

TOWARDS DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR DISPLACED IVOIRIANS



Women returnees in the village of Nedrou in the region of Moyen Cavally receive tools and seeds to rebuild their livelihoods.
Photo credit: Thierry Gouegnon/Oxfam

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Disclaimer

The French terms “*autochtones*”, “*allochtones*” and “*allogenes*” are used in this report to refer to the different groups of people living in the country as they are commonly used in Côte d’Ivoire. This does not reflect the policies or the views of Care, DRC and Oxfam.

In the context of the Moyen Cavally region where the study has been conducted, “*autochtones*” refer to the Guere ethnic group, “*allochtones*” to all other Ivoirian ethnic groups who migrated to Moyen Cavally and “*allogenes*” to all the migrants from the ECOWAS countries.

The legal bases for durable solutions for displacements are the *UNHCR Framework on durable solutions* and the *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacements*. The former focuses on promoting durable solutions for refugees and persons of concerns through repatriation to their country of origin, local integration in the country of asylum or resettlement to a third country. The latter articulates the right of internally displaced persons to a durable solution in the Guiding Principles 28-30. Given the scale of returns, the report mainly focuses on these as a durable solution.

The quotes reported in this paper are those of the respondent(s) and do not necessarily reflect the policies or the views of Care, DRC and Oxfam.

Executive Summary

Six months after the resolution of the post-electoral stand-off in Côte d'Ivoire that followed the contested presidential elections of 28 November 2010, a humanitarian crisis of significant proportions remains. Whilst more than 500,000 have returned to their place of origin since the end of the conflict in April, approximately 450,000 Ivoirians remain displaced inside Côte d'Ivoire and in neighbouring countries, and both groups remain in need of enhanced humanitarian assistance and protection.

Oxfam, DRC and Care have all been working in Côte d'Ivoire to provide humanitarian assistance to individuals and communities affected by the crisis, including both those who have returned home and require assistance to rebuild their lives, and those who remain displaced. Recognising the need to listen to and understand the concerns of those affected by the crisis, this study was carried out to better shape the humanitarian response of all actors in the country.

Throughout July and August 2011, 331 interviews and 25 focus groups were carried out with returnees and displaced people in 27 communities in the region of Moyen-Cavally, western Côte d'Ivoire, gathering information on immediate humanitarian needs, perceptions of security, and prospects for the future. These were supplemented by documentary research and interviews with humanitarian actors. Women were the majority of those interviewed, and data collected was disaggregated and analysed by gender.

The results present a picture of a region still struggling to overcome the effects of the post-electoral conflict, and one which will need sustained support for some time to come. Among other things, this report highlights that:

- Security improvements have motivated displaced Ivoirians to return spontaneously, yet heightened intercommunity tensions and land disputes are not conducive to ensuring returns are sustainable. Ongoing intercommunity fighting is also leading to further displacements.
- Beyond security, the three major factors influencing people's willingness to return are the availability of humanitarian assistance in their place of origin, support for transport and accurate information on the conditions of security. The return of civil authorities, disarmament and the reinforcement of security patrols were all also frequently mentioned.
- As many as 22% of displaced people interviewed expressed their intention not to return to their place of origin because of the destruction of their home, insecurity, the trauma they endured or land disputes. They had little or no idea of alternatives available to them.
- Significant humanitarian needs remain in both areas of return and areas of displacement. Food is the overwhelming priority for most respondents, with 77 % of returnees and 83% of displaced people saying they do not have enough to eat, followed by shelter. Serious gaps in provision of education, healthcare and water were all also highlighted in both displacement and return areas.
- Livelihoods are still seriously disrupted with 58% of returnees and 82% of displaced people having completely lost their source of revenue, facing many challenges to rebuild their lives.
- Displaced people and returnees still face significant protection threats due to ongoing intercommunity fighting, racketeering at checkpoints, lack of access to basic services and continued acts of violence, harassment and intimidation by armed people.
- There is very little knowledge about the existence of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and almost no knowledge of how to access it. People seeking redress are facing considerable obstacles as access to justice remains a major challenge.

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While this study cannot provide a comprehensive picture of all needs in western Côte d'Ivoire, nor represent all views from diverse communities, it is clear that despite the end of the conflict and improvements in security, the situation in the west of Côte d'Ivoire is still highly precarious and unstable.

Consultations with displaced people and returnees over the months of July and August reveal that conditions for durable returns are not met. Some returnees continue to suffer attacks, harassment and intimidation, upon return to their home, and many have limited or no access to basic services and protection mechanisms. A large proportion of returnees has lost their documentation and do not have access to property restitution mechanisms or compensation for their losses, while many have also not been able to reunite with family members. Significant numbers of displaced people are still not ready to return for fear of attacks, lack of access to their land and because they lack means for survival.

The ultimate responsibility for the protection of displaced people and the promotion of durable solutions to their displacement rests with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, although there are vital roles for UN agencies, donors and NGOs to play in supporting these efforts. Detailed recommendations to these actors are outlined later in this report, but include:

1. **Ensuring a responsible, sustainable returns policy for those affected by conflict:** a national legal framework should promote the rights of displaced persons and ensure that all returns are voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable. Both better profiling of population flows and much greater information to displaced people will be needed in support of this. Any strategy will need to consider the root causes of conflict, including land issues, and ongoing security concerns.
2. **Enhancing humanitarian assistance and providing greater support to rebuilding livelihoods:** much greater support is needed for both IDPs and returnees, particularly in the west and especially in relation to food, shelter and livelihoods, although significant needs remain in basic services and in ensuring IDP sites meet SPHERE standards. Significant extra donor funding is required to meet the Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan.
3. **Promoting the re-establishment of the rule of law, supporting reconciliation and preventing further violence and displacements:** sustainable returns require security, justice and reconciliation, requiring security reform, the re-establishment of the rule of law, and effective systems of referral and redress. The reinforcement of patrols in insecure zones, the re-establishment of civil authorities, a process of disarmament, demobilisation and reinsertion, as well as better information around the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission are all needed to achieve this.

TOWARDS DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR DISPLACED IVOIRIANS

Six months after the resolution of the post-electoral stand-off that Côte d'Ivoire following the contested presidential elections of 28 November 2010, a humanitarian crisis of significant proportions remains. Whilst more than 500,000¹ have returned to their place of origin since the end of the conflict, 450,000 Ivoirians remain displaced² inside Côte d'Ivoire and in neighbouring countries, and both groups remain in need of enhanced humanitarian assistance and protection.

Those who have returned have been motivated by the general improvement of security, and driven by the lack of access to land, food and income-generating activities on displacement sites. However, they've done so in very precarious conditions, without the support required to ensure that return is a durable solutions and – like those who remain displaced in camps or host families – they remain highly dependent on aid to restore their livelihoods.

BACKGROUND

Context and Scale of Displacement

In the West, the post-electoral violence has been marked by at least three waves³ of displacement. Exacerbating past grievances, the political crisis resulted in inter-community clashes mid December and early January, followed by heavy fighting in the end of February and then in the end of March to early April.

At the peak of the crisis, more than 350,000 people⁴ in the west were forced to flee their homes to seek refuge in spontaneous sites, mostly in religious institutions, or in host families⁵. More than 200,000 people, mostly from the Montagnes and Moyen Cavally regions⁶, fled to neighbouring countries, most notably Liberia.

Waves of spontaneous returns

As early as mid April, spontaneous returns were observed mainly on the axis between Zouan Hounien and Bin Houyé⁷, but since the end of June, the flow of returnees has been steady and spontaneous returns, both internal and external, have been observed throughout the West.

In the west of the country, as many as 227,755⁸ people are estimated to have returned, mostly spontaneously⁹, to their place of origin. According to an assessment conducted by WFP between 24 July and 5 August, more than 60% of IDPs have returned in Moyen Cavally and Montagnes. However, geographical disparities are high. In some places, as much as 90% of the population has

¹ As of 24 September, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 501,441 displaced had returned to their place of origin nationwide; 79,386 external returnees and 422,055 internal returnees. The actual numbers of returnees and IDPs in host families are difficult to measure for lack of systematic profiling and because of the spontaneous nature of most of the current returns.

² As of end of September 2011, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that close to 450,000 Ivoirians remained displaced – 246,846 internally displaced and some 200,000 refugees in neighbouring countries, mainly Liberia (178,035 people) and Ghana. In addition, by mid-2010, UNHCR estimated that some 519,000 people remained internally displaced from the conflict in 2002-2003. Those are not taken into account in the 450,000.

³ The three waves of displacement followed interethnic clashes in December and January; fighting in February and fighting in the end of March.

⁴ Nationally, up to one million people were displaced at the peak of the crisis.

⁵ According to IOM, the number of IDPs in sites represented 10% of the number of IDPs in host families.

⁶ According to UNHCR, as of 25 September, there are 178,035 refugees in Liberia, of which most are from the West (Data from a profiling of the refugee population in Liberia, HCR, Dakar, 26 August 2011). According to UNHCR and IOM, as of 24 September, there are 169,875 internally displaced in the West, of which 20,764 are in sites and 149,111 are in host families.

⁷ A map featuring these towns and the different population movements as of 11 April 2011 can be consulted at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/map_34.pdf

⁸ As of September 24, according to UNHCR and IOM, 148,375 internal returnees and 79,380 external returnees have been registered in the West (Moyen-Cavally, Montagnes and Haut-Sassandra).

⁹ Some organized returns were operated by UNHCR from Danane to the villages between Zouan Hounien and Teapleu and some support is currently provided to spontaneous returnees, at *Pekan barrages*, upon arrival in Côte d'Ivoire at the border with Liberia.

returned, but in others, whole villages remain deserted, largely because of the scale of destruction and for fear of reprisals after a conflict during which political allegiances were assumed on the basis of ethnicity¹⁰.

REASONS FOR RETURN OR CONTINUED DISPLACEMENT

Reasons for return

When returnees interviewed chose to go back in their place of origin, often in areas that are not yet entirely secure, or where stability remains fragile, 31% did so in order to check on their house, assets and land, and 15% to make the most of the remaining of the planting season. Some (21%) of the initial returnees went back first, in pendulum movements between the area of displacement and their place of origin, to validate the security conditions in their home area, “testing the waters” ahead of a permanent return. For many, the decision to return was also prompted by the will to reunite with family members. During the focus group discussions, many women who returned from Liberia stated that the men from their households, especially the young ones, were still staying behind for fear of retaliation.

Perhaps the most important factor underlying the decision to return, however, has been the improvement of security, illustrated for example by the dismantling in late June of unofficial checkpoints, with 77% of returnees interviewed feeling safe in their area of return.

Of those interviewed who remain displaced, 72% were willing to return home at some point, but not yet. While they were waiting for improvements in the situation of their place of origin, many considered the difficulties of being self-reliant in the place of displacement as a ‘push factor’ in their decision to return home, and the need to get their assets back a ‘pull factor’, even if conditions remained otherwise unfavourable.

They say that to decide to go home, they would need the assurance that they will get assistance upon their return (30% of respondents), especially for the rehabilitation of their home. They also need to be reassured on the conditions of security in their village of origin (38%). In focus groups discussions, many women in the displacement sites called for effective disarmament.

*“I won't feel safe until disarmament is effective. The Dozos, they scare me. Who are they reporting to? I wonder. And the FRCI, there is no order whatsoever in this army. I cannot trust them. If you're Guere, they kill you.”
A displaced woman in the camp of Nahibly, Duékoué*

Other respondents mentioned the need for transport and security during the journey to their place of origin.

Reasons for continued displacement

As of 24 September, 20,764 internally displaced people are still living in camps in the West and about 150,000 are still living with host families¹¹. Factors preventing those who would like to return home from doing so include the destruction of homes and facilities in their towns and villages, as well as continuing fears of attacks by armed men, fears of reprisals in their areas of

¹⁰ For more information, please consult “‘They looked at his identity card and shot him dead’: Six months of post-electoral violence in Côte d’Ivoire”, Amnesty International, 25 May 2011, and “We want to go home, but we can’t”: Côte d’Ivoire’s continuing crisis of displacement and insecurity, Amnesty international, 1 August 2011 and 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.

¹¹ According to UNHCR and IOM, as of 24 September, there are 246,846 displaced, of which 25,864 are in sites and 220,982 are in host families nationwide and 169,875 displaced, of which 20,764 are in sites and 149,111 are in host families in the West.

origins, arbitrary arrests, harassment, illegal taxation at roadblocks and in the bush, a lack of revenue, and access to land.

While the majority (72%) of displaced people interviewed expressed their intention to return to their place of origin, they cited the lack of means, including the lack of affordable transport (63%) and fear of insecurity (26%) as the main reasons why they have delayed the decision to return to their village of origin.

For the 22% of respondents who expressed their intention not to return to their place of origin, the main reasons mentioned are the destruction of their home, the lack of security, the desire to forget the events experienced there and issues around the access to their land.

What is clear is that people do not remain displaced because of a desire to take advantage of assistance available in camps. As outlined in the section on humanitarian needs there are major gaps in provision relating to food, shelter and basic services and the climate of fear and insecurity is not conducive to sustainable returns.

Incentives and lack of alternatives

While none of the returnees interviewed say they were forced to return, only 47% said the decision was entirely their own. Up to 15% said that they were told to return, either by national civilian authorities or by the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI), and 10% mentioned difficulties and lack of aid in the area of displacement as the main reasons for returning. Among the difficulties, food is cited as a major concern, especially in Liberia¹². During focus group discussions, many returnees mentioned that they were encouraged by priests and government authorities to return and they were told that they would receive food aid upon their return.

It is also worrying that the number of people returned is considered an indicator of success¹³ in the action plans of the different ministries and authorities, rather than the existence of conditions favourable to sustainable returns. It is important that actors, including national and religious authorities, do not pressure IDPs into returning prematurely for political purposes before the conditions for safe returns exist, as this could provoke further violence and displacement.

"Now we're here, we have lost everything, but no one has come to help us since we arrived. We suffer a lot."

A returnee in the village of Doke, Bolequin Department

Insecurity, fear, rumours and mixed messages

The arrest of Laurent Gbagbo on April 11, 2011 marked the end of the post-electoral violence but not of the ethnic divisions and land disputes that have torn apart communities in the west. The installation of the new government in Abidjan has not put an end to the insecurity in the region. Waves of reprisals attacks, arbitrary arrests, killings, sexual violence, verbal harassment and illegal taxation are keeping people in fear in a region "awash with weapons"¹⁴.

In Côte d'Ivoire, distrust and fear in the aftermath of the conflict has lead to multiple rumours and violence, which in turn leads to further displacement and hinders freedom of movement. Sporadic

¹² For more information, please consult the Oxfam/Care survey report on return intentions of Ivoirian refugees in Liberia published in July 2011 and available here: http://www.oxfamblogs.org/westafrica/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/OXFAM_CARE_SURVEY_REFUGEES_INTENTIONS_OF_MOVEMENTS_FINAL.pdf

¹³ République de Côte d'Ivoire, Programme de travail gouvernemental – matrice d'actions prioritaires juillet-décembre 2011

¹⁴ From the Declaration of the SRSF Choi to the Security Council to present the situation in Côte d'Ivoire following the 28th Report of the Secretary General to the Security Council on UNOCI. According to UNOCI, only 50% of arms have been collected in the West.

attacks¹⁵ and reprisals, on the basis of unresolved land issues and ethnic strife are reported. During the focus groups, both returnees and displaced people also identified the behaviour of the traditional hunters known as “Dozos” and their relationship with the FRCI as a threat.

Returnees mentioned the lack of access to reliable information on the situation in their place of origin as hindering their decision to return. In Liberia, there is no formal communication system¹⁶ in place to inform the refugees about the situation in Côte d’Ivoire and the information they receive is often biased and is politically driven or it is contradictory. New camps are being built where they are encouraged to relocate to, while, in the meantime, Ivoirian authorities are sending several missions to convince the refugees to return and participate to the reconciliation effort.

“Ivoirian authorities come to visit to convince us to return. In the meantime, the UNHCR is building new camps and telling us to regroup there. What are we supposed to think? All these mixed messages, this is confusing.”

*A returnee from Liberia in Toulepleu village,
Toulepleu Department*

Among the people who found refuge in other areas of Côte d’Ivoire, only 21% received information on the situation in their place of origin through on-site consultation or “go and see” visits. 74% of the displaced in camps and 60% of the returnees interviewed relied on their own network to get information on the situation in their place of origin. Information received from the media (15% of respondents), national authorities (11%) and the FRCI (8%) also triggered the

“Pro-Gbagbo leaders told us that there is no peace in Côte d’Ivoire, that if we return, we will be killed.”

A returnee from Liberia in the village of Meo, Toulepleu Department

decision to return. During focus groups, many respondents mentioned that they would need information on humanitarian assistance and services available in their return villages to be better aware of their options. Many displaced people in camps expressed concerns over the lack of information on assistance committed in displacement sites, especially on scheduled food distribution, and on potential camp closure.

CONTINUING HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

In the west of Côte d’Ivoire, the scale of destruction, looting and pillage in the conflict has left many thousands totally deprived and dependent on aid.

Many returnees found their home burned down or damaged and all their assets - tools, household equipment, clothes, food and seed stocks - pillaged.

“We lost everything, even our food reserves.”

*A returnee in Douandrou,
Blelequin Department*

Food security and shelter are primary concerns

Food is a particular concern. A poor harvest has left 30% of rural households food insecure according to WFP/FAO, and returnees are heavily impacted as most of them were not able to plant and harvest crops in time, while a majority also reported having lost their stocks through looting. According to a recovery needs assessment conducted by UNDP in June and July in the west, central west and southwest, the loss of means of production is estimated at more than 50% for cash crops, more than 80% for food crops, over 30% for tools, equipment and other production assets and 25% for fishing equipment. The resources of host

¹⁵ The attacks in Norbertkro and Berkro on 18 July, Bangolo on 24 August, Zriglo on 16 September resulted in the deaths of villagers and in further displacements.

¹⁶ For more information, please consult the Oxfam/Care survey report on return intentions of Ivoirian refugees in Liberia published in July 2011 and available here: http://www.oxfamblogs.org/westafrika/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/OXFAM_CARE_SURVEY_REFUGEES_INTENTIONS_OF_MOVEMENTS_FINAL.pdf

families have also been strained after several months of sharing scarce resources with the displaced in a context of rising prices and economic chaos.

The lean season is expected to last up to six months and the main rice harvest is expected to be very low as many farmers missed the planting season due to their displacement or the lack of cash flow, seeds and tools. Almost three quarters (74%) of the returnees interviewed identified food as their primary need upon return. While 61% of the respondents rely on food aid, 77% say they do not have enough food. To cope with food scarcity, 53% of respondents do not eat regularly – most of them eat once a day and resort to eating manioc and fruits (12%). Amongst displaced communities there are similar gaps in provision: more than half (57%) said that they don't eat regularly and 83% said they don't eat enough. Exchange of sexual favours for food or non food items have been reported both in return and displacement areas.

Shelter is another major challenge hindering returns. 12,600 houses¹⁷ need some sort of rehabilitation in the west but, according to the cluster there are plans to rehabilitate only 1,800 houses¹⁸ Shelter was cited as the primary concern of 15% of the returnees interviewed and almost half the displaced people who expressed their intention not to return cited the destruction of their house as the main reason. More than a third of returnees interviewed (36%) live in a neighbour's house as their own is no longer fit to live in. This is a particular concern for single women heads of household as it exposes them to further protection threats such as sexual abuses. Distribution of tarpaulin and tools to rehabilitate houses are ongoing but the shelter sector is highly unfunded.

Amongst displaced people, 27% of those interviewed complain about inadequate shelter conditions due to overcrowding their exposure to mud and the cold, and the lack of privacy.

Challenged livelihoods

Returnees face serious challenges restarting their economic activities. The supply chain, banking system and commercial activities have been severely disrupted. The lean season has started earlier than usual, staple food prices have increased (up to 14% higher than in 2010 for imported rice at their highest), banks and other credit institutions have not resumed their activities in Blolequin and Toulepleu, and despite progress, markets activities are also not yet back to normal.

Before the crisis most returnees were living off agriculture (54%), small trade (32%) and employment (9%), while only 4% of them had no revenue. Now a significant number (58%) declare having no revenue. The most vulnerable are poorest households who worked on big farms before the crisis and could not find work during this planting season and women head of households, especially when they are newly widowed and lost all the family's assets.

Displaced communities also need livelihood support activities to be self reliant. 82% of displaced people interviewed have no current source of revenue, whilst all claimed to have some before the crisis, with 54% of previously relying on small trade and 42% on agriculture.

Access to basic services remains limited

In Moyen Cavally, the health system is in disrepair. Even after the return of most health workers, the provision of health care is still disrupted. Health centres and hospitals have been looted. The disruption of the supply chain and the lack of accompanying measures to support the free health care initiative led to stock-outs of medicine and dysfunction in the health system. Insecurity and racketeering at official or unofficial checkpoints are also hindering access to health services. During the interviews, 67% of returnees interviewed declared that they don't have access to a functional health centre and rely on mobile clinics operated by NGOs or the ICRC that come once

¹⁷ Data from UNHCR shelter monitors.

¹⁸ According to the Shelter Cluster, plans are underway to rehabilitate 1,800 shelters (ICRC, ADRA, NRC, Solidarités/IOM).

or twice a week depending on the locations. This has dire consequences on maternal health as many women have to deliver without the assistance of skilled personnel. It also means that many ailments that could be cured easily if treated in a timely manner become lethal because people tend to seek medical care as a last resort, when it is too late.

Due to the massive displacement and looting, the education system across the region has also experienced severe problems. An estimated 140,000 children¹⁹ who were enrolled prior to the crisis were still out of school in July. Although teachers and pupils are starting to return, 65% of the returnees interviewed declare that school did not start again and that their children did not go back to school (75%). In the focus groups, some returnees explained that their children did not attend school all year because of the election and post election situation. Some mentioned that their school was occupied by the FRCI²⁰. Many young people mentioned that they dropped out of school because of their displacement and said they could not go back for lack of means to do so. The time of the summer break should be used to support catch-up programmes for children who lost months or even an entire year of learning, and the beginning of the school year 2011/12 set for 22 October is a key moment to provide a return to normalcy for all the children in the region as many risk never going back to school or never catching up.

Water and electricity infrastructure was not spared by fighting. Many villagers found their pumps damaged and their wells contaminated either due to lack of usage and maintenance or because it had been ruined, in some instances by disposed corpses. According to the WASH cluster, about 35% of the pump rehabilitation needs are not covered at this time.

Many returnees mentioned that electricity was not yet functional in their village and that it was a security concern for them. They also mentioned that the radio and phone network was not working everywhere, representing yet another hurdle on their path to normal life.

Those in areas of displacement face similar deprivation. For instance, 41% of those interviewed declared that they don't have access to enough water to meet their daily basic needs. In the sites of Nahibly, Nazareth and UNOCI annex, water and sanitation provision is not adequate²¹. To cope with this deprivation, they go to fetch water outside of the site, at a community well or at the pond.

Although most of the displaced interviewed are in camps where educational services should be offered on site, 45% declare that their children did not go back to school because of the lack of teachers (38%) or of means to pay fees (24%).

PROSPECTS FOR SECURITY AND RECONCILIATION

Community tensions

Intercommunity tensions continue despite the end of the conflict. Guere women in the Nazareth camp in Guiglo and in the Catholic Mission in Duékoué reported in focus group discussions that they are verbally harassed, even stoned, in or on the way to the market.

Existing community tensions have been exacerbated during the electoral and post-electoral process. In many communities, distrust built up and led to the return of some groups faster than

¹⁹ Data from the Education Cluster.

²⁰ At the time of reporting, 5 schools are still occupied by the FRCI in Moyen Cavally.

²¹ On several instances, including during 4 days late August, the displaced had only 3 litres per person per day due to water cuts at the Nahibly camps. At the UNOCI Annex camp in Guiglo, the provision of latrines per persons is well below standards. At the Nazareth Camp, interruption in the supply of water have been observed due to water shortages and cuts in Duékoué and Guiglo hampering efforts to ensure a stable provision through water trucking.

others. Young people, especially young men, are very slow to return. Many fear reprisals, especially during interrogations upon return by FRCI, who target presumed pro-Gbagbo supporters and alleged members of militias in search of arms.

The perception of many displaced people is that their security is not necessarily guaranteed. In focus group discussions, they acknowledge threats, notably in the bush and on secondary roads. They also report that their freedom of movement is hindered due to extortion from armed people at checkpoints on secondary roads and in villages near gold mines.

In the meantime, the FRCI's control of the different parts of Moyen Cavally has reversed the conflict dynamics in place since 2002. While the "allogenes" population feels "liberated and protected" from the harassment and abuses of militias, and feel that they can now re-establish on the land they exploited until 2002 and 2006, the "autochtones" Guere live in fear of reprisals. Many Guere farmers who returned to their village declared that they do not feel safe enough to access their land, for fear of attacks by armed men in the bush or because their land is now occupied. Yet, in the forest, militia groups continue to pose threats to the "allogenes" and "allochtones". Ongoing land disputes in these areas have been exacerbated by the armed conflict, the resulting displacement, and now the return of displaced people. It is feared that the land disputes will multiply as more people return to their place of origin.

***They're occupying our land;
they've burned our camp site. It's
their revenge."***

*A returnee in the village of Goya,
Blequin Department*

Need for civilian authorities, reconciliation efforts and the rule of law

Access to services, resolution of land disputes, and participation in electoral processes may be hampered by the fact that an estimated 80%²² of the displaced have lost civil and land tenure documents. This will play a significant role in the return to normal life of many displaced and returnees.

Civilian authorities are slowly coming back – mainly at the level of the prefect and sub-prefect for now – but their capacity is diminished due to a lack of transport and communication tools, the looting of their archives and the challenge to reclaim a number of prerogatives taken on by the FRCI during the crisis.

***"I hear calls for reconciliation.
What we need is justice.
We won't live together in peace
if there is no justice."***

*A villager in Goya 1,
Guiglo Department*

Up until now, the FRCI are usurping the role of the law enforcement and judicial authorities. The police and "gendarmarie" are slowly coming back but are not effectively operating throughout the region. Allegations continue of intimidation, arbitral arrests, detention, racketeering and acts of violence committed by armed elements. This discourages the reporting of crimes, including sexual violence, especially for

the Guere as they don't necessarily trust the FRCI and often consider them as perpetrators. Most respondents (78%) refer abuses and violence to the chief of villages or to military authorities (10%) for lack of legitimate civilian actor for the referral and redress.

In the regions of Montagnes and Moyen Cavally, the law enforcement and justice system have yet to be fully restructured following the conflict. This complicates the establishment of system of referral and redress, hinders the return of the rule of law and fuels a state of impunity.

Crisis committees set up during the conflict are being replaced by peace committees who work

²² Data provided by the Protection Cluster.

***"I don't mind who the President
is, but he has to show us that
he's our President too."***

I want peace for my children."

*A displaced woman in the Catholic
Mission in Duékoué*

with prefects promoting reconciliation in their constituencies.

Five months after the creation of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a vast majority (72% of both displaced people and returnees) are not aware of its existence, and they don't know how to contact it (72% of returnees and 85% of internally displaced persons).

Conclusion

Despite the end of the conflict and improvements in security, the situation in the west of Côte d'Ivoire is still highly precarious and unstable. Consultations with displaced people and returnees over the months of July and August reveal that the conditions for durable returns to displacement are not yet met.

The following criteria are commonly seen as benchmarks for measuring progress made towards achieving durable solutions²³:

- Formerly displaced persons do not suffer attacks, harassment, intimidation, persecution or any other form of punitive action upon return to their home communities or settlement in other locations
- Formerly displaced persons are not subject to discrimination for reasons related to their displacement
- Formerly displaced persons have full and non-discriminatory access to national and sub-national protection mechanisms, including police and courts
- Formerly displaced persons have access to personal documentation, which typically is needed to access public services, to vote and for administrative purposes
- Formerly displaced persons have access to mechanisms for property restitution or compensation regardless of whether they return or settle in the area where they found refuge or a new location
- Formerly displaced persons enjoy without discrimination an adequate standard of living, including shelter, health care, food, water and other means of survival
- Formerly displaced persons have been able to reunite with family members if they choose to do so
- Formerly displaced persons are able to exercise the right to participate fully and equally in public affairs

Six months after the end of the conflict, far too many returnees continue to suffer attacks, harassment and intimidation, upon return to their homes, and many have limited or no access to basic services and protection mechanisms. A large proportion has lost their documentation and do not have access to property restitution mechanisms or compensation for their losses, while many have not been able to reunite with family members. Significant numbers of displaced people are still not ready to return for fear of attacks, lack of access to their land and because they lack the means for survival.

In this context, there must be a prudent and responsible approach in promoting the return of displaced people. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire, UNOCI, UN agencies, donors, and the entire humanitarian community must support projects to promote durable solutions by addressing the root causes of the conflict, by restoring the rule of law, by ensuring the rehabilitation of public services and security services, by enhancing the provision of humanitarian assistance and livelihood support and supporting sustainable, dignified and voluntary returns.

²³ For more information, please consult the *IASC Framework for durable solutions* and the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacements*, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the priorities identified through consultations with displaced people and returnees:

Above all, it is imperative that all actors should ensure that returns are strictly voluntary, not coerced or forced by a lack of alternatives, and are adequately supported to promote durable solutions for those displaced by conflict, and those returning home.

The ultimate responsibility for the protection of displaced people and the promotion of durable solutions to their displacement rests with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, although there are vital roles for UN agencies, donors and NGOs to play in supporting these efforts.

1. Ensure a responsible, sustainable returns policy for those affected by conflict

- The Government, with support from all actors, should promote a national legal framework and policy to promote and respect the rights of displaced persons and ensure that all returns are voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable.
- The Government, UNHCR and IOM should improve the profiling of population flows to more precisely identify displacement and return movements to ensure better planning and assistance. Profile and monitoring reports should be widely disseminated.
- The Government, UNHCR and IOM should organize information campaigns and “go and see” visits to inform displaced people about the conditions in their area of origins and their options, and to provide them with opportunities to validate this information.
- The Government and UNHCR should explore durable solutions for the people who may choose to relocate or resettle, identify feasible options and inform displaced people about them.
- The Government and the UN should ensure that all stakeholders, including NGOs and civil society organisations, are included in discussions around the development and implementation of all returns policies and development frameworks.
- The UN and all humanitarian actors should ensure that land issues and other conflict dynamics are considered within any strategy developed by the agencies to help IDPs and returnees achieve durable solutions.

2. Enhance humanitarian assistance and provide greater support to rebuild lost livelihoods

- The Government, with support from all actors should support the swift rehabilitation and re-establishment of basic social services.
- The Government and Donors should prioritize support towards the western region in order to respond to the heightened humanitarian needs in that region and prevent further violence and displacement.
- The UN and all humanitarian actors should enhance humanitarian support, in particular prioritising food aid, shelter rehabilitation and livelihood recovery activities, for both IDPs and returnees, ensuring the most vulnerable groups are assisted.
- The UN and all humanitarian actors should maintain or, when necessary, upgrade services in camps to SPHERE standards as long as displaced persons have not found durable solutions to their displacement.

- Donors should increase their funding to ensure that humanitarian needs identified in the Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire +4 Emergency Humanitarian Action Plans are fully funded²⁴ and commit long term funding to ensure stability.
- All actors should take into account conflict dynamics in humanitarian and early recovery response to ensure long term stability, prevent violence and further displacement.

3. Promote the re-establishment of the rule of law, support reconciliation and prevent further violence and displacements

- The Government, with support from UNOCI and donors, should prioritize efforts to restructure the law enforcement and justice system in the west given the longstanding lawlessness that prevailed there.
- The Government should tackle the root causes of the conflict and prevent further displacement by prioritising the resolution of land disputes.
- The Government should launch an information campaign to explain the mandate of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission and ensure that the population, and particularly those affected by the recent crisis, can benefit from it.
- UNOCI; the UN and all humanitarian actors should reinforce protection monitoring.
- Donors, UNOCI and the UN should, in the meantime, promote a system of referral and redress to ensure the population has access to judicial assistance and justice (ie. legal clinics). This is particularly important for the recovery of identity documents lost during the conflict and for the resolution of land disputes that cannot be mediated.
- UNOCI should effectively ensure that deployment and patrols respond to protection needs on the ground. This means that peace keepers need to talk with the communities to understand their protection needs and priorities. Some examples based on this research include more patrols on secondary roads²⁵.
- UNOCI should rapidly implement, in conjunction with the national government, a disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion programme, especially in the West.
- UNOCI and donors should scale up support to the rehabilitation of the civilian authorities' infrastructure (communications, transport, buildings) and reinforce their capacities (vehicles, computers).

²⁴ A of 22 September, the Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan (EHAP) for Côte d'Ivoire and neighbouring countries affected by the crisis is currently funded at 28%, leaving a gap of \$211 million.

²⁵ The UN Policy Framework on the protection of civilians in the context of UN peacekeeping operations recommends consulting with communities and humanitarians to identify their priorities and methods of implementation and offers guidance in preparing relevant strategies to protect civilian populations.

Survey methodology

The information for this report is drawn from a survey carried out in the region of Moyen Cavally, Côte d'Ivoire by Oxfam, DRC and Care between 7 and 13 July 2011, and additional focus group discussions as well as from specific documentary research and interviews with humanitarian actors and authorities conducted in July and August 2011.

During the initial survey, the team interviewed 331 people and conducted 25 focus groups in 27 communities²⁶ of the region of Moyen-Cavally. The interviewees were from 15 ethnic groups although the majority of them were Guere and the majority were women²⁷. The survey focused on areas most populated with internally displaced persons (IDPs) and on returns areas.

In each village, the team sought to meet with the various social groups, including the village chief and the land chief, the notables, members and representatives of “autochtones”, “allogenes” and “allochtones” groups, women and youth.

The team used a methodology based on semi-structured interviews with household representatives (92 IDP households and 127 returnee households; and with key informants (20 IDP key informants; 92 returnee key informants; community leaders, local authorities and camp managers) as well as 25 focus groups (women, men, young people and elders).

The interviews were held based on a list of questions dealing with different issues regarding returns intentions of IDPs in displacement areas and the needs and conditions of returnees in return areas.

The purpose of these interviews was to find out the combination of factors that may have motivated people to return and/or stopped others from returning to date. It aims at serving as a basis for further analysis of the current situation and at facilitating the implementation of durable solutions and reintegration of internally displaced people and returning Ivoirians refugees in Côte d'Ivoire.

Limitations

The villages surveyed in the return areas on the main axis between Guiglo and Toulepleu are traditionally populated in majority by the Guere ethnic group. The other groups (“allogenes” and “allochtones”), stay mostly in the camp sites (“campements”) in the bush or further in the forest. Due to security issues, the research team was not able to reach the camp sites that are located off the main road in the bush.

The survey does not offer an exhaustive dataset, but tries to provide a snapshot of people's perceptions. The events leading up to the displacement although linked to the post-electoral crisis that followed the 28 November 2010 elections have revived historical and deep-seated conflicts. It is hard to guarantee that the views of the respondents represent or are shared by the majority of the people affected by the conflict, particularly on matters related to the source of protection or security threats.

²⁶ In the Département of Duékoué (Mission catholique; Site de Nahibly); in the Département of Guiglo (Goya 1, Goya 2, Yaoude, Site Nazareth, Zouan, Beoua, Kaade, Bedy-Gouazon; in the Département of Bolequin (Bolequin, Denisekro, Ziglo, Zeaglo, Béoué, Douandrou, Gueya, Keibly, Goya, Yoya, Oulai Kpably, Doké); in the Département de Toulepleu (Péhé, Sahibly, Méo, Toulepleu, Toulepleu-village). The choice was made to reflect areas of displacement, areas hosting displaced people and areas of returns.

²⁷ 66% of the IDP households interviewed; 20% of the IDP key informants; 57% of the returnee households; 17% of the returnee key informants were women.