

1: Briefing on mission to Togo and the surrounding countries
(by Michel Gaudé, UNHCR)

Mr. Michel Gaudé, UNHCR's head of West Africa operations briefed on the latest developments in Togo and neighbouring countries following a recent mission to the region.

An estimate of 36.000 people have fled Togo to neighbouring Ghana and Benin following the violence surrounding the presidential elections in April this year, which saw Faure Gnassingbe [son of Togo's late leader through 38 years Gnassingbe Eyadema], declared as the winner. Furthermore, approximately 16.000 IDPs are present in Togo as a consequence of the events.

The numbers have stabilised although it is likely that some of the IDPs, living mainly in the Southern part of the country, will cross the borders.

In Benin, approximately 22.000 Togolese refugees are living in two camps situated in the southern part of the country.

The humanitarian response to the influx has been good due to a well prepared Inter-Agency planning process. Basic services were in place in the two camps when the first refugees arrived. However, the capacities of the camps are now stretched to their limits.

The Benin Government has informed UNHCR that they want the camp situated near the city of Comé closed because its presence is creating problems vis-à-vis the local population. A new site has not yet been identified. Refugees, of which 95% are young males (18-30 years), claim to have fled harassments by the police and military groups, because they support the political opposition. Mr. Gaudé stressed that this message is coming from Togolese refugees in both Benin and Ghana.

In Ghana, the situation is quite different. The approximately 15.000 refugees present in the country are not living in regular camps, but are set up in villages and private homes.

Though having welcomed the refugees, the Government of Ghana insists on keeping their presence at a low profile and has requested UNHCR to act accordingly.

Refugees have generally integrated well into Ghanese society, including children in schools, facilitated by the fact that Togo and Ghana share the same language/dialect. However, Mr. Gaudé underlined that living conditions in many places are problematic. Also, the refugees are difficult to target because of their widespread presence in the country.

The risk of further deterioration of the situation in Togo is evident, even to the point of a long-term civil war, and Mr. Gaudé urged an update on the Inter-Agency regional contingency planning process.

Mr. Gaudé mentioned that a fact-finding mission headed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Louise Arbour, left for Togo on 12 June.

The discussion following the briefing focused on different agencies' response to the situation as well as the question of IDPs, including difficulties regarding access and assessment of needs. By way of various church organisations Non-Food-Items have been distributed to some of the IDPs.

2: Briefing on OCHA new Advocacy Strategy (by Opia Kumah, OCHA)

Mr. Opia Kumah, Chief of OCHA's Advocacy – External Relations and Information Management Branch, briefed on OCHA's new Advocacy Strategy 2005-2006.

In 2004 an external consultant came up with findings and recommendations regarding OCHA's advocacy. These included: 1) lack of clarity as to what constitutes advocacy in OCHA; and 2) need for clearer designation of roles and responsibilities regarding advocacy and communication.

In mid 2004 the ERC, Jan Egeland, set up a task force to develop a new advocacy strategy for OCHA, using the findings of the external consultant. The task force has now completed its work, and Mr. Kumah, presented the outline of the new strategy.

On the question of what constitutes advocacy for OCHA, a statement of commitment/"Charter" has been developed, which outlines among others, that OCHA should speak out on behalf of people affected by disasters and emergencies as well as actively promote adherence to humanitarian principles.

The strategy outlines four key areas for advocacy: 1) Neglected emergencies; 2) Natural disasters, 3) Protection and access; and 4) Safeguarding the humanitarian identity. Targeting donors, partner agencies as well as governments and local groups in affected countries.

The strategy outlines the various responsibilities for advocacy of which an important aspect is the strengthening of the ERC's capacity for media outreach and strategy development. Furthermore the strategy looks to improve the capacity of HCs as well as other parts of OCHA. In this regard training has been conducted for HCs and heads of OCHA offices in the field.

Mr. Gaudé mentioned that it is the intention to build a public information surge capacity, so when, for instance, an UNDAC missions is deployed, there is always a trained media/spokesperson included in the team.

The discussion after the briefing focused on the issue of advocacy and communication in the context of integrated missions, including the role of SRSGs and DSRSGs. NGOs' expressed some concern in this regard.

3: IASC Standard Briefing
(by Marilena Viviani, IASC Secretariat)

- This afternoon at 17h00 the IASC Tsunami Task Force is meeting in Salle VC (Video Conference) of the Palais. Agenda includes: Briefing on the last Global Consortium meeting; Debriefing on the findings of the recent OCHA/UNDGO/UNDP mission to Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives; Briefing on the situation in the Maldives and the challenges for the transition; Proposed mechanism for the allocation of un-earmarked funds - second phase; and the DSS standard briefing on security.
- On 22-23 June the IASC Working Group is meeting at IOM Headquarters in Geneva.

This means that there will be no IASC Weekly meeting on Wednesday the 22nd.

The next IASC Weekly meeting will be on the 29th of June with a proposal from UNHCR to devote the entire meeting to Central Asia, as was suggested in a recent weekly meeting. UNHCR will lead the discussion but we hope that others would join in.

- On Friday the 24th of June there is an HLWG meeting on the Humanitarian Response Review, with a briefing from the HRR consultants team leader Ms. Costanza Adinolfi. The meeting is taking place in Room VIII of the Palais at 9h30.

**IASC Weekly Meeting
15 June 2005
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