

**Internal Displacement in West Africa: A Snapshot**

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## Introduction\*

On 7 July 2011, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) convened its first Ministerial Conference On Humanitarian Assistance And Internal Displacement In West Africa in Abuja, Nigeria. ECOWAS members have long been in the forefront of African efforts to develop normative frameworks on internal displacement and this conference was intended to increase understanding and support for the watershed African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). To support ECOWAS efforts in this regard, the Brookings-LSE Project prepared a background paper which surveyed internal displacement in West Africa and discussed the implications for national governments of ratifying the Kampala Convention, which 11 of the 15 ECOWAS Member States have signed to date. Given continuing—and unfortunately new—displacement in the region since the ECOWAS summit, it seemed timely to update and disseminate an excerpt from the original background paper.

This paper thus offers an overview of internal displacement in the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) region—which consists of 15 countries as presented in the map below—including displacement resulting from conflict, generalized violence and human rights violations; natural disasters and the effects of climate change; and development projects. The analysis includes a discussion of the protection concerns around particular internal displacement situations, an assessment of efforts to find durable solutions to displacement and a brief summary of laws and policies adopted by governments in the region.

While UNHCR is a reliable source of data on refugee movements in West Africa,<sup>1</sup> collecting even basic data on internally displaced persons (IDPs) is a challenge—particularly when looking at those displaced by natural disasters and development projects. Even finding basic information on the number of people displaced by a particular conflict or disaster is difficult. This is due in part to the fact that most IDPs in the region (and globally) do not live in camps, but are dispersed within host communities. In some cases, governments have established IDP registration systems, but these rarely include all IDPs and are rarely publicly reported. Moreover, there are not adequate mechanisms in place to track multiple displacements or to determine whether or not durable solutions have been attained. In some cases—such as Sierra Leone and Liberia—the national governments, after having made significant efforts to find durable solutions for IDPs, simply concluded at some point that displacement had ended. Moreover, much of the information about the particular needs and vulnerabilities of IDPs is anecdotal in nature.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, UNHCR's West Africa profile page: ([www.unhcr.org/pages/49e45a9c6.html](http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e45a9c6.html)).

Understanding internal displacement in West Africa, as in other regions, is an important step in both preventing further displacement and in finding solutions for those who are already displaced. While conscious of the shortcomings in the data, we hope that this report will begin to shed light on the complex displacement situations in the region and will encourage governments and other actors in their efforts to prevent and resolve displacement and to ensure that all those who are already displaced receive the protection and assistance that they need.

Map 1-1. The Fifteen ECOWAS Member States



## Overview of displacement in Africa

Every year since at least 2001, the African continent has had the largest number of internally displaced persons fleeing armed conflict, generalized violence and human rights violations.<sup>2</sup> Displacement in Africa has been dynamic, at times decreasing when improved security or peace agreements have enabled people to return; at other times, the numbers have increased due to renewed conflict or unsustainable returns. In a positive trend, however, the number of IDPs in Africa has decreased annually since 2004 according to available estimates.

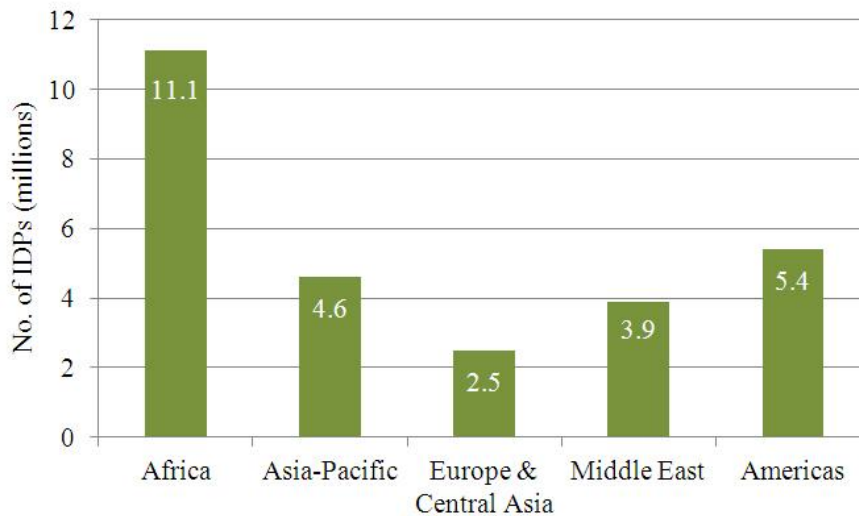
Today, nearly half of the world's conflict-induced IDPs are in Africa. The 11.1 million IDPs in 21 African countries accounted for 40 percent of the 27.5 million people internally displaced across the world by conflict, generalized violence and human rights violations as of the end of 2010 (see Table 1-1 below). The majority—70 percent—of the IDPs in Africa are concentrated in just three countries: Sudan (4.5 million to 5.2 million), accounting for 40 percent of the total IDPs in Africa; the Democratic Republic of the Congo (about 1.7 million); and Somalia (1.5 million). Three African countries are among the five countries in the world which had more than one million IDPs as of the end of 2010: the DRC, Sudan, Colombia, Iraq and Somalia. Together these five countries account for half of the world's IDPs. Colombia, the DRC and Sudan are the three countries in the world which have had over one million IDPs throughout the decade ending in 2010. In addition, not captured in these statistics is the more recent post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire, which caused the internal displacement of around one million people between 2010 and 2011, and the displacement of thousands (there are no clear estimates and displacement is temporary in nature in some instances) of people in Nigeria due to bombing and other attacks by Boko Haram militants throughout 2011. At the time of writing, 2012 has already been witness to further attacks by Boko Haram and fighting between the militants and security forces, as well as clashes between protesters and security forces in the wake of the removal of the fuel subsidy.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> IDPs displaced by these causes are referred to herein generally as 'conflict-induced IDPs' or as displaced by conflict, to differentiate the category from persons displaced by natural disasters and by development projects. For annual figures since 2001, see Global IDP Project and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, including Global IDP Project, *Internally displaced people: Global Survey 2002*; For other reports, see [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

<sup>3</sup> See for example: "Côte d'Ivoire," in UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2012-2013*, p. 92 ([www.unhcr.org/pages/49e484016.html](http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e484016.html)); Human Rights Watch, "Nigeria: Boko Haram Attacks Indefensible," 8 November 2011 ([www.hrw.org/news/2011/11/08/nigeria-boko-haram-attacks-indefensible](http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/11/08/nigeria-boko-haram-attacks-indefensible)); CNN, "11 Boko Haram militants killed in Nigeria," 28 January 2012 ([http://articles.cnn.com/2012-01-28/africa/world\\_africa\\_nigeria-attack\\_1\\_islamic-militants-boko-haram-nigeria?s=PM:AFRICA](http://articles.cnn.com/2012-01-28/africa/world_africa_nigeria-attack_1_islamic-militants-boko-haram-nigeria?s=PM:AFRICA)); Christian Okeke, "Protests: 4,000 displaced in Benin, 300 injured nationwide —Red Cross," *Nigerian Tribune*, 13 January 2012 (<http://tribune.com.ng/index.php/news/34288-protests-4000-displaced-in-benin-300-injured-nationwide-red-cross>).

**Table 1-1. Global Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement by Region as of December 2010**



IDMC, *Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2010*, March 2011  
([www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org))

In addition to those displaced by conflicts, generalized violence and human rights violations, many Africans have been displaced by natural disasters and the effects of climate change. As former UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes remarked at the African Union (AU) Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Kampala in October 2009, climate change will increase the number of displaced Africans. African countries have already witnessed an uptick in the number and intensity of natural disasters resulting from climate change. Indeed, the number of people in Africa affected by climate change has doubled in the past two decades, increasing from 9 million in 1989 to around 17 million in 2008.<sup>4</sup> According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Africa is “is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate change and climate variability,”<sup>5</sup> and the international climate change research community has acknowledged that widespread coastal erosion is one of the most serious anticipated climate-change related environmental challenges facing the region.<sup>6</sup> Rising sea levels, altered precipitation patterns and drought as well as more frequent and intense storms caused by climatic changes affect economic sectors, ecosystems and migration patterns, often straining the resources of areas to which people are displaced. In some cases, the effects of climate change could be a driver of conflict. As described further below, African governments have recognized their vulnerability to

<sup>4</sup> UN News Centre, “Climate change to accelerate displacement in Africa, top UN official warns,” 22 October 2009 ([www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32682](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32682)).

<sup>5</sup> M.L. Parry et al., ed.s, *Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, 2007, available at [www.ipcc.ch](http://www.ipcc.ch)

<sup>6</sup> The second assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as well as Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded projects including the GEF-funded Medium Size Project (MSP) Sub-Saharan Africa Project “Development and Protection of the Coastal and Marine Environment in Sub-Saharan Africa,” also known as the ‘*African Process*.’

natural disasters and the effects of climate change and have taken some steps to address these challenges.

In addition to conflict, generalized violence, natural disasters and the effects of climate change, development projects have also caused displacement in West Africa. Although the causes of displacement vary, the experience and needs of IDPs are often similar. All of these situations are examined in the following section.

### **Analysis of internal displacement in West Africa**

Throughout West Africa, individuals have been forced or obliged to flee their communities due to armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, human rights violations, natural disasters and climate change as well as large-scale development projects. Access to resources, including unresolved tensions around land and property rights, as well as endemic poverty and high levels of youth unemployment contribute to recurring displacement in many West African countries. Across the sub-region, it is difficult to ascertain the precise number of persons internally displaced by conflict. Displacement patterns are complex, and the internally displaced often seek refuge in non-camp settings, living with families and friends or finding anonymity in urban areas. Data are usually not comprehensive as monitoring of internal displacement and of returns in conflict and in post-conflict situations is often not undertaken, or figures may only take into account IDPs in camps or in areas where access is possible. Virtually no information is available on the achievement of durable solutions other than return.

In the decades since independence, West African governments as well as the sub-regional organization, ECOWAS, have made significant strides in seeking to address internal displacement. ECOWAS has responded to conflicts throughout the region and has exerted efforts to ensure that refugees and internally displaced persons in the region realize durable solutions. ECOWAS has played a critical role in securing peace, stability and security in the region, including through preventive diplomacy, as in Liberia, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire and through the conflict management efforts of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire.

In terms of measures to address displacement by natural disasters and the effects of climate change, many ECOWAS Member States have developed and implemented national disaster risk reduction strategies, policies and measures. In addition, all 15 ECOWAS Member States are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and to date, the vast majority of them have submitted National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) to the UNFCCC Secretariat.<sup>7</sup>

Against this backdrop, an overview of internal displacement trends and challenges in the 15 ECOWAS Member States is provided below.

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<sup>7</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

*Displacement caused by conflict, generalized violence and human rights abuses*

Conflict-induced displacement in ECOWAS Member States has featured complex flight patterns, with affected populations displaced internally as well as across borders. In many cases internal displacement occurred due to civil war or large-scale violence in the 1980s, 1990s and the early to mid-2000s—as is the case in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone—and at present many IDPs have yet to achieve durable solutions. Conflict has sometimes spilled over into neighboring states, resulting in internal displacement, as witnessed for example in Guinea, due to armed conflict in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. In Togo, the death of former President Gnassingbe Eyadema in April 2005 and subsequent political events resulted in both internal and external displacement. Other cases of displacement are ongoing, as in the case of West Africa's longest-running civil conflict, the Casamance conflict in Senegal in which tens of thousands have been displaced due to conflict and landmines.

Communal violence and internal armed conflict in the past decade have also displaced hundreds of thousands in Nigeria, and in the Niger Delta region, the inequitable access to resources and the use of oil revenues displaced thousands.<sup>8</sup> Other instances of internal displacement are due to conflicts that have broken out more recently, such as communal conflict in Mali, in the Gao and Kidal regions. In Niger, inter-communal conflicts have intensified and become more frequent, resulting in internal displacement, particularly in the Tillabéry region due to resource competition exacerbated by drought and desertification. Violence following the November 2010 presidential election in Côte d'Ivoire displaced an estimated one million within the country and, at the peak of the crisis, an estimated 200,000 sought asylum in 13 neighboring countries, primarily Liberia, Ghana and Togo.<sup>9</sup> And a resurgence of violence in Ghana in recent years has resulted in both internal and external displacement. A series of large-scale inter-communal conflicts have occurred primarily in the Northern Region in Ghana, including over issues around the chieftancy. UNHCR last reported a total IDP figure for Ghana in 2003, when there were over 174,000 IDPs of concern to the agency<sup>10</sup> and an unknown number have been displaced in recurrent conflicts since then.<sup>11</sup>

In Guinea, where internal displacement has been mainly the consequence of the spillover effects of 15 years of armed conflict in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, the peak number of IDPs was recorded in 2001, with around 320,000 people having been internally displaced. The government's most recent total figure for IDPs is 19,000 as of

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<sup>8</sup> IRIN, "Nigeria: Thousands still homeless in Delta," 15 January 2010 ([www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87751](http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87751)).

<sup>9</sup> "Côte d'Ivoire," in UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2012-2013*, p. 92 (<http://www.unhcr.org/4ec230fd16.html>).

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, "Ghana," *2003 UNHCR Statistical Yearbook* ([www.unhcr.org/41d2c1710.html](http://www.unhcr.org/41d2c1710.html)).

<sup>11</sup> IRIN, "Ghana: Pre-election violence escalates," 9 September 2008 ([www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=80250](http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=80250)); BBC, "Ghanaians flee violence for northern Togo," 25 May 2010 ([www.bbc.co.uk/news/10152302](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10152302)).



December 2005<sup>12</sup> and the most recent international estimates are for those in the Guinea Highlands region from the World Health Organization in 2003, according to which there were 100,000 IDPs in need of humanitarian assistance. In addition, in 2010, thousands were displaced because of election-related violence although their number and situation was unclear by early 2011.

In Nigeria, there are no official IDP camps. The vast majority of IDPs seek refuge with family, friends or host communities in areas where their community is in the majority, and return home once the violence has subsided. An unknown number of IDPs also resettle in other areas of the country or integrate locally in their areas of displacement.<sup>13</sup> In an effort to obtain more information on the numbers and situation of those internally displaced, the government of Nigeria asked the UN in mid-2010 for assistance in profiling the number and situation of IDPs in the country. From 2011 through to January 2012 a spate of attacks by Boko Haram militants took place. Attacks by Boko Haram in northern Yobe State and the response by security forces had displaced some 10,000 people in Damaturu, according to National Emergency Management Agency figures in late December 2011. The attacks in early 2012 reportedly prompted Nigeria's eastern Igbo tribal elders to call for women and children living in the north to flee the violence and threat from Boko Haram and travel south, leaving the men to tend to their businesses. The Igbo community is setting up shelters in the southeast to house those displaced from the north.<sup>14</sup>

Information on internally displaced persons in Mali, in the Gao and Kidal regions, is limited, but ICRC was assisting a few thousand of them and their host families/communities as of 2009.<sup>15</sup> The number of people internally displaced in Niger as of the end of 2010 is currently unknown, including those newly displaced due to communal conflict, particularly between herders and farmers who face conditions of drought and desertification and compete for access to natural resources, as mentioned above.<sup>16</sup> In Senegal, estimates of the number of IDPs have ebbed and flowed with the dynamics of the conflict. For example, in 2001 there were only an estimated 6,000<sup>17</sup> IDPs, but by 2008 with a rise in violence, at least 60,000 people were displaced internally

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<sup>12</sup> Global IDP Project, *Guinea's forgotten internal displacement crisis*, 17 February 2005, p. 11, ([www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)); IDMC, *Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2006*, p. 93 ([www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)).

<sup>13</sup> See IDMC, *Nigeria: Simmering tensions cause new displacement in the "middle belt"*, 3 December 2010 ([www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)).

<sup>14</sup> Michael Olugbode, "Nigeria: 10,000 Persons Displaced in Damaturu, Says Nema," 28 December 2011 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/201112280567.html>); Jane Labous, "Nigeria's Igbo Tribal Elders Call for Evacuation Due to Violence," 30 January 2012 ([www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/west/Nigerias-Igbo-Tribal-Elders-Call-for-Evacuation-Due-to-Violence-138322529.html](http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/west/Nigerias-Igbo-Tribal-Elders-Call-for-Evacuation-Due-to-Violence-138322529.html)).

<sup>15</sup> ICRC, "Mali: support for displaced people in northern Mali," 14 August 2009 ([www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/mali-news-140809.htm](http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/mali-news-140809.htm)); ICRC, "Mali: ICRC helps families affected by intercommunal violence," 4 September 2009 (<http://reliefweb.int/node/323303>).

<sup>16</sup> IDMC, *Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2010*, March 2011 ([www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)).

<sup>17</sup> Global IDP Project, *Internally displaced people: Global Survey 2002* ([www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)).

and externally, including about 10,000 refugees in Gambia and Guinea-Bissau.<sup>18</sup> Current estimates range between 10,000 and 40,000 IDPs. Exact numbers, however, are unavailable in the absence of a comprehensive survey.

This brief description of conflict-induced internal displacement in West Africa illustrates the paucity of accurate, up-to-date information on even the most basic of indicators.

### *Internal displacement due to natural disasters and the effects of climate change*

Large-scale flooding and drought—effects of climate change—are perennial problems affecting West Africa, resulting in considerable damage to infrastructure, food stocks, crops and livestock, as well as loss of life and displacement. Coping with the sheer scale of these disasters presents tremendous challenges to national governments, civil society and international humanitarian actors. Floods are the most common disaster and since 2007 had affected more than 1.8 million people in West and Central Africa, according to international estimates in May 2010.<sup>19</sup> Heavy rainfall and floods have affected Benin, Burkino Faso, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria and Togo while drought has affected Gambia, Niger and Nigeria. Most West African countries have natural disaster management plans to assist in disaster preparedness, but often the populations lack awareness about these national systems. Moreover, Africa has the least number of meteorological stations of any region in the world, and early warning systems are lacking in most West African countries.<sup>20</sup>

Bénin has had the most flood events of any West African country in the 1970-2010 period, and ranks seventh overall in the African continent.<sup>21</sup> Cyclical floods have affected hundreds of thousands. In 2009, at least 20,000 were displaced in the worst flooding since 1963, prompting the government to declare the first state of emergency in years. In November 2010, 680,000 were affected by flooding—150,000 of whom lost their homes—with 82,000 still without permanent shelter by December 2010 according to international estimates.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.; IRIN, “Senegal: Finding incentives for peace in Casamance,” 25 June 2008 ([www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78944](http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78944)).

<sup>19</sup> IFRC, “Floodings and natural disasters, challenges for West and Central Africa,” 6 May 2010 (<http://reliefweb.int/node/353795>).

<sup>20</sup> Vikram Oedra Kolmannskog, *Future Floods of Refugees: A comment on climate change, conflict and forced migration*, Norwegian Refugee Council, April 2008, p. 35; FAO, *FAO & emergencies: West Africa* ([www.fao.org/emergencies/tce-appfund/tce-appeals/consolidated-appeals/west-africa/en](http://www.fao.org/emergencies/tce-appfund/tce-appeals/consolidated-appeals/west-africa/en)).

<sup>21</sup> According to data from EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database—Université Catholique de Louvain – Brussels, Belgium, cited in World Bank, p. 19, *Responding to Floods in West Africa: Lessons from Evaluation*, 15 November 2010 ([http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTDIRGEN/Resources/flood\\_note.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTDIRGEN/Resources/flood_note.pdf)).

<sup>22</sup> UN OCHA, *Benin Floods, 2011 Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan—Revised*, 9 February 2011.

Burkina Faso ranks eighth overall in Africa for the most flood events over the 1970-2010 period, just after Bénin.<sup>23</sup> In 2009, the worst flooding in 90 years displaced 150,000 within the country; in total, some 600,000 people in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone lost their homes or were otherwise affected. The majority of displaced Burkinabé fled to schools and other public buildings while the rest (40,000) stayed with family or neighbors. The following year, over 100,000 people were affected in the country by flooding which caused widespread devastation, left some villages inaccessible, and led people to seek refuge in schools other public buildings, and over 90 temporary government-allocated sites.<sup>24</sup>

Guinea is prone to heavy rainfall and floods, with areas near the Niger River and other rivers in Upper Guinea flooding on an annual basis.<sup>25</sup> The overflow of the Niger River and its tributaries in Upper Guinea in 2003—the poorest region in the country where there were already conflict-affected IDPs—caused the worst flood damage in 30 years. Some 200,000 persons were affected to different degrees according to government estimates at the time, including around 40,000 children under the age of five.<sup>26</sup>

The Gambia has experienced widespread damage and loss from disasters including storms, floods, landslides and droughts, including devastating floods in recent years. People residing near waterways and other disaster-prone areas are particularly vulnerable and affected. Flooding of rural areas has forced farmers to flee to overcrowded towns and cities, which lack economic opportunities and are already strained to provide basic services to existing residents.<sup>27</sup>

On a larger scale than conflict, displacement has occurred in Mali due to recurring and devastating droughts and floods, including one of worst droughts in two decades in 2009. Flooding in August-September 2010 resulted in a dire humanitarian situation, affecting 16,000 people including the internal displacement of 11,600 individuals, some of whom took refuge in schools. The floods caused extensive damage, resulted in the loss of cattle, and exacerbated peoples' vulnerability to disease.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> According to data from EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database. [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be) – Université Catholique de Louvain – Brussels, Belgium, cited in World Bank, p. 19, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTDIRGEN/Resources/flood\\_note.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTDIRGEN/Resources/flood_note.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Government of Burkina Faso, “Relogement des sinistrés : Les éclaircissements du Gouvernement,” 19 May 2000 ([www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/KHII-85R5KZ?OpenDocument](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/KHII-85R5KZ?OpenDocument)); IFRC, *Burkina Faso: Floods Emergency appeal, Operations update n° 6 – Appeal extension* (<http://reliefweb.int/node/361859>); Oxfam, “Burkina Faso faces the worst flood for 90 years; Oxfam is responding,” 4 September 2009 ([www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2009-09-04/burkina-faso-faces-worst-flood-90-years](http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2009-09-04/burkina-faso-faces-worst-flood-90-years)); UN News Centre, “UN agencies launch appeal to assist flood victims in Burkina Faso,” 7 September 2010 ([www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35835](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35835)).

<sup>25</sup> Government of Guinea/ UN Agencies/UNDAC Mission, *Floods in Guinea—Report*, October 2001 ([http://ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/Floods\\_in\\_Upper\\_Guinea.pdf](http://ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/Floods_in_Upper_Guinea.pdf)).

<sup>26</sup> UN OCHA, *Guinea humanitarian situation report No. 1*, 5 November 2001 (<http://reliefweb.int/node/89385>).

<sup>27</sup> IRIN, “Gambia: Urban centres under strain as farmers flee,” 23 April 2010 (<http://reliefweb.int/node/352400>).

<sup>28</sup> IFRC, *Mali: Floods*, 4 October 2010 (<http://reliefweb.int/node/369863>).

In Togo, flooding in 2007 washed away roads and bridges, cutting off about 60,000 people from assistance in Kpendjal prefecture, and displaced 10,000 to government-run school shelters. Flooding in 2008 affected 30,000 to 40,000 and displaced approximately 4,000 families according to USAID. The government evacuated some 4,000 flood-affected families to school buildings and camps set up by the military.<sup>29</sup>

Cape Verde, a Small Developing Island State, is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change, a phenomenon which has already compelled residents to move to urban areas. This displacement has increased stress on urban resources already characterized by high population density.<sup>30</sup> In addition to short torrential rains during the rainy season, Cape Verde's 2007 National Adaptation Programme of Action highlighted the likelihood of an increased occurrence of droughts, which heavily impact small vulnerable farmers and push them to urban areas.<sup>31</sup>

Adding to conflict-displacement challenges in Ghana is the country's vulnerability to the effects of climate change. Ghana's 2001 National Communication to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change identified three main concerns regarding the potential impact of climate change, including reduced water flows. There were also estimates of a rise in the sea levels of one meter by 2100 which were projected to inundate an area of land home to a quarter of the population living below the 30 meter level, thereby putting 132 000 people at risk.<sup>32</sup>

The climate change community has recognized that one of the most apparent instances of climate change is that of decreasing precipitation producing severe drought in the Sahel region during the last three decades of the twentieth century.<sup>33</sup> Most recently, drought in the region, from Mauritania to Chad, had affected over 10 million people as of June 2010, including 7-8 million in Niger (around half of its population.)

Nigeria, undergoing desertification, is also prone to coastal erosion, coastal flooding, river flooding, and urban flooding—all of which cause displacement. Following heavy rainfall, the opening of the swollen Challawa and Tiga dams to relieve strain on them displaced two million people in northern Nigeria in September 2010. Government authorities initially moved the affected populations to rural schoolhouses and other government buildings.

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<sup>29</sup> IRIN, "Togo: Floods kill at least 17, cut off access to some 60,000 people," 5 September 2007 ([www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=74144](http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=74144)) ; USAID, "USAID Provides Assistance to Togo Flood Victims," 8 August 2008 (<http://appablog.wordpress.com/2008/08/08/togo-usaid-provides-assistance-to-togo-flood-victims>).

<sup>30</sup> Voice of America, "Academics Study Link Between Climate Change and Urban Development in Cape Verde," 22 April 2009 ([www.voanews.com/english/news/a-13-2009-04-22-voa34-68639637.html](http://www.voanews.com/english/news/a-13-2009-04-22-voa34-68639637.html)).

<sup>31</sup> Republic of Cape Verde, *National Adaptation Programme of Action on Climate Change, 2008-2012*, December 2007 (<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/napa/cpv01.pdf>).

<sup>32</sup> Government of Ghana, *Ghana's initial national communication under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. 2 May 2001 (<http://unfccc.int/2860.php>).

<sup>33</sup> "Analysing regional aspects of climate change and water resources," in Bryson Bates et al., eds., *Climate Change and Water*, June 2008, IPCC ([www.ipcc.ch/pdf/technical-papers/ccw/chapter5.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/technical-papers/ccw/chapter5.pdf)).

### *Displacement caused by development projects*

Development-induced displacement is not comprehensively monitored in ECOWAS Member States. But infrastructure and urban development projects have led to internal displacement. While estimates for the total number of West Africans displaced by all large-scale development projects are not available, an estimated 234,600 people were displaced primarily by large dam projects in the region from the 1960s to the late 1990s, including two of the largest dams in the region, the Akossombo and the Kossou. The displaced often lack adequate solutions to their displacement, bearing the brunt of these projects implemented for hydroelectric production, regulating water supplies, irrigation and other reasons. To date, West African countries have built more than 150 of the 1,300 large dams throughout the continent and the 45,000 throughout the world.<sup>34</sup>

**Table 1-2. Number of people displaced by large dam projects in West Africa<sup>35</sup>**

Name of the dam	Country	Displaced persons	Date of displacement
Akossombo	Ghana	80,000	1963
Kossou	Côte d'Ivoire	75,000	1970
Kandji	Nigeria	44,000	1967–1968
Sélingué	Mali	15,000	1980
Nangbéto	Togo/Bénin	10,600	1987
Manantali	Mali	10,000	1986–1987
Garafiri	Guinea	2, 140	1999

While the displacement and relocation of these populations to make way for these dams has not been without its challenges, there are few publicly available evaluations or assessments of these projects. More often than not, compensation to those displaced has been inadequate and the affected communities have not enjoyed the benefits of the dams. Rather, they have “[born] the environmental and social brunt” of them.<sup>36</sup> As argued in a report on these projects in West Africa, planning and funding to address the needs of the displaced have tended to be short-sighted. Their living conditions have actually worsened within five to ten years—the typical duration of engagement of those building the dam—of the dam having been built, rather than ensuring those displaced get a share of the economic benefits the dam could give them throughout its life-span, which is at least 50 to 80 years.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> According to FAO's AQUASTAT database (2009), cited in Madiodio Niasse and Lawrence Haas, eds., *Sharing the benefits of large dams in West Africa*, International Institute for Environment and Development (UK), 2009, p. 6 (<http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/12555IIED.pdf>).

<sup>35</sup> De Wet, C. (1999) and Niasse, M. and Ficatier, Y. (2008), provided in Madiodio Niasse and Lawrence Haas, eds., *Sharing the benefits of large dams in West Africa*, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> Madiodio Niasse and Lawrence Haas, eds., *Sharing the benefits of large dams in West Africa*, pp. iv-v.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. iv-v.

In urban areas, internal displacement has also often been part and parcel of development projects. For example, since 2000 in Nigeria, forced evictions in urban areas have caused the displacement of more than 2 million people. An estimated 200,000 people in Port Harcourt are at risk of forced eviction for urban development projects intended to demolish all waterfront settlements.<sup>38</sup>

For some of the displacement situations examined above, African States, including ECOWAS Member States, have sought to develop national laws and policies to address internal displacement, as examined below.

### **Summary of laws and policies on internal displacement in Africa**

Globally to date, twenty-two countries including six in Africa have adopted a wide variety of national policies or legislation—many of which are based on the Guiding Principles—specifically addressing internal displacement, and others are in the process of doing so, including Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Chad and Kenya. African States were among the first in the world to adopt national laws and policies based on the Guiding Principles. Of the six African countries which have developed laws and policies on IDPs, two are West African States—Liberia (2004) and Sierra Leone (2002)—in addition to Angola (2000), Burundi (2001), Sudan (2009) and Uganda (2004).

Liberia fully adopted the Guiding Principles into national legislation in November 2004 after issuing in 2002 a Declaration of the Rights and Protection of Liberian Internally Displaced Persons. Liberia’s National Community Resettlement and Reintegration Strategy (2004) prepared by the National Transitional Government of Liberia with the support of the international community provided the framework for the resettlement and reintegration of over 300,000 IDPs and other war-affected groups, including host communities.<sup>39</sup>

Signed in July 1999, the Lomé Peace Agreement referred to the need to design and implement a plan for voluntary repatriation and reintegration of Sierra Leonean refugees and internally displaced persons (Article XXII). Sierra Leone’s Resettlement Strategy (October 2001), revised from a December 2000 version developed by the National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NCRRR), established the plan for the resettlement and reintegration of internally displaced persons, refugees and ex-combatants. To consolidate peace and lay the foundations for development, the Recovery Strategy for Newly Accessible Areas (May 2002) was developed by the National Recovery Committee (NRC), which was established in 2001. The implementation of the peace agreement and subsequent strategies enabled and facilitated the swift return of IDPs and refugees.

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<sup>38</sup> Amnesty International, *Africa: Human Rights Live Here: Stop forced evictions in Africa*, 30 September 2010 ([www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR01/006/2010/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR01/006/2010/en)).

<sup>39</sup> Brookings-LES Project on Internal Displacement, National and Regional Laws and Policies on Internal Displacement : Liberia, Government of Liberia, National Community Resettlement and Reintegration Strategy (June 2004) ([www.brookings.edu/projects/idp/Laws-and-Policies/liberia.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/projects/idp/Laws-and-Policies/liberia.aspx)).

Having outlined some of the laws and policies developed to address forced displacement in African States, we now examine some of the associated protection challenges in the ECOWAS region.

### **Current IDP protection challenges in the region**

Protection challenges in West Africa include the effects of armed conflict, generalized violence and human rights violations on the most vulnerable IDPs: women, children, communities facing discrimination, older persons, IDPs living with HIV/AIDS and IDPs with disabilities. However, detailed conclusions about these and other specific protection challenges across most of the ECOWAS Member States are limited by the lack of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of the numbers or status of IDPs and of durable solutions. Information that is available may be limited geographically or to a certain time frame.

As in most parts of the world, IDPs in West Africa often lack access to basic services, but their vulnerability is difficult to assess given that IDPs in the region tend to seek refuge with their families and friends. This renders the identification of the displaced and the assessment of their needs difficult. The presence of IDPs in most cases strains host communities whose resources tend to be limited even before they take in their displaced kinfolk or friends.

Throughout the world, women and children represent around 80 percent of a given conflict-related internal displacement situation. In light of the fact that 60 percent of the population in many West African countries is under the age of 20 according to the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the displacement of children and youth merit serious consideration to promote economic, social and political security. Indeed, the issue of youth is a focus of UNOWA at the request of the UN Security Council. Access to employment opportunities, including for youth and former combatant youth, is also a protection challenge.

In the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and in other conflicts on the continent and the world over, sexual and gender-based violence, primarily against women and girls, has been employed as a systematic weapon of warfare. Addressing sexual and gender-based violence has also been a priority in establishing the conditions necessary for the achievement of durable solutions for both the Liberian government and the international community. Sexual and gender-based violence was experienced by 90 percent of Liberian women, which was exacerbated by the lack of therapeutic assistance and a widespread culture of impunity despite the adoption of the Rape Amendment Act in early 2006.<sup>40</sup> Sexual-based violence also occurred in post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire. Such violence causes physical harm, trauma, stigma and social ostracism, as well as the risk of

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<sup>40</sup> These figures are cited in the *National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Management of Gender-Based Violence in Liberia* prepared by the Task Force on Gender-Based Violence led by the Ministry of Gender, and are based on a study by the World Health Organization carried out in 2005.

unwanted pregnancies and health complications or problems. Sexual violence, sexual slavery and ‘survival sex’ place women and girls at an exponentially increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and infections. A UN General Assembly resolution which welcomed the adoption of the Kampala Convention and called for its signature and ratification, noted that women and children among refugees and other persons of concern face particular vulnerabilities, including discrimination and sexual and physical abuse. The resolution also noted that throughout Africa, refugees, internally displaced persons and particularly women and children face an increased risk of exposure to HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases.<sup>41</sup> Internally displaced persons are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to sexual violence, through all stages of displacement—including return and post-conflict—even following the signing of peace agreements. Those raped—often brutally and by gangs—in conflicts throughout West Africa, including during 2011 in Côte d’Ivoire, may still face trauma and health issues owing to this sexual violence. This is compounded by the inability of victims of sexual and gender-based violence to obtain redress under the criminal justice system, especially amidst a culture of impunity evident to date in Côte d’Ivoire.<sup>42</sup>

Protection challenges can also arise when designation of people as IDPs does not include all those who are displaced. For example, the government of Liberia, with the support of the international community, made a clear policy decision in assigning legitimate IDP status only to those Liberians residing in official camps. In 2011, with the conclusion of the return process, the Liberian government and its international counterparts considered that internal displacement in the country had come to an end. According to IDMC, however, as of the end of 2010, the status of an unknown number of people who were not registered as IDPs but who remained displaced around Monrovia was not clear. There was a “significant protection gap” according to UNHCR, for the ‘non-recognized’ IDPs in urban areas and in host families in non-camp settings who lacked durable solutions.<sup>43</sup>

Further, families and host communities often generously take in IDPs as per customary practice and tradition in Africa, yet frequently the number and profile of IDPs living with host families has not been determined, making it difficult both to identify them and to provide needed assistance and protection. This was the case, for example, during the 2010-2011 violence in Côte d’Ivoire. This identification is important as often, host communities become overburdened by the ongoing presence of IDPs yet they and the displaced do not receive adequate assistance. In Guinea, as of 2004 it was believed that few IDPs had returned home, with most settling in host communities but receiving only sporadic assistance; those who had returned had received scant reintegration assistance.<sup>44</sup> Recurrent ethno-religious and community conflicts and generalized violence, often rooted

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<sup>41</sup> UN General Assembly, *Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa*, A/RES/64/129, 28 January 2010.

<sup>42</sup> UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Côte d’Ivoire*, United Nations, A/HRC/18/52, 20 September 2011 (<http://reliefweb.int/node/448305>).

<sup>43</sup> UNHCR, *Real-time evaluation of UNHCR's IDP operation in Liberia*, PDES/2007/02 - RTE 2 July 2007 (<http://www.icva.ch/doc00002439.pdf>).

<sup>44</sup> IDMC, *Guinea's forgotten internal displacement crisis*, 17 February 2005 ([www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)).



in issues including access to oil revenue wealth and the distribution of land and other resources, have occurred in Nigeria since the return to civilian rule in 1999. While some estimates put the figure of IDPs at 80,000 in 2009, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre in December 2010, there are “no reliable statistics” on the number or profile of IDPs in Nigeria.<sup>45</sup> There is neither comprehensive registration of IDPs—who often take refuge with friends and families and do not register—nor comprehensive assessments. Hence, different estimates are used and the figures government agencies and NGOs provide are “are generally only estimates referring to localised displacement situations,” and only include those in temporary camps.<sup>46</sup> While there are estimates of the thousands displaced due to violence in 2011 in the north of the country and early 2012 in areas such as the southern city of Bénin, it is unclear how many have returned or are displaced with friends and family. Turning to Senegal, the most recent figure for displacement in host communities was in 2007 by WFP, revealing that 80 percent of IDPs in Casamance had sought refuge with family and friends or host communities, in many cases in the regional capital Ziguinchor.<sup>47</sup>

Access to viable land and security of land tenure also present serious protection problems in the region. For example, in some West African states, the presence of landmines makes land unsafe for habitation. In other cases, returning IDPs find their land occupied by others, leading to further conflict. In some West African states, those who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods find themselves displaced when their villages are washed away in devastating floods or when erosion of their land makes it impossible for them to return. The loss of their land can lead them to migrate to urban areas where they do not enjoy access to land or their traditional livelihoods and where they must compete for basic services in areas where services are often already limited. Pastoralist IDPs fleeing to other rural areas often place an increased stress on resources, resulting in tensions or conflicts over access to land. Some IDPs, as in Niger, Nigeria and Senegal, have become unable to sustain their agricultural livelihoods.

These protection challenges all impact upon the ability of IDPs to secure durable solutions to their displacement. As the section below illustrates, there are further challenges to achieving durable solutions.

### **Analysis of durable solutions in the ECOWAS region**

A durable solution to displacement is achieved when formerly displaced persons no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and such persons can enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement. A durable solution can be obtained through: sustainable reintegration at the place of origin (return); sustainable local integration in areas where internally displaced

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<sup>45</sup> IDMC, *Nigeria: Simmering tensions cause new displacement in the “middle belt”*, 3 December 2010, p. 6 ([www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> IDMC, *Senegal: Overview: New displacement and challenges to durable solutions in Casamance*, 18 June 2010 ([www.internal-displacement.org/countries/senegal](http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/senegal)).

persons take refuge (local integration); or sustainable integration in another part of the country (settlement elsewhere in the country).<sup>48</sup>

Challenges to achieving durable solutions begin in many instances with a lack of information on IDPs, including information on their numbers, profile, needs and vulnerabilities. This difficulty is compounded by complex flight patterns as well as the tendency of the internally displaced to seek shelter not in camps but with their families and friends. Further, even after peace agreements, IDPs who return to their communities may experience vulnerability as a result of their displacement, as for example, when there are conflicts over land. And there are always IDPs who are unable to return, even after peace agreements have brought an end to the conflict which displaced them or the conflict has come to an end by other means. Post-conflict ethnic tensions may serve as a real threat to the return of IDPs to their areas of origin. IDPs may face a lack of access to adequate basic services. Assistance may be more readily available and accessible, especially in camp settings as compared to host communities, in the emergency phase of the conflict or disaster, but as displacement becomes protracted, assistance typically dwindles. In addition, displacement is often rooted in conflicts related to land ownership and access, or land issues can emerge or re-emerge when IDPs return. Hence, security of land tenure is a serious impediment to durable solutions. Tied to this is the fact that IDPs often lack basic documentation, which can also preclude them from being able to exercise their political rights, such as the right to vote. For example, an estimated 80 percent of Ivorians displaced in the 2010-2011 post-election crisis have lost their civil and land tenure documents.<sup>49</sup> Further, all too often, there is little access to economic opportunities which would enable IDPs to become self-reliant.

These are just some of the multitude of issues with which the internally displaced persons in the ECOWAS region have had to contend, as outlined further below.

By September 2011, following the post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire in late 2010-2011, nearly 230,000 displaced persons—over 148,000 IDPs and over 79,000 displaced outside the country—were estimated to have returned to their place of origin in the west of the country (Moyen-Cavally, Montagnes and Haut-Sassandra).<sup>50</sup> Some of these returns were organized by UNHCR but most were spontaneous in nature. Notably, according to a survey of 331 returnees and IDPs in Moyen-Cavally—by no means a comprehensive survey—conducted around mid-2011 by international humanitarian organizations with women comprising the majority of those interviewed, none of the returnees who were interviewed said they were forced to return, but only 47 percent said

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<sup>48</sup> See further: Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *Inter-Agency Standing Committee Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*, April 2010 ([www.brookings.edu/reports/2010/04\\_durable\\_solutions.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2010/04_durable_solutions.aspx)). Adopted by the UN in: UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Walter Kälin—Addendum: Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*, 9 February 2010, A/HRC/13/21/Add.4 ([http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?m=71](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?m=71)).

<sup>49</sup> Care, Danish Refugee Council and Oxfam, “Towards Durable Solutions for Displaced Ivoirians,” Joint Briefing Paper, 11 October 2011, p. 11 (<http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/towards-durable-solutions-displaced-ivoirians>).

<sup>50</sup> According to UNHCR as of 24 September 2011. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

they had made the decision on their own. Around 15 percent said they were told to return by national, civilian authorities or by the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (RFCI) and 10 percent said they returned due to inadequate assistance in the area of displacement.<sup>51</sup> It is important to consider that tensions remain, affecting returnees and the displaced, as the country has not yet consolidated peace. According to the above survey, 77 percent of returnees interviewed reported feeling safe in their area of return, but some have faced attacks, threats and intimidations. According to UNHCR, as of September 2011, 247,000 remained internally displaced in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>52</sup> Returnees and IDPs lack access to food, shelter, revenue from their jobs, basic services, property restitution and compensation and face ongoing protection threats such as acts of violence and harassment. Some IDPs remain displaced due to the lack of security and fear of reprisals given that the conflict lines were drawn along perceived political support or affiliations on the basis of ethnicity.<sup>53</sup> The majority of the displaced interviewed (72 percent) expressed their intention to return, citing the cost of transportation (63 percent) and insecurity (26 percent) as reasons they had not yet done so. The 22 percent of displaced persons interviewed who did not to return to their place of origin gave as their reasons the destruction of their homes, insecurity, trauma or land disputes—and they had no idea about the avenues of recourse available to them.<sup>54</sup>

Sierra Leone and Liberia have both worked to help IDPs realize durable solutions to their displacement. The return and reintegration of the displaced following civil war in Sierra Leone were the subjects of the Lomé Peace Agreement and subsequent national strategies. From April 2001 to November 2002, over 220,000 registered IDPs were reintegrated in five phases although many more returned spontaneously, and disarmament was completed by the end of 2001. The completion of this process brought an official end to the situation of internal displacement in the country in 2002, a testament to the commitment of the government and the international community. However, government and humanitarian agencies reportedly acknowledged that the presence of some homeless persons and squatters in Freetown remained a matter of concern.<sup>55</sup>

Similarly, following Liberia's civil war and the ECOWAS-brokered Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the facilitation by UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP) of the return and reintegration of over 300,000 IDPs between 2004 and 2007 proved to be a remarkable achievement. Some IDPs exercised their right to resettle elsewhere in the country, often due to lack of family links and of basic services in the areas of origin, economic or educational opportunities in Monrovia, and new family links due to intermarriages. A number of IDPs also decided to stay around the former camps, especially where relationships with

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<sup>51</sup> "Returnees" is not defined in the paper, but includes those returning from Liberia. Care, Danish Refugee Council and Oxfam, "Towards Durable Solutions for Displaced Ivoirians," Joint Briefing Paper, 11 October 2011, p. 7 ([www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)).

<sup>52</sup> Côte d'Ivoire," in UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2012-2013*, p. 92.

<sup>53</sup> Care, Danish Refugee Council and Oxfam, "Towards Durable Solutions for Displaced Ivoirians," p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> OCHA, June 2003, cited in: IDMC, "Sierra Leone: Executive Summary," October 2004 ([www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpCountrySummaries\)/0372C6E093AFEFEB802570C00056B6D0?OpenDocument&count=10000](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpCountrySummaries)/0372C6E093AFEFEB802570C00056B6D0?OpenDocument&count=10000)).

local communities proved cordial and special arrangements for the use of the land were secured.

UNHCR acknowledged in a May 2007 real-time evaluation of its Liberia operation the presence of a residual caseload of internally displaced people in former camps, and an undetermined number of people in a situation of urban displacement.<sup>56</sup> As evidenced by the return of some IDPs to their former camps, key areas of return suffered from a severe lack of basic services and infrastructure. Many areas had been entirely devastated by the war. The UN estimated that almost two-thirds of communities in 2006 did not have adequate shelter.<sup>57</sup> Major challenges to achieving durable solutions have included the provision of basic services, high levels of rural poverty and the lack of employment opportunities, particularly for the youth (including former combatants). Since the end of the IDP and refugee return processes, communal clashes over land and property ownership have been common. The presence of residual caseloads of IDPs sheds light on the difficulties facing a state recovering from a devastating civil war to rebuild infrastructure and provide basic services while trying to address land and property rights issues which are often impediments to securing durable solutions for displaced populations.

The transition process for returnees is itself challenging, pointing to the need for IDPs to be able to achieve durable solutions even though war has ended or peace agreements have been signed. As in Liberia, disputes have arisen over access to land for returnees, including over customary rights. For example, in Guinea, while regular and comprehensive assessments had been lacking, international reports in 2004 revealed that returning IDPs faced problems in accessing land, with most still living in precarious conditions and having received little reintegration assistance.<sup>58</sup> As IDPs started returning following the 2007 Ouagadougou Peace Agreement in Côte d'Ivoire, land disputes multiplied over customary land rights.<sup>59</sup> Although some IDPs received assistance, most of the returns have been spontaneous. In cases of IDP returns, problems also arise over limited resources, which can become a source of tension between the displaced and return populations. Such was the case in a number of host communities in Guinea where the return of IDPs, refugees and migrants strained host communities that were already lacking in basic resources, including public services and infrastructure. In Guinea Bissau, many IDPs returned to their homes after the war, but political tensions continued to disrupt efforts to consolidate the peace, and in 2006 new waves of internal displacement occurred.

Land and property issues, including the presence of landmines, are often the major impediment to durable solutions. Despite the signature in December 2004 of a peace accord between the Government of Senegal and the separatist Mouvement des forces

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<sup>56</sup> UNHCR, *Real-time evaluation of UNHCR's IDP operation in Liberia*, July 2007.

<sup>57</sup> UN OCHA, *2007 Liberia Common Humanitarian Action Plan*, 12 February 2007 (<http://ochaonline.un.org/cap2006/webpage.asp?Page=1546>).

<sup>58</sup> IDMC, *Guinea's forgotten internal displacement crisis*, 17 February 2005 ([www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)).

<sup>59</sup> IDMC, *Whose land is this? Land disputes and forced displacement in the western forest area of Côte d'Ivoire*, November 2009 ([www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)).

démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC), violence has continued and new displacement occurred in 2009 following a resurgence in hostilities. Continuing rebel attacks have affected the livelihoods of both rural and urban IDPs as well as host communities by restricting their access to their land. Land issues constitute an important factor in return movements in Casamance and return has been ongoing at varying rates since at least 2001. The presence of landmines has presented significant challenges to both IDPs and non-IDPs and has prevented many IDPs from returning to their home villages. As livelihoods depend mainly on agricultural production, demining efforts which have, for the most part, focused on only the return villages and not the surrounding farmland, has hindered the success and sustainability of many return movements. In 2008, known mined areas were said to affect nearly 90,000 villagers in 93 villages and an additional 150 villages were suspected to be mined—the full extent could not be determined due to insecurity.<sup>60</sup> However, a recently concluded demining operation of over 130 mines in several hectares of land, initiated in 2008, is a promising development that could usher in durable returns for some of the displaced.<sup>61</sup>

## Conclusion

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Member States have confronted the challenges of internal displacement almost continuously over the past two decades. The nations of West Africa have achieved great progress in bringing seemingly intractable conflicts to an end, which has allowed hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons to return home and rebuild their lives. And yet, hundreds of thousands of people remain uprooted, vulnerable and in need of solutions. The underlying causes of forced displacement, including armed conflict and violence, human rights abuses, natural and human-made disasters and development projects, persist in West Africa, with implications not only for protection and assistance to IDPs but also often for overall regional security.

ECOWAS and its Member States have a key role to play as part of network of national, regional and international stakeholders, in securing the rapid ratification of Kampala Convention so that this instrument can enter into force. Subsequently, these actors can work to implement the legally binding Convention, in order to promote peace, security and development nationally, regionally, and for the African continent as a whole. Included in these implementation efforts will be fulfilling the obligation of States to incorporate the Convention into domestic law, by amending existing or enacting new legislation, to protect and assist IDPs in conformity with international law.

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<sup>60</sup> IRIN, “Senegal: Lack of peace accord hampers demining in Casamance,” 9 May 2008 (<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78126>).

<sup>61</sup> AFP, “Demined land handed back to locals in Senegal's Casamance,” 12 March 2011 ([http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20110312/wl\\_africa\\_afp/senegalcasamanceunrest\\_20110312214409](http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20110312/wl_africa_afp/senegalcasamanceunrest_20110312214409)).

**ANNEX. List of African Union Member States that have signed, ratified/acceded to the Kampala Convention\***

Country	Date of Signature	Date of ratification/acces sion	Date Deposited
Algeria	—	—	—
Angola	—	—	—
Bénin	March 2010	—	—
Botswana	—	—	—
Burkina Faso	July 2010	—	—
Burundi	October 2009	—	—
Cameroon	—	—	—
Cape Verde	—	—	—
Central African Rep.	October 2009	December 2010	March 2011
Chad	June 2010	December 2010	October 2011
Comoros	February 2010	—	—
Congo	October 2009	—	—
Côte d'Ivoire	November 2009	—	—
Djibouti	October 2009	March 2010	Not yet deposited
Democratic Rep. of Congo	February 2010	—	—
Egypt	—	—	—
Equatorial Guinea	October 2009	—	—
Eritrea	—	—	—
Ethiopia	October 2009	—	—
Gabon	January 2010	January 2011	February 2011
Gambia	October 2009	April 2011	August 2011
Ghana	February 2010	—	—
Guinea	—	—	—
Guinea-Bissau	June 2011	June 2011	Not yet deposited
Kenya	—	—	—
Lesotho	December 2010	—	—
Liberia	October 2009	—	—
Libya	—	—	—
Madagascar	—	—	—
Mali	November 2009	November 2009	—
Malawi	—	—	—
Mozambique	April 2010	—	—
Mauritania	—	—	—
Mauritius	—	—	—

\* Adapted from: African Union, “List of countries which have signed, ratified/acceded to the *African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa* (Kampala Convention),” updated by UNHCR 3 November 2011, on file with the authors. The 15 ECOWAS Member States are shaded in green; 13 of them have signed the Convention, 5 have ratified it and 2 have deposited their instruments of ratification.

Namibia	October 2009	—	—
Niger	—	—	—
Nigeria	October 2009	—	—
Rwanda	October 2009	July 2011	Not yet deposited
South Africa	—	—	—
Sahrawi Arab Democratic Rep.	October 2009	—	—
Sao Tome & Principe	February 2010	—	—
Senegal	July 2011	—	—
Seychelles	—	—	—
Sierra Leone	October 2009	July 2010	October 2010
Somalia	October 2009	March 2011	Not yet deposited
Sudan	—	—	—
Swaziland	—	—	—
Tanzania	December 2010	—	—
Togo	December 2009	July 2011	August 2011
Tunisia	—	—	—
Uganda	October 2009	January 2010	March 2010
Zambia	October 2009	January 2011	January 2011
Zimbabwe	October 2009	—	—

**No. of countries:** 53  
**No. of signatories:** 33

**No. of ratification:** 13

**No. of deposit:** 8