



Côte d'Ivoire

Quick facts

Number of IDPs	At least 621,000
Percentage of total population	3.2%
Start of current displacement situation	2002
Peak number of IDPs (and year)	1,100,000 (2003)
New displacement in 2008	700
Returns in 2008	89,000
Causes of displacement	Internal armed conflict, generalised violence
Human development index	166

Over 600,000 people were still displaced in Côte d'Ivoire in 2008, six years after civil war erupted in 2002. The politicisation of ethnicity during the economic decline of the 1990s had caused escalating tensions and eventually armed conflict which led the country to be split between the government-controlled south and the north held by the rebels of the Forces Nouvelles ("New Forces"). Thousands of civilians, especially government and public-sector employees, left the north to seek shelter in the south, mostly within the economic capital Abidjan. Meanwhile, in the western "cocoa belt" of Moyen Cavally and Dix-huit Montagnes, tensions around land between indigenous communities and economic migrants escalated and caused massive displacement.

The 2007 Ouagadougou Peace Agreement gave IDPs real hope for an end to their displacement. However the lack of comprehensive figures on return movements since then does not allow for a clear indication of the number still displaced. In 2006 the national statistical institute ENSEA estimated that there were some 709,000 IDPs in southern regions. Up to the end of 2008 around 70,000 registered IDPs returned to western Côte d'Ivoire and 18,000 civil servants were redeployed in the north, and so at the end of 2008 an estimated 621,000 IDPs remained. However this figure does not include those newly displaced who did not return within the year, and people displaced within the north. The only managed IDP site in the country, the Guiglo transit centre which hosted up to 7,900 IDPs at its peak, closed in July 2008 although some IDPs remained there.

In 2008, new displacement continued in the west, due to land disputes and inter-communal tensions which sometimes followed the return of IDPs. Ongoing tensions over land and property also prevented many from returning. Notwithstanding the progress in implementing the peace accord, political setbacks and continued insecurity in many areas of return helped to prolong the displacement situation. There was limited progress in demobilising and reintegrating rebel troops and pro-government militias, and the presidential elections which had been rescheduled for November 2008 were cancelled once again.

There was in 2008 a resurgence in banditry and armed robberies, especially along highways in the west, which joint government and Forces Nouvelles patrols were unable to address. Displaced women and girls were particularly vulnerable to the widespread threat of sexual violence.

Accessing the basic necessities of life has proved difficult in areas of displacement and return, for IDPs and host communities. Social services are inadequate or absent, particularly in the north and west, and food insecurity is high where displacement has interrupted agricultural cycles. Displaced women and girls have more frequently had to resort to prostitution as a means to ensure they and their family have some income.

Return has been the only durable solution considered thus far, but until the causes of the conflict are addressed, foremost legal identity and access to land, and better services and infrastructure are in place to enable livelihoods for returnees, durable returns are still a distant prospect. The restitution of IDPs' property and access to their land remain politically charged; in the north there are concerns about restitution of property illegally occupied or taken by members of the Forces Nouvelles, and in the west land has been occupied by people who remained in villages, by other IDPs or by newly-arrived migrant workers.

Funding and capacity constraints have generally hampered the provision of assistance. UNHCR heads the only cluster in the country, for the protection sector, while the same model has been adopted for other sectors. In 2008, in response to queries over the operational abilities of the national and district cluster working groups, UNHCR enhanced its field presence by deploying protection monitoring teams to the west and north. However, more efficient coordination and increased staff capacity is still needed.

The Ministry of Solidarity and War Victims is the government's focal point on IDP issues. Its impact is limited by the lack of coordination within the government, institutional support and funding. An inter-ministerial committee set up to coordinate the response to the displacement situation has lacked high-level representation, while the government's focus on reducing foreign debt has come at the expense of financial commitments in support to durable solutions.