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## Côte d'Ivoire: Road to national recovery and durable solutions still long

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*Thanks to some progress in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Peace Accord, internally displaced people (IDPs) in Côte d'Ivoire have continued to return home throughout the second half of 2008. Of over 700,000 counted in just five government-controlled regions in 2005, some 70,000 had returned by the end of September 2008 in the western regions of Moyen Cavally and Dix-Huit Montagnes. Some of the returns, however, have not been sustainable, while displacement has continued to be reported both in the centre-north and the western regions of Côte d'Ivoire.*

*While the political atmosphere has remained generally positive and all parties have continued to support the implementation of the Ouagadougou agreement, potential threats to long-term peace and stability remain. There has been no or little progress in the disarmament of former rebels and the dismantling of militias. Military unrest occurred both in the centre-north and the west throughout 2008 over disarmament and demobilisation. Indeed, with militias still operative in the west, the risk of new displacement has grown while in the north the process for the full hand-over of authority by the Forces Nouvelles remains unclear.*

*Efforts for the redeployment of the administration, although laudable, have been ineffective and human rights abuses have continued with impunity resulting partly from the lack of effective justice mechanisms in former rebel areas. While a date for presidential elections was finally set, technical delays in identification of the population and in voter registration have led the government to postpone them once more to some time in 2009.*

*Both the Ivorian government and the international community have recognised the need to focus on long-term, sustainable and equitable recovery. With the humanitarian community shifting to early recovery programmes and activities, guarantees for the protection of IDPs have been included in the relevant development plans but not necessarily realised on the ground. As highlighted in the UN Development Assistance Framework, internally displaced people will achieve durable solutions only when the root causes of Côte d'Ivoire's conflict are addressed. These include personal identification and access to land. At the same time, special attention should be given to the safeguarding of IDPs' rights in the implementation of all the necessary reforms.*

**Internal displacement in Côte d'Ivoire**

- Areas with known high concentrations of IDPs in host communities
- IDP camp
- Return movements
- Capital city
- Economic capital
- Province capital
- Town, village
- Green line

0 50 100 Km

**IDMC** April 2008



1,079 IDPs in the Centre d'Accueil Temporaire des Déplacés (as of Dec. 2007)\*

Estimates reach from 300,000 - 440,000 (IDMC, forthcoming) to 495,783 (ENSEA, 2006) IDPs

\* Additionally 467 IDPs former residents went back to the CATD in February 2008 as they could not access their plantations since their return in September 2007.

**Total numbers of IDPs**

There are no country-wide statistics on the number of IDPs in Cote d'Ivoire nor comprehensive data on return movements. Humanitarian agencies are therefore retaining the number of 709,000 for planning purposes.

**Sources:**  
 Making Population Estimates and Profiles of Urban IDPs: Case Study of Abidjan (Ivory Coast), Karen Jacobsen, IDMC, NRC (forthcoming); IOM, Dec. 2007; OCHA/EU-Côte d'Ivoire, September 2007; ONUCI, www.onuci.org; ENSEA, March 2006

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the IDMC.

More maps are available on <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>

## Background and causes of displacement

From independence until the 1990s, Côte d'Ivoire was West Africa's most prosperous country. Between 1960 and 1980 both the political pragmatism of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny's autocratic government and a very favourable economic environment contributed to its stability. A key to the economic development of the country was the availability of foreign labour, which was further encouraged by liberal laws on land ownership, under which the land belonged to those cultivating it. However, Houphouët-Boigny's pragmatism and political opportunism failed to tackle existing tensions in any sustainable way (UN Commission on Human Rights, 22 December 2004). Following a sharp decline in the commodity prices of coffee and cocoa, Côte d'Ivoire's main exports, a recession at the end of the 1980s not only hit general standards of living but also exacerbated tensions between locals, internal economic migrants and workers from other West African countries (CRISE, March 2007).

Unable to address the underlying causes of the country's increasing instability, Houphouët-Boigny's successor Henri Konan Bédié started politicising ethnicity in a bid to hang on to power. In 1995, he introduced the concept of "*Ivoirité*", which was used both to exclude political opponents and to mobilise political support against people of foreign origin among an increasingly impoverished population. According to this new concept of national identity, a citizen of Côte d'Ivoire had to be born of Ivorian parents who were members of one of the country's "autochthonous" ethnic groups, had

to belong to one of the country's ethnolinguistic and cultural groups, and had to share the same socio-cultural experience as the Ivorian people. The policy undermined the residence rights of millions of people who had migrated to Côte d'Ivoire from the neighbouring countries throughout the economically prosperous 1960s and 1970s and even during colonial times. Around one quarter of the population of 17 million, especially in the north and west of the country, was increasingly disenfranchised.

As the country's economy declined, people became receptive to the divisive propaganda. Tensions escalated dramatically leading to the country's first ever coup on 24 December 1999 and the consequent presidential elections of October 2000, which were eventually won by Laurent Gbagbo. Like his predecessors, Gbagbo made the issue of nationality central to his political agenda and failed to resolve the growing ethnic and religious divisions across the country (HRW, August 2001). In September 2002, a failed coup by disaffected soldiers set off civil war. Intense fighting left the rebels of the Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire (*Mouvement Patriotique pour la Côte d'Ivoire*, or MPC) in control of much of the centre and the predominantly Muslim north of the country, with government forces holding the largely Christian south. Hundreds of thousands of civilians were displaced, with many seeking refuge in the southern city of Abidjan. Further displacements occurred later that year when two new rebel factions, later to merge with the MPC and to become known as the New Forces (*Forces Nouvelles*), emerged in western Côte d'Ivoire.

Regional and ethnic alliances have played a major role in the development of the Ivorian crisis. Neighbouring countries have reportedly supported the main rebel groups (CASIN, August 2003), while the displacement of many Ivoirians, migrant workers and refugees from neighbouring wars caused population movements that threatened the stability of the entire region. According to a report published by the International Crisis Group, the crisis in Liberia has been one of the main causes of instability in Côte d'Ivoire, as it was used by Liberian president Charles Taylor as a second front against the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) insurgency (ICG, 30 April 2003).

#### *The path to peace*

Several rounds of negotiations ensued over the following years, facilitated by regional and West-African mediators as well as France as former colonial power. The first peace agreement of Linas Marcoussis in 2003 addressed most of the salient underlying causes of the crisis, including the issue of citizenship and land tenure, but the agreement finally failed due to the unclear interests of France as mediator, and due to the power-sharing formula it proposed (GIGA, July 2008). Both the composition of the government of national unity and the choice of prime minister sparked fervent criticisms in Côte d'Ivoire (CASIN, August 2003) and the agreement was only partially implemented.

The Linas Marcoussis Accords and the subsequent Accra and Pretoria agreements prevented new escalations of violence and massive displacement but provided only tenuous hopes for a viable

solution. In contrast, the Ouagadougou Peace Accord, signed in March 2007 under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was praised as a concrete attempt at reviving the peace process (Government of Burkina Faso, 14 January 2008; AU, 19 December 2007). Giving all main players a role, including that of mediator to the government of Burkina Faso, the Ouagadougou Accord appears more realistic as it creates a more viable power-sharing agreement (GIGA, July 2008). However it is still not clear whether the current solution overshadows "existing incentives for the conflict's protagonists to maintain the situation of neither peace nor war" (Conciliation Resources, 2008). With an "economy of war" still pertaining, access to resources such as cocoa enables financial returns significantly higher than the rewards discussed for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR).

Significant progress has been made on the issues highlighted in the Ouagadougou Agreement, including the identification of the population, and preparation for presidential elections. The *Forces Nouvelles* have gradually handed over power to redeployed government officials, customs posts have reopened, and over 600,000 declaratory judgments in lieu of birth certificates have been delivered by mobile courts (UN SC, 10 July 2008).

However, serious constraints remain. No progress has been made on the disarming and dismantling of militias, and lack of funding and disagreements over reintegration arrangements still afflict the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme. The

redeployment of the justice system suffers from these setbacks in the DDR programme and technical delays and resistance from militia groups continued to threaten the November elections (AFP, 14 April 2008). The date of the elections has now been postponed once more to 2009 due to delays especially in the identification of the population and voter registration process (IRIN, 24 October 2008; France 24, 15 October 2008; Reuters, 4 August 2008).

### **Patterns of displacement**

Given the patterns of displacement, with almost all people being hosted by friends and family, and the extreme scarcity of information from the areas under former *Forces Nouvelles* control in the north, reliable statistics about the number of internally displaced people in the whole country are difficult to obtain. A UNFPA-funded survey, carried out by the national statistics agency ENSEA in late 2005 and published in March 2006, put the total number of IDPs in five government-held regions at 709,377. Taking into account reported return movements since the signature of the Ouagadougou Accord in early 2007 (OCHA, October 2008; 30 September 2007; UNOCI, 23 January 2008), the current number is likely to be lower.

The western regions of Moyen-Cavally and Dix-Huit Montagnes witnessed several population movements with the eruption of the crisis in 2002. In some cases, people fled to Abidjan or to the bigger towns of Duékoué, Guiglo and Bloléquin, while others found refuge in nearby villages based on their social affiliation. On the other hand, people (mostly civil servants) displaced from Bouaké and other

towns in the Vallée du Bandama region in centre-north Côte d'Ivoire fled to Abidjan and the political capital Yamoussoukro.

### *New localised displacements*

Rapid assessment reports covering the regions of Moyen Cavally, Dix-Huit Montagnes and Vallée du Bandama have showed that some localities are affected by the phenomenon of "new departures" (NRC, September 2008/Moyen Cavally & Dix-Huit Montagnes; NRC, September 2008/Vallée du Bandama). The findings reflect the perceptions of interviewees on the departure of households from their areas of residence in the three months prior to the interview. Villages where respondents highlighted this phenomenon include Beon-Gohouo, Seba, Dah Zagna, Gozon, Lokosso, Pinhou and Yapleu in the west and Pindikou, Brobo and Djebonoua Villes in the centre-north. Reasons for these departures can vary, but they tend to confirm continuing low-level displacement due to land disputes and inter-community tensions.

In one of the most serious incidents, some 400 people were displaced in September 2008 when inter-community clashes fanned by land disputes between Lobis and Koulangos broke out in the north-eastern village of Marahui (UNOCI, 8 September 2008). Following the destruction of their homes, most of the people displaced, of whom a large percentage were children, sought refuge at the local public school. People were also reportedly displaced to nearby villages. Two weeks later, following a reconciliation meeting between the two communities, a significant number of the displaced were observed returning to

Marahui (UNOCI, 17 September 2008). Similar incidents across the country in 2008 have highlighted land disputes as a cause of displacement (Reuters, 8 October 2008; OCHA, 6 October 2008; UNOCI, 31 January 2008).

### *Urban displacement*

According to studies conducted between 2005 and 2007, internally displaced people in Côte d'Ivoire are largely concentrated in urban areas (ENSEA, 31 March 2006; UNHCR, July 2007; IDMC/Tufts University, September 2008). Of the 700,000 IDPs counted in just five government-controlled regions, up to 500,000 are thought to have found refuge in Abidjan since the beginning of the crisis in 2002. The city exercised a strong pull factor because of its shelter and economic opportunities. Abidjan has traditionally been cosmopolitan and has over the years successfully managed rural-urban and intra-urban migration (UNOWA, October 2007). Apart from a few families who sought refuge in Yamoussoukro, most people who fled northern Côte d'Ivoire, typically civil servants and small entrepreneurs, settled in Abidjan together with others from the troubled regions of Moyen Cavally and Dix-Huit Montagnes in the west.

IDPs were found to have settled in all parts of the city, except for the commune of Treichville, as residential, administrative and industrial areas are mixed together and shanty towns and upscale residential blocks generally coexist. The communes with the highest proportion of IDPs were found to be Yopougon and Abobo, where there is a large property rental market (IDMC/Tufts University, September 2008).

With the majority hosted by family and friends, both IDPs and host communities have experienced the same difficulties of urban poverty and lack of infrastructure. There are, however, notable differences between IDPs and their hosts with regard to their desire to leave Abidjan, their employment situation and the documentation they possess. In these areas, IDPs tend to have more difficulties than non-IDPs (IDMC/Tufts University, September 2008). A study commissioned by UNHCR highlighted how IDPs were more likely to lack identity documents, which had repercussions on the enjoyment of other rights such as freedom of movement (UNHCR, July 2007). Displaced 10-14-year-old girls were found to be under considerable pressure to find income and risk sexual exploitation as waitresses in bars or nightclubs (IRIN, 29 September 2008). A high proportion of IDPs was also among the population of areas such as Abobo and Koumassi affected by the illegal dumping of toxic waste in 2006 (IRIN, 19 August 2008; UN Human Rights Council, 8 August 2008). It is unclear how many IDPs are among the victims and whether their access to compensation may be restricted by their status as IDPs.

### **Return movements**

The signing of the Ouagadougou agreement and the consequent dismantling of the "zone of confidence" between government and rebel-held areas initially led to the expectation that huge numbers of IDPs would go back to their areas of origin (ICRC, 31 May 2007). However, only small-scale return movements have been recorded since then. Generally, however, these movements have been only partially documented and there is no

reliable data on the number of returns. The lack of data is largely due to the complexity of the displacement patterns themselves, as well as a lack of resources. Humanitarian agencies recorded some 70,000 returnees in the west of the country by the end of September 2008, including some 20,000 since the beginning of the year (OCHA, October 2008). “Strengthened coordination between authorities and humanitarian actors” (UN SC, 10 July 2008, para.47) reportedly contributed to the ongoing return of IDPs, although the deployment of mixed government/*Forces Nouvelles* brigades did not make a durable contribution to improved security.

Though presented as a symbol of the success of the peace process (IOM, 1 August 2008), the official closure in July 2008 of the *Centre d'Accueil Temporaire des Déplacés* (CATD), a temporary IDP site in Guiglo in western Côte d'Ivoire, reflected a lack of funding as well as the actual return of most residents. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator clarified that humanitarian organisations would continue to assist those displaced residents who had been unable to return (UNOCI, 6 August 2008).

#### *Obstacles to return*

The limited progress in disarming former rebels and dismantling militias has caused increased instability and military unrest in the centre-north and in the west (IRIN, 1 October 2008; UNOCI, 3 July 2008; AFP, 18 June 2008). Until effective local administration is restored, returnees cannot count on regular services, while law and order are only loosely guaranteed, especially in the north, where violent crime remains widespread and

“human rights abuses are happening with impunity” (IRIN, 30 June 2008).

The final report of the Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire to the UN Security Council, stated that efforts to redeploy the administration to former rebel areas had been positive, but their effectiveness has been limited by the continuing de-facto *Forces Nouvelles* rule. The report highlighted the *Forces Nouvelles*' reluctance to cede powers “as clearly demonstrated by the ineffective presence of Ivorian customs on the northern border with Burkina Faso” (UN SC, 9 October 2008, para.11).

According to UN estimates, only 30 per cent of teachers redeployed to former rebel areas had the proper qualifications (OCHA, 3 July 2008). In some cases, male heads of displaced households have returned alone, leaving their families behind because of the lack of services such as education and healthcare in return areas (IDMC Interviews, Bouaké, 23 September 2007; OCHA, 7 October 2007).

Unresolved land disputes still constitute a source of inter-communal conflict, particularly in western Côte d'Ivoire (UNHCR, 26 March 2008; UNOCI, 23 October 2007). Returnees may be refused access to land by local communities, by other IDPs currently occupying their land (UN SC, 2 January 2008; IASC, 15 August 2007) or by newly arrived migrant workers. Rapid assessments in the Moyen Cavally and Dix-Huit Montagnes regions showed the prevalence of chain displacement, with more than half (and in some areas practically all) of the respondents highlighting the problem (NRC, September 2008/Moyen Cavally & Dix-Huit Montagnes).

The 1998 Rural Land Act aims to improve security of tenure by certifying land rights and clearly demarcating village boundaries. It aims to acknowledge customary rights and translate them into statutory ownership titles. However, its complexity may prevent its effective implementation and the resolution of the frequent land disputes. In September 2008, the government launched a new drive for the delivery of land certificates (Fraternité Matin, 15 September 2008). In this context, careful consideration must be given to the rights of IDPs.

Customary transfers of land and property rights between groups considered indigenous to an area and “foreigners”, including both West African migrant workers and non-local Ivorians, are characteristic of the western regions of Côte d'Ivoire, where the majority of farmers have non-local roots. According to custom, the transfer of rights takes place under the “*tutorat*” patron-client type of relationship. In the context of return, solutions have been negotiated and translated into codes of social integration on an ad hoc village-by-village basis. Since the implementation of the 1998 law, according to which only Ivorian citizens have the right to own land, these codes have been seen as a potential source of additional confusion and renewed conflict (OCHA/EU, September 2007).

Some CATD residents, mostly West African migrant workers but also third- and fourth-generation descendents of Burkinabé and Malian immigrants, were reportedly unable to return, as their plantations around the western town of Bloléquin had been occupied by Guéré indigenous groups (USDoS, March 2008; UNOCI, 15 April 2008). Following rec-

onciliation efforts by government and humanitarian agencies, local youth groups agreed to lay down their arms and allow the return of the IDPs (UN SC, 10 July 2008; UN OCHA, 25 May 2008), but difficulties persisted, especially with regard to the contentious protected forests (UN OCHA, 29 September 2008). By the end of September 2008, some 254 people still remained in the CATD.

### **National and international response**

The declared overarching goal of the government's IDP plan is the return of all displaced people to their original homes. The Ouagadougou Accord focuses on the drafting of a national strategy document to facilitate the return of IDPs, and remains silent on the right to voluntary resettlement in another part of the country, as prescribed in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The government formulated in August 2006 a programme of assistance for the voluntary return of people displaced by the conflict (GoCdi, August 2006), in collaboration with a number of UN agencies and international NGOs; the programme aimed to provide psychological, medical and administrative assistance to returning IDPs while guaranteeing their reintegration in areas of origin.

In mid-2006, the Ministry of Solidarity and War Victims officially took the lead role on IDP issues and tried to coordinate assistance efforts. In July 2007, the Ministry, with the support of the Swedish government and UNDP, launched the return programme's pilot phase, involving assistance to help 4,000 IDPs return to the centre-north regions (UNDP, July 2007). By the end of June 2008, the pro-

ject had provided assistance to some 600 returnees, both accompanied and spontaneous, and supported income-generating activities for IDPs (GoCdI, 4 July 2008). Confusion with parallel Ministry initiatives on compensation mechanisms for war victims has reportedly created a number of obstacles to the implementation of the project (GoCdI, 4 July 2008). Meanwhile, elements of a national legal framework upholding the rights of IDPs, including a draft bill for the protection of IDPs, were still awaiting signature as of September 2008.

Funding constraints have generally affected both the national and the international response to the internal displacement situation in Côte d'Ivoire. With the government's 2008 budget focusing on the organisation of the elections and the settlement of a substantial part of the country's multilateral debt (AfDB/OECD, 2008), it is hardly surprising that no government funding was allocated to the return programme. Meanwhile, allocations from the underfunded emergencies stream of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) have helped to fund relief and protection assistance to IDPs, especially in the west of the country. A \$6.4 million CERF grant at the beginning of 2008 was used to strengthen the humanitarian response in support of return movements in line with the needs expressed in the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) for 2008 (OCHA, 3 July 2008). By 3 November 2008, the CAP had received less than half of its funding requirements (\$23.7 million of an estimated \$58.4 million).

More and more, however, operational agencies have shifted to early recover programmes and activities. The humani-

tarian community will issue an appeal entitled *Common Humanitarian Needs and Funding Gaps* instead of a CAP for 2009. Moreover, in view of OCHA's plans for progressive disengagement in 2009 and the intention of OCHA, and UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) to establish joint field offices, the humanitarian community is planning to focus on identifying and responding to existing assistance and protection needs of IDPs, returnees, refugees and other vulnerable groups in host communities. Organisations like UNDP, the European Union and the World Bank are scaling up their early recovery interventions with varied success. UNDP has set up two trust funds (one for the elections and the other for the larger government programme on crisis recovery) in an effort to facilitate external funding (OCHA, 3 July 2008).

In order to "consolidate peace and contribute to durable and equitable economic recovery" (UN, 3 July 2008), the government and the international community have tried to include guarantees for the sustainable return, resettlement and reintegration of IDPs in the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the period from 2009 to 2013. The UNDAF, the first UN joint planning exercise in Côte d'Ivoire since the crisis, recognises that challenges such as the sustainable return of IDPs will not be resolved if the root causes are not addressed. Foremost among these are legal identity and access to land.

*Note: This is a summary of the IDMC's Internal Displacement profile. The full profile is available online [here](#).*

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## About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people. In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).

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