as development actors to ensure the integration of PoCs in national programs and development strategies in line with commitments enshrined in PES, CRRF, GRF pledges and the New York Declaration.
- In addition, UNHCR and its partners continued to promote collaboration and responsibility-sharing with United Nations Agencies, including UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, FAO, IOM, WFP, and others. In the spirit of UNDAF, joint work plans were agreed upon to cover certain refugees' needs such as in the areas of education, child protection, HIV/AIDS, agriculture, and mixed movements.
- A specific strategy to appropriately respond to the challenges faced by the LGBTIQ + PoCs at heightened risk in most of the MCO countries due to restrictive legislations in place and cultural practices, was put in place, and fully implemented in 2021. Supporting NGOs dealing with such cases on the ground.

#### Abbreviations

BRISR	the Regional Bureau for the Integration and Monitoring of Refugees (Guinea)
CNAR	National Commission for Assistance to Refugees (Togo)
CNISR	The National Commission for the Integration and Monitoring of Refugees (Guinea)
CNR	National Refugee Commission (Benin)
CNRD	National Commission for Refugees (Guinea-Bissau)
CNRRPD	National Committee for the Management of Returnees and Displaced Persons (Senegal)
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
GAFNA	Gambia Food and Nutrition Association (The Gambia)
GCR	Gambia Commission for Refugees (The Gambia)
GVF	Green Village Foundation (Senegal)
MCO	Multi-Country Office
NaCSA	National Commission for Social Action (Sierra Leone)
ODIC	Organization for Integrated Community Development of Guinea (Guinea)

## Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds.

## External / Donor Relations

### **CONTACTS**

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