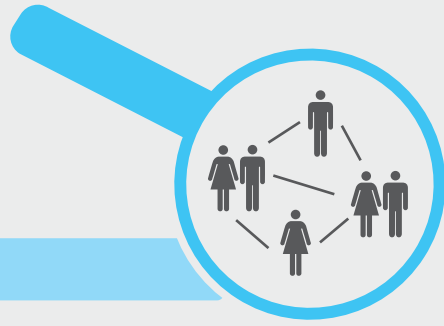


MIGRANTS IN COUNTRIES IN CRISIS

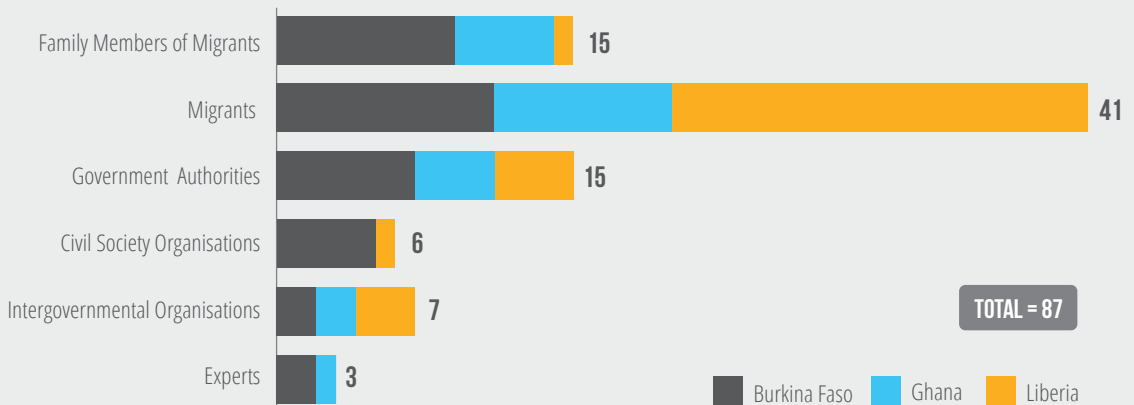
CÔTE D'IVOIRE FACT SHEET



FOCUS

The impact of migrant returns from Côte d'Ivoire on the socio-economic development of Burkina Faso, Ghana and Liberia

INTERVIEW DATA (APRIL – MAY 2016)



CONTEXT

TIMELINE

1950s–1980s:

Immigration-friendly policies boost agricultural production, particularly in cocoa and coffee

1960–1993:

Citizenship, voting and land tenure rights extended to immigrants

1989–1997:

Liberian refugees migrate to Côte d'Ivoire fleeing armed conflict in Liberia

1995–2000:

Restrictions placed on immigrant voting and citizenship rights; notion of 'Ivoirité' invoked

2002:

Disgruntled northern-based soldiers retaliate against state-sanctioned demobilisation and disarmament, beginning of the first crisis

2002–2003:

Government and militia forces recruit foreign mercenaries while also targeting foreign civilians

PRE-CRISIS

DURING CRISIS



MIGRANT RESPONSES

SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITION OF MIGRANTS

- Mostly low-skilled and illiterate Burkinabé labour migrants involved in agriculture, fisheries, livestock, trade
- Large proportion of Ghanaian women involved in trade, some in prostitution; also a small proportion of Ghanaian men involved in fishing and agriculture
- Liberian migrants, of whom a large proportion are rural, agrarian, and low-skilled, involved in informal trading, agriculture and prostitution

Liberian refugees, Burkinabé and Ghanaian labour migrants all reported being negatively impacted by the Ivorian crises. For instance, Liberian migrants who did not speak French, particularly men, or did not have Ivorian identity documents, were perceived as parties to the conflict and were therefore harassed, beaten, or physically attacked. Burkinabé migrants faced similar reprisals after being accused by Ivorian authorities of destabilising the country. For instance, in September 2002, after the outbreak of the rebellion, between 350,000 and 400,000 Burkinabé were forced to flee Côte d'Ivoire for Burkina Faso to escape repression by security forces and militias.

Many able-bodied migrants employed in informal sector work lost their property and means of livelihoods, including shop owners, traders, and cocoa farmers. Furthermore, the uncertainty and trauma associated with crises affected migrants adversely thereby shaping their decisions to return home in large numbers. Although most Burkinabé, Ghanaians and Liberians fled Côte d'Ivoire on their own with minimal support from family, home and host government authorities or international agencies, others relied on these networks for cross-border road and air evacuations, repatriation and reintegration assistance.

Although some returnees resettled relatively easily in regions both similar to and different from their regions of origin, others struggled to access food, shelter, healthcare and education. While some returnees were implicated in land disputes due to long periods away, others found it difficult to seek assistance from neighbours and other community dwellers because they were perceived to be better off than those who had not migrated.



I was selling when the war broke out. I had to run without packing my things.

(Migrant from Ghana, female, 40 years old)



INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

The governments of Burkina Faso, Ghana and Liberia intervened at varying levels during and after the crises. Burkina Faso organised the transportation of approximately 8,850 returnees from Côte d'Ivoire to Burkina Faso through the 'Bayiri Initiative'. In an exercise dubbed 'Operation Quabgo', the Ghana National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO) coordinated activities of the Ghana Navy, Air Force and Immigration Services to screen, identify and register all migrants arriving in the country. And a government agency in Liberia provided reintegration packages to Liberians, referring them to institutions requesting employment of returnees.

Intergovernmental organisations such as IOM also played a prominent role in the evacuation of migrants implicated in the Ivorian crises. Beneficiaries of this support included a mixture of Liberian refugees, Ghanaian and Burkinabé returnees and other third country nationals. While the EU funded evacuation, repatriation and resettlement schemes with large-scale emergency relief channelled through governments and international organisations, other intergovernmental organisations such as UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA intervened directly in early periods of the crisis by providing migrants with school kits, fuel, vaccines, medical consumables, and skills training.

Civic associations located in border villages also helped by negotiating with traditional authorities and community leaders to enable returnees to have access to land, in the case of Burkina Faso. Other civil society organisations, particularly in the capitals of Burkina Faso and Liberia, advocated for the political, economic, social and human rights of returnees through public awareness campaigns. As a case in point, based on advocacy by the Liberia Returnees Network (LRN), UNIDO conducted entrepreneurship training for returnees, subsequently providing them with certification, tools and equipment to secure employment.

LEGAL SITUATION OF MIGRANTS:

- Ghanaian, Liberian and Burkinabé migrants exempted from visas because of ECOWAS free movement of persons protocol
- Many Burkinabé born in Côte d'Ivoire, but not recognised as citizens until after crises
- Some Liberian migrants are refugees from political crises in Liberia
- Many Liberian migrants lack proper identity cards in Côte d'Ivoire



For returnees, we did our best. We asked landowners to find fields for some of them and it was done.

(Traditional chief, male, Burkina Faso)



POLICY LEARNING



I want to see change on how we operate at our border with that mindset of the ECOWAS treaty that talked about free movement.

(Southeast Regional Hub Coordinator, Bureau of Immigration and Naturalisation, Liberia)

Some Burkinabé, Ghanaian and Liberian migrants continued to travel back to Côte d'Ivoire post-crisis primarily to maintain property and investments, particularly in farming. As a case in point, migrants who returned to rural areas in Burkina Faso were more likely to return to Côte d'Ivoire because of limited employment prospects. Those who settled in urban centres in Burkina Faso were more likely to find informal sector employment, based on vocational skills acquired in Côte d'Ivoire. Semi-skilled Burkinabé returnees have contributed meaningfully to socio-economic development by introducing new livelihoods prospects. Similarly, Liberian returnees have brought back specific skills that have contributed to the labour market, but there has been no in-depth follow-up assessment conducted on the impacts of their contributions. This proves that skills acquisition abroad coupled with labour market absorption in the country of origin have a direct bearing on whether or not migrants re-migrate or resettle permanently.

For migrants' families, the abrupt return of their relatives and concomitant loss of remittances increased household expenditure thereby exacerbating tensions between returnees and their familial hosts. Migrant returns put a strain on government budgetary allocations as well. In Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Liberia funding limitations have constrained the ability of government agencies to respond to crises efficiently and in a timely fashion. In response to crisis situations in the past decade, however, NADMO drafted a bill which is before the Ghanaian parliament. Among other provisions, it aims to create a Disaster Management Fund to boost its funding base in order to better deal with crises in the future. It remains clear that sustainable return cannot be guaranteed without financial commitments from donors and governments alike for full economic and social reintegration.

In Burkina Faso, Ghana and Liberia, governments have initiated the formulation and adoption of migration related frameworks, although there still remain gaps in directly addressing migrants caught in crisis situations. For instance, Liberia has yet to pass its Draft National Migration Policy and Ghana's National Migration Policy does not mandate NADMO to evacuate nationals from abroad. Burkina Faso organised a national symposium on migration in 2006 leading to the formulation of the National Strategy of Migration in 2008 and its validation in 2009. Nevertheless, this policy shift does not address directly the dearth of statistical data on the number of Burkinabé abroad, and this gap also rings true in Ghana and Liberia.

The Ivorian crises have generated a number of policy lessons. Diplomatic missions abroad need to be more fully engaged in registering their nationals as well as issuing them with travel documents. From the experience of Ghana and Liberia, it is clear that the construction of purpose-built reception centres comprising a reception unit, psychosocial orientation unit, temporary camp and offices for medics would facilitate screening, profiling and record taking of returnees from countries affected by crises in a more humane manner. Moreover, organisations like the LRN must be actively involved in the creation of these centres because of their intimate knowledge of the needs of returnees.



The international community has to play a responsible role in dealing with crises in Africa. They have to understand our history, our culture, our traditions; otherwise we will be the source of perpetual research [on crisis].

(Deputy Commissioner General of Immigration for Administration, Bureau of Immigration and Naturalisation, Liberia)

