Gulf of Guinea Joint Response Plan

for refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, and host communities

January
December
2024

Benin Response Plan

© UNICEF/UN0794117/Hounkpatin

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

WFP World Food Programme

IOM UN MIGRATION

unicef | for every child

Benin

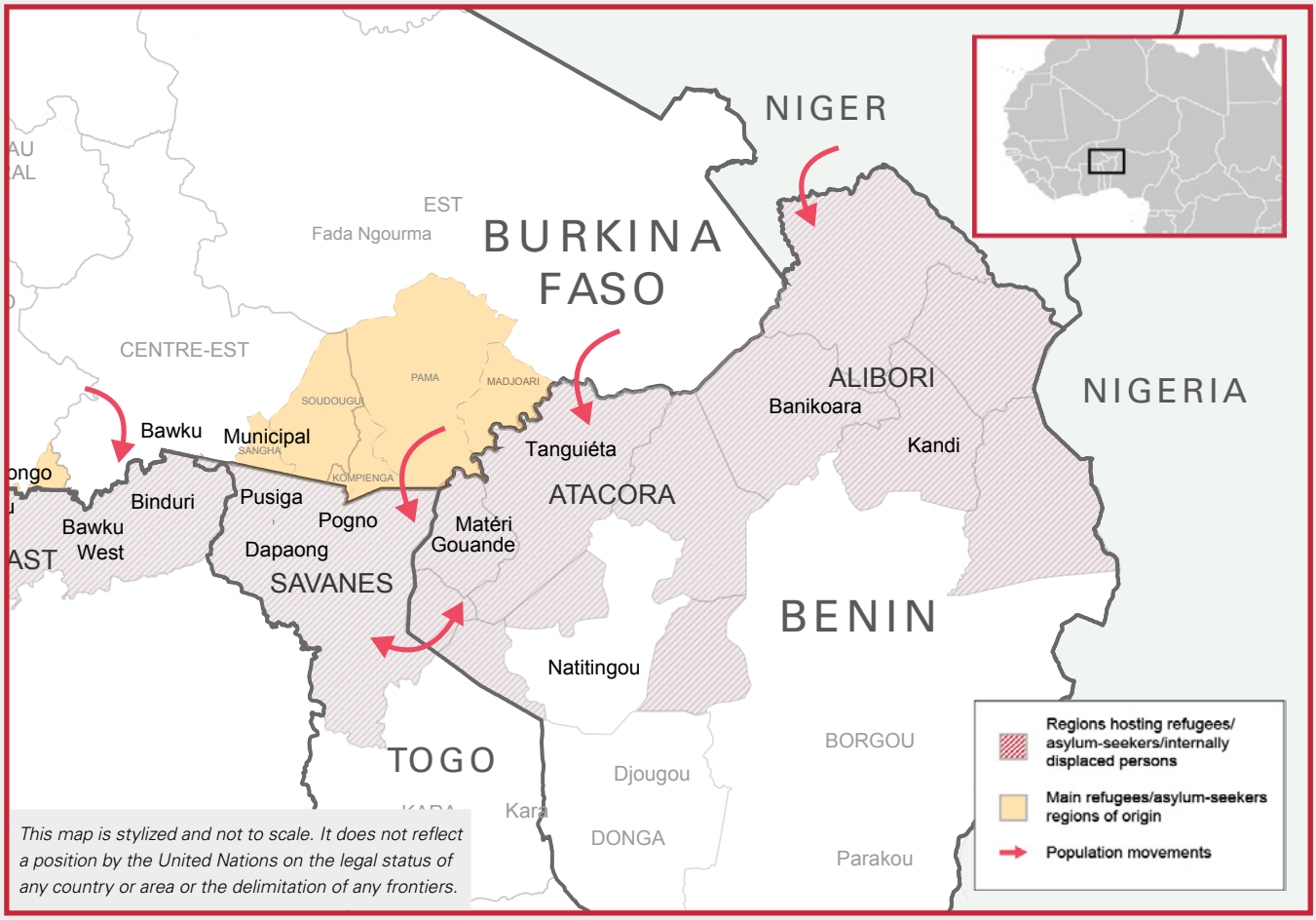
KEY FIGURES

30,000
Projected refugee populations/asylum seekers

15,000
Internally Displaced Persons

50,000
Host-community members to be reached

25,7 USD (millions)
Financial requirements



Population Groups in Affected Regions (Alibori & Atacora)

Population	31 December 2023	Estimated population as of December 2024 (to be reached)
Refugees/asylum-seekers	15,000	30,000
Internally displaced persons	8,785	15,000
Host communities[1]	50,000	50,000
Total	73,785	95,000

© UNICEF/UN0794103/Hounkpatin

On 23 October 2022, Amadou Dann, Chief of the Burkinabe Refugee Association Tanguieta in northern Benin, sits for a portrait.

1 Cadre Harmonisé Novembre 2023 (IPC 3+ population)

UNICEF
On 23 October 2022, Chanta Okidji, the principal of Tchoutchoubou Primary school Group D, in Tanguiéta, northern Benin, stands in front of the classroom where Abasse, 8, a refugee child from Burkina Faso, is enrolled.

Current Situation

The deterioration of the situation in the central Sahel has impacted progressively the northern region of Benin and in particular, populations in the departments of Atacora and Alibori. Communities are already vulnerable to poverty, food insecurity, elevated youth unemployment, and are facing limited access to basic social services, especially for health and nutrition, education, safe water and sanitation. As of December 2023, the northern region of Benin hosted an estimated **15,000** refugees and asylum seekers, 10,510 of whom were officially registered. The National Civil Protection Agency (ANPC) also reported internal displacement of **8,785** people in the departments of Atacora and Alibori as the deterioration of the situation is leading to an increase in forced displacement.

From the start, the government adopted a strategy to accommodate refugees and asylum seekers in host communities. However, since Benin's northern region grapples with significant economic and social development challenges, this situation is exacerbated by existing resource scarcity, particularly in terms of access to drinking water, arable land and limited basic social services.

As part of its response strategy, the country has revised its National Contingency Plan and enhanced the capabilities of its National Civil Protection Agency (ANPC) to better navigate and respond to the evolving circumstances. Humanitarian and development partners are working together to support the authorities in strengthening institutional, community and individual resilience, to work towards stabilizing social cohesion and to link humanitarian, peace and development initiatives.

This one-year joint response plan, endorsed by national authorities, brings together nine humanitarian and development partners.[1] It is the result of a collective process that brought together the authorities, including the National Civil Protection Agency (ANPC), the Permanent Secretary of the National Commission for Refugees and Stateless Persons (SP/CNRA) and under the general direction of the United Nations Resident Coordinator.

This joint plan presents both the needs and the planned responses across all sectors for refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and host communities affected by the situation in the central Sahel. While highlighting the current needs in the north of the country, the plan also ensures linkages between humanitarian and development programmes in support of refugee protection, assistance, community resilience and solutions to enhance social cohesion. This cooperation is in line with the National Contingency Plan and the Refugee Contingency Plan (2023-2024) currently being finalised under the leadership of the permanent secretariat of the National Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons (SP-CNRA). This plan is intended to complement existing intervention in the security, economic and social fields, such as Benin's National Development Plan 2018-2025, the Government Action Programme (PAG 2021-2026), the Sustainable Development Goals, and the United Nations Development Cooperation Framework for Benin. The primary focus of the Gulf of Guinea Joint Response Plan for Ghana is therefore i) to support the establishment and running of the reception centres and settlements; and ii) to simultaneously enhance the absorption capacity of services and food assistance for the most food insecure and vulnerable in the host communities to enable integration and peaceful co-existence. Support will be in the sectors of protection, education, health and nutrition, WASH, food security and social services.

1 Direct Aid, Fundacion educacion y Cooperacion (EDUCO), Havre de Paix National NGO, International Organization for Migration, United Nations High-Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, United Nations Development Programme, World Food Program.

Needs and Vulnerabilities

UN agencies and partners have conducted multisectoral needs and protection assessments that have shown that protection, shelter, food, health, water, and sanitation are among the most urgent assistance needs for refugees, asylum seekers and their hosts in Benin. Two inter-agency missions were organized at country level:

- A multi-sectoral assessment mission was organized in May 2023 upon the request from the government to the United Nations System (UNS) to respond to the situation of new arrivals in Atacora in early 2023, in addition to the Burkinabe already present in the department since 2021
- A joint emergency assessment mission in the department of Alibori to prepare the response to the influx of refugees from Niger was held from 26 August to 1 September 2023

Access to basic services

Education

There are at least 952,766 out-of-school children in the four northern departments (Alibori, Atacora, Bourgou and Donga). Due to the situation in the north of the country, at least 2,607 internally displaced and refugee school-aged children are out of school. Thanks to the actions undertaken, 2,421 children have been reintegrated into host community schools. Nevertheless, 167 schools are in risk zones characterized by their proximity to a border. According to the June 2023 inter-agency multi-sector assessment report, pressing needs in the education sector include:

- Teachers, due to a shortage of teachers and overcrowding in schools.
- Table-benches.
- Temporary learning spaces in certain villages to ensure continuity of learning in the event of shocks.
- Water points in schools, especially in affected areas.
- Psychosocial support for affected pupils through the safe school approach.

WFP/2023

Health and nutrition

According to the provisional results of the latest SMART nutritional survey conducted in five departments in Benin, including the four in the north, the following findings emerged:

- The departments of Donga and Alibori are suffering from 3.5% and 2.5% Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) respectively, putting them above the nutritional emergency threshold, while the department of Atacora has a 2.1% prevalence of SAM.
- Severe Acute Malnutrition affects boys more than girls (2.6% compared to 0.8%).
- Children under 23 months are most vulnerable to malnutrition, with 3.5% of children aged 12 to 23 months and 2.8% of those aged 6 to 11 months suffering from SAM.

Although vaccination coverage is acceptable in the four departments in the north of Benin, it should be noted that the average of complete vaccination rate for children aged between 24 and 35 months remains under the national average (12.8%), reaching only 9.5% in Atacora and 6.3% in Alibori.

Similarly, the incidence of diarrheal diseases is higher than the national average (10.5) in the 4 departments of Alibori, (16.5) Atacora (24) Bourgou 920.8) and Donga (916.9). Atacora has the highest lethality linked to diarrheal diseases in children (4 vs. 3.7 at national level).

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

According to the Multiple Indicators Clusters Survey (MICS) 2021-2022, nationally 48% of the population (37% in urban areas and 63% in rural areas) still practice open defecation, down from 54% in 2015. However, progress is still slow in some affected regions, including Atacora (80%) and Alibori (67%). Moreover, some 43% of people in Alibori and 57% of people in Atacora use improved drinking water sources. New arrivals to areas in the north further stretch the already limited drinking water resources available to both the host community and the displaced population. It also increases the rate of open defecation due to the limited sanitation facilities available.

Food security

The results of the *Cadre Harmonisé* (CH) of November 2023 reveal that nearly 101,000 people will be food insecure across Atacora and Alibori during the lean season (June to August 2024). This indicates a worsening situation compared to the previous findings from 2022[2], reflecting the rise of acute and chronic malnutrition. Moreover, insecurity is likely to impact supply routes, increasing the price of basic food products.

An aggravation of the food and nutritional security situation may have dire long-term effects on households and individuals, particularly on children who are susceptible to stunting and wasting, as well as on pregnant or lactating women. Without assistance, households are likely to adopt negative coping mechanisms to meet these primary needs, which could further fuel conflict and intercommunal tensions, undermining their livelihoods and stability within their communities. It is important to integrate both forcibly displaced populations and host communities in assistance, as both face pressure on their livelihoods and challenges to their food security and nutrition. In this regard, assistance should prioritize households based on their vulnerability rather than their displacement status.

Protection

The SP/CNRA registers and documents new asylum-seekers received in the North through dedicated field missions. Using simplified asylum procedures, 863 asylum-seekers were recognized as refugees by a Ministerial *arrêté on 9 February 2023. A similar group-based recognition is ongoing for an additional 9,392 asylum-seekers. The registration of more asylum seekers is, however, slowed down by the lack of sufficient funding to organize identification and registration missions in the North.*

The security context, combined with growing food insecurity, rising food prices and natural disasters induced by climate change, provides a precarious and fragile environment for children and their families. According to UNICEF estimates, more than 2.3 million people – mainly children, girls and women – are currently at risk in northern Benin, particularly in the departments of Alibori (Banikoara, Karimama, Malanville and Ségbana) and Atacora (Natitingou, Boukoumbé, Cobly, Matéri, Tanguiéta and Kérou).

According to the Multiple Indicators Clusters Survey (MICS) 2021-2022, some 93% children under the age of 5 have been registered at birth. Of these, 84% have a birth certificate, while 9% have been registered but have no birth certificate. The situation does not vary according to the child's sex or age. In 2023, some 374,597 children aged 0-17 received an identity document, including 40,175 children under the age of one (9%). This shows the major challenges involved in registering births and withdrawing certificates, and the urgent need for free civil status for children.

2 Bénin, AGVSAN-SA 2022

Violence, abuse and exploitation against children – especially girls – remain major concerns in Benin, despite efforts by the government and other stakeholders to improve and strengthen the child protection system. Violence against children (VAC) affects over 88% of children in Benin.

According to MICS 2021-2022 data, more than 27% of women aged 20 to 24 were married before the age of 18, compared with only 5% of men in the same age group. Moreover, some 6% of girls were in union before the age of 15, compared to less than 0.3% of men. For women aged 20 to 49, 28.4% were married or in union before the age of 18, with disparities between rural areas (31.7% vs. 24.1% in urban areas); according to level of education, 34.2% for women with pre-primary education or no education at all vs. 6. 9% for those with higher secondary education or more; women living in poor (34.5%) or poorer (35%) households are more likely to enter union early than women living in better-off households (16.5%).

© UNICEF/2023

UNICEF
23 October 2022, Abasse Dahani, 8, sits with his younger brother, Zakari, 3, outside their home in Tanguieta, northern Benin.

Shelter

The accommodation needs of asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs are particularly acute in the north, as some 59% of forcibly displaced persons live with host families, while schools, mosques and churches have become places of shelter for others. Analysis of the data reveals gaps in access to shelters, notably due to frequent flooding and the capacity to meet the growing demand. 71% of respondents believe that shelter capacity is insufficient.

Livelihoods and economic inclusion

According to a rapid evaluation assessment carried out in October 2023, at least 70% of the displaced population have no stable income-generating activity (IGA). Most have turned to agriculture for family consumption to meet their basic needs.

After losing much of their property and income-generating activities, facing higher prices for food and other essentials, and dealing with existing vulnerabilities such as poverty and poor nutritional status, refugees and IDPs require support to meet a variety of basic needs. The arrival of forcibly displaced people also puts a strain on public services in host communities, impacting on access to services not only for the displaced themselves, but also for host communities. The long-term hosting of displaced people within communities could also lead to tensions due to competition for resources. In this context, a social transfer to households are needed to help displaced people and host families meet their basic needs and reduce financial barriers to accessing services. Cash transfers would also prevent them from resorting to negative coping strategies and reduce tensions within the community.

In addition, the region is affected by the adverse effects of climate change. For example, in 2022-2023, Benin experienced one of the worst floods in recent years after heavy rainfall caused rivers to overflow. The northern commune of Karimama was one of the worst-hit areas, with around 15,000 people affected according to the World Weather Attribution. Rising temperatures due to climate change are likely to affect the level and intensity of rainfall in the region, putting northern communities at further risk.

Social cohesion

Social cohesion continues to be affected by the increase in security incidents and the arrival of internally displaced persons and refugees. The implementation of interventions that aim to improve social cohesion – including promoting essential family practices and ensuring the continuity, functionality, and use of essential services by the population (particularly children) – faces several challenges:

- Insufficient capacity of implementing actors to build community resilience.
- Weak coordination of interventions linked to community engagement with other partners.
- Weak coordination of community feedback mechanisms.
- Low inclusion and participation of affected communities, including those affected, in reflection and action to improve their situation.
- Lack of familiarity among communities as it pertains to their rights to request change on issues that affect them.

Part 2- Response Strategy

The one-year Gulf of Guinea Joint Response Plan is an interagency response tool for an immediate and resilience-based response linked to central Sahel crisis and its impact on the immediate hosting communities. It is focused on refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people (IDPs) and host communities receiving these new arrivals. The geographic area for the Joint Response Plan prioritizes northern regions of Benin.

While strengthening the protection environment, the response is designed to bridge the gap between the initial humanitarian and development needs in the North, to enable IDPs, asylum-seekers and refugees to integrate into national services as they live among hosts communities, and to improve access to basic services for host communities. Increasing access to social and basic services for vulnerable populations both from forcibly displaced and host communities will reinforce the host communities' capacity to absorb new arrivals and cope with external shocks and crises. This contributes to building more resilient and shock-responsive systems and reinforces social cohesion among communities.

The response strategy will be structured around four strategic pillars:

Analysis: Evaluation and monitoring Partners will build capacity for data collection, processing, analysis and visualization, enabling more harmonized and rapid inter-agency planning and decision-making in support to the authorities.

Assistance: A common response to emergency situations for faster and more efficient assistance. The partners will pool their human and material resources to ensure that in the event of a sudden shock, the humanitarian community can quickly assist the authorities with specific assistance needs.

Prevention: Community Integration and Resilience. Communities and local authorities in the northern regions are among the first to respond. Partners will build their capacity to identify early risks, take steps to mitigate them, and reduce the strain that an increased influx of displaced persons puts on access to existing basic social services.

Protection: Ensure that all community members are included in an enhanced protection environment. The protection of individuals and communities will remain at the heart of partners' response, ensuring that initiatives are implemented in support to the authorities, civil society and community-based interventions. The response that will be implemented aims to guarantee the full enjoyment of the rights of displaced persons and their host communities, to ensure assistance for immediate essential needs and improved access to basic social services, and to strengthen social cohesion, resilience and self-sufficiency.

1. Analysis: Data Collection and Analysis

Improvement of information management systems

The data on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons aims to improve the capacity of stakeholders for analysis and decision making through strengthened collection, processing, interpretation, and dissemination of information. Several reader friendly dashboards and maps on population figures, static infographics, protection monitoring, operational presence and contact list are produced to ensure that the relevant actors are working with the same or complementary information and baseline data, and that this information is as relevant, accurate and timely as possible. Partners will further improve data analysis through severity of needs, response analysis, protection analysis updates and operational mapping.

Partners will contribute to the GRANIT coastal countries monitoring tool coordinated by OCHA, IOM and REACH by ensuring the quality of the information collected and that the analyses can be carried out through the sectoral working groups[3].

3 Outil de veille multirisques pour les pays côtiers d'Afrique de l'Ouest: Bénin - Côte d'Ivoire - Ghana - Togo (GRANIT) (Au 31 juillet 2023) | OCHA (unocha.org)

Analysis and assessment of essential services capacity in hosting areas

Response actors will continue to assess needs in terms of access to essential services, and will jointly evaluate the state's capacity to respond to those needs, as a foundation upon which to advocate for intervention of actors in Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus.

Border/protection monitoring, registration

Partners will strengthen the monitoring mechanism of population movements and increase awareness and capacity of all actors, including authorities, NGOs, host communities and displaced populations on Benin's obligations regarding forced displacement.

Partners will strengthen the implementation and optimization of the protection monitoring system in localities hosting asylum seekers, displaced populations and refugees and at border crossings, to enhance data collection and assessment activities on protection risks and needs.

Several components of IOM's Displacement Monitoring Matrix (DTM) will be implemented in northern Benin depending on the context and partners' needs. Data will be collected through an extensive and well-established network of community relays and enumerators, in coordination with the relevant national authorities (such as ANPC and SP CNRA). This collaboration between key stakeholders in the field will enable an in-depth analysis of the situation in the north of the country, highlighting mobility trends and the vulnerabilities of people on the move (internally displaced people, migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, transhumant herders, etc.) as well as host communities. Collaboration is also foreseen with actors in Burkina Faso to obtain and provide early warning on population movements by monitoring and exchanging information between UN agencies working on both sides of the border.

WFP/2023

WFP
A cash distribution is organized in Northern region of Benin

©WFP/2023

WFP
Cash distribution

2. Assistance: Coordinated Inmediate Humanitarian Response

Emergency shelter and Core Relief Items

Partners will focus on a multi-purpose cash transfer system to help families improve their shelter conditions or pay rent for a few months. Humanitarian actors will advocate with communal and departmental authorities for land allocation to allow for the construction of semi-durable shelters. They will also strengthen the capacity of communal agents and partners to address housing, land and property issues in situations of forced displacement.

To cover basic and essential needs of displaced populations, humanitarian partners will adopt a hybrid approach consisting of cash based interventions and in-kind distribution depending on the location of the target populations, taking into consideration whether local markets are still functioning and the profile of the populations to be reached (for example: unaccompanied and separated children). From January to October 2023, some 10,718 conflict-affected people, including refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons comprising 2,370 households benefited from non-food item (NFI) kits. Out of this number, 6,245 were children including 2,692 girls and 1,036 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC).

Food and multi-purpose cash assistance (CBT)

Partners are providing a joint emergency response in the form of cash-based assistance through mobile money. The purpose of this response is to address essential needs such as nutrition. A joint essential needs-based approach – **relying on the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) analysis and validated with the government partners** – will help ensure that people can buy what they need the most when they need it. Providing cash to vulnerable households means they can prioritize their own spending and don't need to resort to difficult trade-offs and sell assets to buy necessities. WFP and partners will ensure that crisis-affected populations in targeted areas can meet their basic food and nutrition needs during and after crises. Inclusive assistance will ensure social cohesion and positive reception of displaced populations. Multi-purpose cash assistance also offers improved access to livelihood opportunities.

Food-insecure populations in targeted areas, including school-aged children, will also have access to adequate and nutritious food. Moreover, nutritionally vulnerable populations in targeted areas – including children aged 6–23 months, pregnant and lactating women, and girls – will also have improved nutrition status.

Partners involved: WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR.

3. Prevention: Community Integration and Resilience

Access to basic services

Health and nutrition

UNICEF will continue to support the government through humanitarian partnerships to meet health and nutrition needs in the 10 worst-affected communes in the Alibori and Atacora departments.

This support will include the treatment of severely acutely malnourished children, the reinforcement of active screening for malnutrition, and the strengthening of community health by setting up community platforms to increase the supply of primary health care and referral systems. This will be reflected in the stockpiling of inputs and essential medicines to alleviate the suffering of internally displaced persons and refugees.

Education

Access to education remains a major challenge in Benin's northern regions, with an increasing number of security incidents and threats of repression against school staff. In this context, the response will include the establishment of resilient schools, support to school administrations to recruit volunteer teachers, and the installation of temporary teaching spaces to increase intake capacity.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene

The response in the WASH sector will improve water availability by treating drinking water and providing water transport and storage equipment in Alibori and Atacora departments, where most forcibly displaced persons are being hosted. At the same time, awareness-raising sessions on fecal peril and good water, hygiene and sanitation practices will be reinforced.

Given the influx of forcibly displaced populations, which puts pressure on the already inadequate WASH infrastructure, a large part of the intervention will consist of installing improved latrines and "Tippy Tap" hand-washing facilities, as well as rehabilitating water points that are non-functional or not readily available.

UNHCR/2023

WFP
Beneficiaries of Multi-purpose cash programme in Northern Benin

Climate-resilient agriculture and livelihoods

Partners aim to implement longer-term interventions for education, nutrition and support to small-holder farmers and local procurement. Response partners are utilizing the opportunity presented by the school feeding programme and disaster risk reduction interventions as an entry point to support climate-resilient agriculture and livelihoods for small-holder farmers. Local procurement from small-holder farmers has a potential multiplier effect on local economies and supports the establishment of better-designed food systems that are gender and climate sensitive as well as sustainable. It will be essential to promote access to markets for farmers by creating opportunities for small-holder farmer cooperatives, which will support increased production and investment in solar dryers and appropriate equipment for better livelihoods.

Road Infrastructure

Roads need to be rehabilitated in the northern departments, particularly before, during and after the rainy season. The impassability of the road leads to the inaccessibility of certain areas, further isolating vulnerable communities which are now also facing a deterioration of the security environment. Only 57% of roads assessed in the Atacora department are in poor condition and only 20% are considered acceptable. In Alibori, 50% of the roads are in poor condition. This presents a constraint in terms of access to markets but also access to basic social services such as health, education and civil services. The intervention will focus on strengthening technical capacities and skills at the community level by providing conditional cash transfers to rehabilitate rural feeder roads. These road rehabilitation programs would also support WFP deliveries for the school feeding programme in the north during the rainy season.

Social cohesion and community engagement

Benin's role is essential to contribute to the peace and stability in the region. In this context, strengthening essential social services can contribute to peaceful coexistence. To this end, the partners are working to promote the participation of women and young people as agents of change to become central players in peaceful coexistence initiatives. These initiatives will include mechanisms for dialogue as well as conflict and risk prevention, joint actions between host communities and displaced persons to improve peaceful coexistence, and awareness-raising campaigns with champions of social cohesion to encourage behavioural change. Schools – and in particular the school feeding programme – will be seen as an entry point for large-scale communication and commitment to peaceful coexistence and social cohesion.

So far in 2023, support from partners has helped the government to reach 130,322 community actors (including 67,768 women) through community discussions supported by more than 100 community leaders in at least 291 villages in Banikoara, Matéri and Tanguiéta. In addition, community engagement actions prepared the various stakeholders for the management of crisis situations involving large-scale population movements. These actions concerned the communities of ten municipalities in the Atacora and Alibori departments, and in 2024 they will continue to impact more communities and operationalize best practices in emergency situations.

Community feedback mechanisms were functional, and feedback was received from 854 people, indicating that most of the projects resulted in better psychological care and life-skills training for adolescents.

Partners plan to provide information to 1,469,678 people about prevention and access to essential services. This remaining need is in line with its annual target of 1,600,000 people, including IDPs, asylum seekers and refugees. **Next to communication and information, the UNCT will also set up a Community Feedback Mechanism through the 189 Green Line active to receive and manage feedback and complaints**. By the end of 2024, the UN team aims to assist around 1,600,000 people to be informed about the availability of services offered by UN agencies, as well as other relevant issues such as the complaints and feedback mechanism, gender, PSEA (Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse), etc.

Social protection

Given the already complex food security situation, made more challenging by the influx of refugees and internally displaced people, host families also require support to cover their basic needs. To promote social cohesion, assistance will be provided to host communities through social protection. This program will be implemented jointly by WFP and UNICEF aiming to provide immediate cash assistance to targeted 20,000 community host households (around 100,000 persons) for four months, aligned with or through existing social protection programs, while strengthening national social protection systems to become more shock responsive. The transfer amount is determined using the minimum basket methodology and adjusted to consider national levels of social protection benefits and the national minimum income. Currently the transfer value is estimated at approximately USD 80 per host household per month.

4. Protection

Registration and Status Determination

UNHCR will continue to support the biometric registration of new asylum-seekers, facilitating their freedom of movement in Benin. Building on existing positive practices in Benin, UNHCR will assist the SP/CNRA with the operationalization of simplified asylum procedures to fast track the recognition of Burkinabe refugees and their inclusion in local systems and services, while referring complex cases to individual asylum procedures.

Civil Registration

The legal framework in Benin promotes systematic birth registration in health facilities and a structured declaration procedure. Law no. 2020-34 of 06 January 2021, on special provisions for simplifying and dematerializing the registration of civil status events has changed the registration of civil status events in Benin. UNICEF has supported the development of the procedures manual (SOPs) for the birth registration system in Benin. In view of the planned introduction of one-stop shops in health facilities from 2024 onwards, it will be necessary to support the government in updating the SOPs and training system players in this new mechanism. An analysis of the bottlenecks to the modernization of the civil registry carried out by the Civil Registry Department with support from UNICEF showed that more needs to be done to bring services closer to the people, who are still largely uninformed about the services available and how to access them.

Partners will ensure the registration of all vital events in the refugee's lives, including birth, marriage, divorce, and death, with special emphasis is put on the provision of birth certificates for refugee children. Partners will provide smartphones for birth registration officers, computer equipment for civil registry centers, motorcycles for civil registry agents responsible for collecting completed secure forms.

Gender-Based Violence

Partners intend to ensure social mobilization through community dialogues for the elimination of discriminatory and gender-based social norms and the prevention of gender-based violence, forced child marriage, sexual exploitation and abuse. Community mobilization will also be used to intensify the strategy of identifying vulnerable children, and women, and victims through community mechanisms.

Additional resources are required to maintain and ensure the extension of community mobilization and intensify the use of the nexus approach to reinforce work to prevent gender-based violence in all communes of the 4 northern departments exposed to or affected by insecurity.

Child protection

UNICEF will continue to support capacity-building for institutions and resource persons on the theme of child protection in emergencies. This will involve setting up and supporting emergency child protection subcommittees at all levels of Benin's administrative pyramid. The purchase and distribution of household and dignity kits will undoubtedly bring relief to displaced populations and refugees. Psychosocial support for children and the establishment of children friendly spaces (CFS) will constitute one of the main backbones of the response in the children's sector.

Persons with specific needs

As part of the response, people with disabilities (PWD) will be included in consultations carried out to understand their risks, vulnerabilities, and needs, and to learn how to effectively include them in the response. Based on the evidence gathered, accessibility measures and disability-sensitive accommodations will be put in place to ensure the inclusion and effective participation of people with disabilities. In addition, communication tools and engagement strategies during mobilization will be diversified to ensure that information is accessible to people with different physical disabilities.

In addition, communication methods at distribution sites will be adapted to the needs of people with physical, visual and hearing disabilities. To this end, staff will use illustrative symbols, simple language and provide detailed instructions to accompanying family members of disabled people. Specialized disability support services and disabled people's organizations will also be consulted to ensure the provision of effective inclusive support and services.

5. Country Cross-Cutting Response Priorities

Accountability for Affected Populations (AAP)

Obtaining and responding to community feedback is a key aspect of the work of partners to improve accountability towards affected populations (AAP) and putting affected communities in the centre of humanitarian responses. Community involvement in decision making will be further strengthened through regular consultations on programmes during project implementation and by considering culturally appropriate ways of engaging with affected women, men, boys, and girls. To this purpose, partners will provide trainings to field staff and on AAP, community engagement and Communication with Communities (CwC). Sessions with the communities will be held to discuss the vulnerability criteria for the selection of the beneficiaries, the preferences on the assistance and the delivery modality and the communication channels. partners will also prepare communication materials and visuals to ensure beneficiaries understand the process and their rights.

© UNICEF/UN0794104/Hounkpatin

UNICEF
UNICEF is providing essential support to refugee Burkinabe families through the Social Promotion Centre in Tanguieta, which oversees care for refugees. This includes clothing, basics for cooking and washing, along with support to facilitate school enrolment and health care.

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

Partners will support the elaboration of a national protection strategy for the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and the capacity building of all actors, including authorities, UN agencies, NGOs, host communities and displaced populations.

The government's establishment of social promoting centers, are responsible for coordination of identified GBV and SEA cases in each commune, has supported the adequate management of protection cases. The list of participating members in each commune was published to ensure that cases are referred to the appropriate protection actors.

Other initiatives include continuing capacity building for UN-affiliated personnel to ensure compliance with the UN Standards of Conduct for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the development of community-based complaints mechanisms.

The inter-agency PSEA network will be reinforced and supported to work in close collaboration with those involved in coordinating efforts related to AAP, GBV, child protection and gender-inclusion. Wherever possible, PSEA Focal Points will be appointed in the various sectoral coordination groups to ensure that priority activities for safe programming and mitigation of the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Localization

The proposed intervention will prioritize collaboration and partnership with local non-government organizations (NGOs) that have a strong local presence. This approach aims to leverage their ability to provide contextual knowledge and ability to implement community-specific programmes tailored to community needs. Local NGOs will be encouraged and empowered to play a key role in delivering protection and assistance on the ground. Working with and investing in these local actors as equal and strategic partners will be a priority for an effective emergency response programme.

Partners are working with ANPC to collecting identification data on refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons and host communities. On the nutrition response, the Food and Nutrition Council (SPCAN), the national body in charge of nutrition, manages the operation coordination on the prevention window, together with the Ministry of Health on the treatment side. Implementation will involve different stages, including awareness-raising, community mobilization, and setting up distribution operations at various sites. In close collaboration with partners, including the government, the UN Team will aim to meet the Grand Bargain commitments of promoting localization of humanitarian action by ensuring that local actors are better skilled to regularly assess humanitarian needs and provide an immediate response to the essential needs of displaced communities, and are better represented in coordination bodies at national and sub-national levels.

Climate Action

Access to basic social infrastructure such as water points, latrines, and waste management/recovery will be guaranteed to ensure sanitation in the settlements where displaced populations and host communities live. Partners will promote hygiene and sanitation standards, as well as approaches and technologies for the management and recycling of household, production and biological waste.

Partners will work to establish a mechanism for securing access to resources and opportunities for livelihoods and production. The team will also promote farming and other resource leveraging technologies that comply with environmental and economic sustainability standards. Special attention will be given to climate smart interventions, especially access to energy such as electricity and cooking stoves. Partners will ensure that ecosystems (including classified and community forests, plantations, parks, fields, bodies of water, etc.) and populations are safe and secure to protect the environment and avoid situations of widespread destruction and pollution.

6. Partnership and Coordination Arrangements

The National Agency for Civil Protection (ANPC) and the Permanent Secretariat of the National Commission for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (SP/CNRA), at the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security will coordinate the refugee response at central level, with full delegation to the prefectural regions concerned. The prefects will have full decision-making authority at the regional level, working with the decentralized technical ministries and at municipality level with mayors. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Shock Preparedness and Response (GTIA) supports the existing coordination mechanism. In the field, sectoral working groups led by line ministries and co-led by sectoral leads ensure intra-sector information management and coordination, as well as the mainstreaming of cross cutting issues. At the national level, the Resident Coordinator's office holds a monthly meeting on the refugee situation in the north for the international humanitarian community to exchange and strategize.

In consultation with government authorities, UN agencies will align with existing coordination mechanisms at local level in northern Benin, such as the NGO Round Table, a departmental coordination mechanism, includes 11 sectoral working groups led by organizations in protection, education, health, WASH and other fields. This coordination forum was established in Natitingou by Atacora departmental authorities on 10 March 2023 to coordinate the response to the influx of refugees and asylum-seekers from Burkina Faso.

At national level in Cotonou, SP-CNRA and ANPC are the main governmental interlocutors, as are the prefectural authorities at departmental level. The UN agencies are fully committed to strengthen coordination with the prefectural authorities in the Atacora and Alibori prefectures.

UN agencies are expected to support existing coordination mechanisms in northern Benin as well as in Cotonou in terms of operational guidance and co-financing of inter-agency coordination activities. As part of this plan, the UN agencies will organize capacity-building workshops for humanitarian authorities and partners. In addition, an annual training plan on the coordination of refugee situations will be developed for government authorities and all humanitarian actors.

Under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior and public security, ANPC's mission is to implement government policy on disaster risk management and reduction, acting as Permanent Secretariat for both the Plateforme Nationale de Réduction des Risques de Catastrophes and the Commission Nationale des Réfugiés et des Apatrides. Its mission also includes ensuring the protection of refugees and stateless persons and helping to organize their settlement in the Benin.

At the central level in Cotonou, the UN system, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, has set up the Inter-Agency Working Group on Shock Preparedness and Response (GTIA).

Stakeholders involved in the response

Authorities: National Agency for Civil Protection (ANPC), the Permanent Secretariat of the National Commission for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (SP/CNRA), Ministry of the Interior and Public Security, prefectural authorities (Préfets) at departmental level (préfectures).

National NGOs: Havre de Paix, Caritas Benin, SianSon, Croix Rouge Beninoise, Table ronde des ONG au Nord du Bénin

International NGOs : Educo, Direct AID

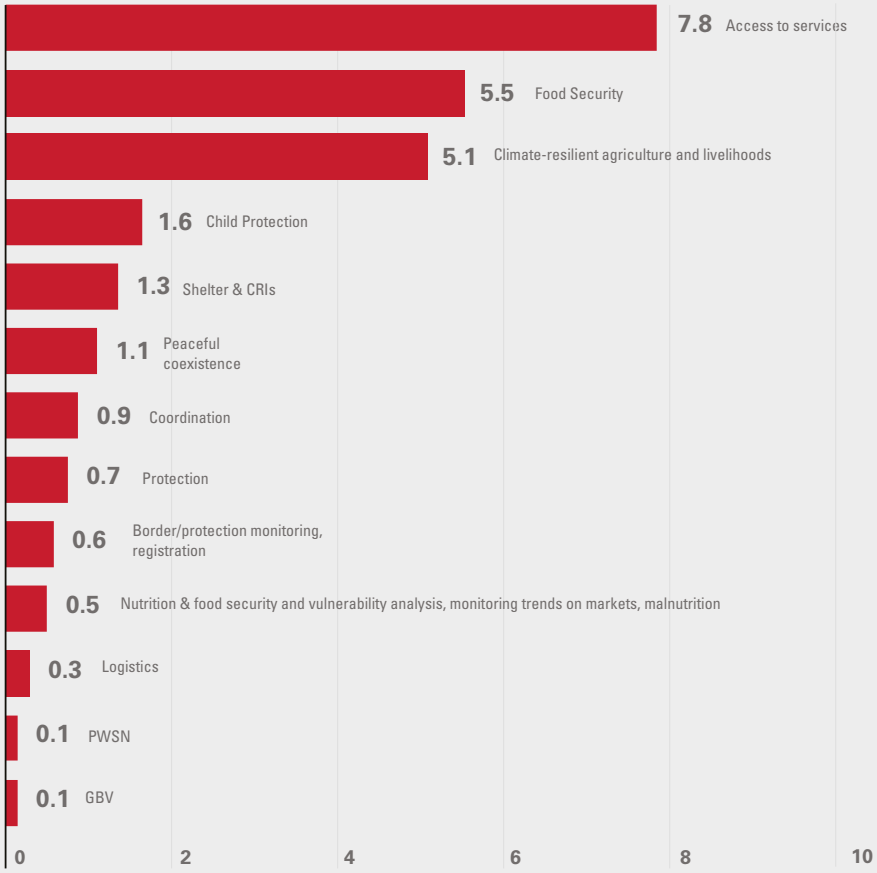
UN agencies: IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, RCO

7. Financial Requirements (USD $)

$ 25,7 USD (millions)

Analyze	Assist	Prevent	Protect	Other
$1,075,000	$8,995,500	$11,800,000	$2,675,200	$1,160,300

Budget Summary by Sector



Budget Summary by Partner

Partner (UN Agencies)	Acronym/Short Title	Requirements in US$
World Food Programme	WFP	10,000,000
United Nations Children's Fund	UNICEF	9,440,000
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	UNHCR	4,766,000
International Organization for Migration	IOM	1,150,000
Total		**25,706,000**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Aude Rigot
Deputy Representative
arigot@unicef.org

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
Ali Mahamat
Representative
mahamata@unhcr.org

World Food Programme (WFP)
Caroline SCHAEFER
Deputy Country Director
caroline.schaefer@wfp.org

International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
Fatou Diallo NDIAYE
Chief of Mission
fendiaye@iom.int

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | WFP World Food Programme | IOM UN MIGRATION | unicef for every child