

# Gulf of Guinea Joint Response Plan 2024

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

February  
2025

## Ghana Response Plan Report

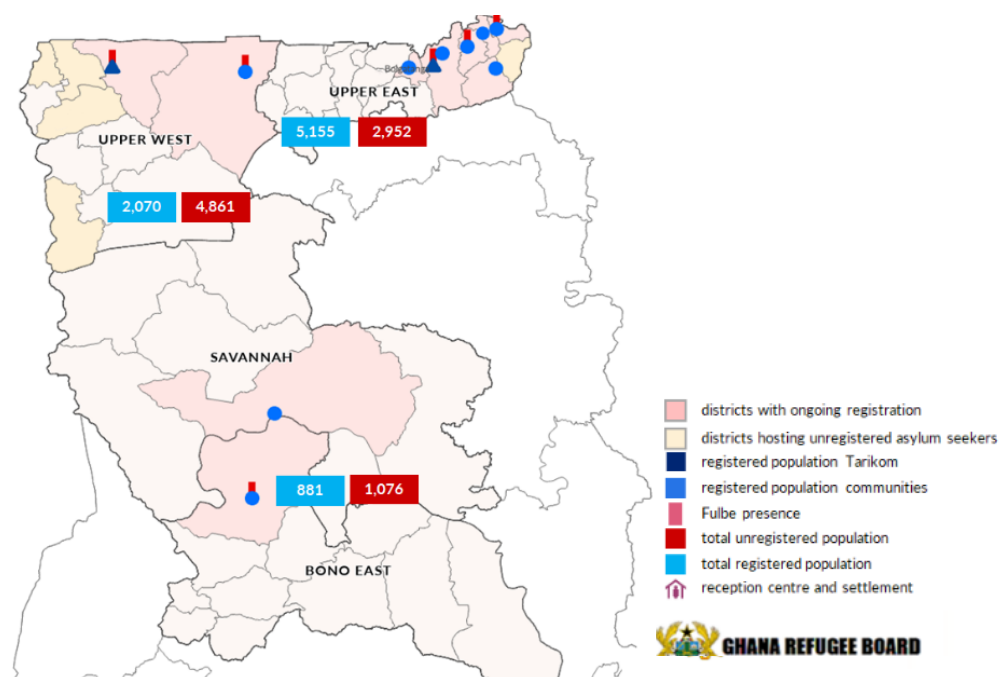


© UNHCR A young girl taking water from a water point in Sapeliga refugee settlement, Upper East region, Ghana.

# 1. Operational context

## MAP POPULATION OF CONCERN

Region	District
Bono East	Kintampo North Municipal
Savannah	Central Gonja
Upper west	Sissala East
Upper west	Sissala West
Upper West	Lambussie-Karni
Upper West	Wa West
Upper West	Jirapa
Upper East	Bawku Municipal
Upper East	Bawku West
Upper East	Bawku West
Upper East	Binduri
Upper East	Garu
Upper East	Nabdram
Upper East	Pusiga
Upper East	Tempene



**Population figures.** The total estimated number of asylum-seekers is more than 17,000 in the Upper East, Upper West, and Bono East (the latest) regions of Ghana by the end of 2024. 9,444 asylum-seekers are registered, the number of individuals awaiting registration is above 7,500. With the deterioration of the security situation in Burkina Faso, an estimated 2,000 more asylum-seekers crossed the border from March to June

### Population Groups in Affected Regions (Upper East & Upper West)

	December 2023	December 2024
Refugees and asylum-seekers - estimate	15,000	17,000
Refugees and asylum-seekers - registered	3,327	9,480



mainly from the western part of the Upper East region in Paga. They arrived in the Savannah and Bono East Regions. The number of new arrivals from Burkina Faso is expected to increase following the fluid security situation in Burkina Faso. The total number of registered refugees and asylum-seekers in the whole of Ghana is more than 17,000 at the end 2024.

**Protection environment analysis.** No refoulement was recorded in Ghana during the reporting period. In 2024, the security situation in Bawku Municipal in the Upper East continued to be tense, marked by ongoing violence between the Kusasi and Mamprusi communities. Tensions were often fueled by ethnic conflicts, political disputes, and traditional leadership issues. Sporadic attacks occurred, including incidents targeting civilians and security personnel. However, the general situation in most host communities remained calm. A survey with asylum-seekers and host community members revealed that 90% of the population reported having positive relationship, which is an indication of a peaceful coexistence.

Asylum seekers continue to enjoy unrestricted access to basic services, including education, health, civil registration, and work. Shared cultural similarities and access to resources such as land and services support this harmony. The construction of nearly permanent structures in several host communities further suggests long-term integration and positive social impact. With many of the asylum-seekers' children yet to be enrolled in school added to the socio-economic vulnerability of their families, the protection monitoring findings indicate that the risk of children engaging in hazardous work in some locations to support needs at home remain high. In essence, Gender Based Violence (GBV) and child protection were the main protection incidents reported. Children in places that are not easily accessible are also at risk of no civil documentation.

## 2. Main achievements

### Pillar 1. Analysis: Data collection and analysis

 <p>FIELD VISITS TO IDENTIFY AND MONITOR PROTECTION NEEDS</p> <p><b>159</b></p>	 <p>COORDINATION MEETINGS WITH AUTHORITIES</p> <p><b>18</b></p>
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### Pillar 2. Assistance: Coordinated immediate humanitarian response

 <p>PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED FOOD SUPPORT</p> <p><b>11,327</b></p>	 <p>PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT</p> <p><b>200</b></p>	 <p>HOUSEHOLDS WHO RECEIVED SHELTER SUPPORT</p> <p><b>958</b></p>	 <p>HOUSEHOLDS WHO RECEIVED NON-FOOD ITEMS KIT</p> <p><b>1,134</b></p>
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### Pillar 3. Prevention: Community integration and resilience

BENEFICIARIES OF ACUTE MALNUTRITION PREVENTION PROGRAMME	CHILDREN (6-59 MONTHS) TREATED FOR SEVERE ACUTE MALNUTRITION TAKEN FOR TREATMENT	CHILDREN VACCINATED AGAINST MEASLES
<b>23,470</b>	<b>6,063</b>	<b>50,999</b>
PEOPLE WITH ACCESS TO DRINKING WATER	CLASSROOMS BUILT/RENOVATED	CHILDREN WITH LEARNING MATERIALS
<b>9,150</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>33,849</b>

### Pillar 4. Protection

REFUGEES REGISTERED ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS	UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN IN ALTERNATIVE CARE	CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACES BUILT & EQUIPPED	COMMUNITY CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEES CREATED/ REACTIVATED	PEOPLE ACCESSING GBV RESPONSE & PREVENTION SERVICES
				
<b>6,117</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1,284</b>





©UNICEF  
Meeting between  
communities and  
UN staff - Sapeliga  
(Ghana)

**Refugee status and registration.** The Ghana Refugee Board (GRB) has granted prima facie refugee recognition for the Burkinabe asylum-seekers. Additionally, in September 2024, the Government of Ghana lifted the ban on registration in host communities with a 30 km caveat as the basis for registration in the communities. Asylum seekers living less than the approved km distance from the border are not to be registered. Following the resumption of registration in the communities, a combined team from GRB and UNHCR fielded a mission to some host communities to register asylum-seekers within the approved limit. The registration was put on hold before Ghana's presidential election and resumed on 16 December 2024. Once registered and documented, asylum-seekers' right to access education, health, and other national services is secured and at par with the host population. GRB continues to sensitize asylum-seekers living in communities below the 30km radius to move further inland.

**Stabilization of the situation in Zini and Tarikom.** Around 2,600 refugees are living in these two sites. Emergency shelters and core relief item needs have been covered for refugees' households living in the two sites as well as dignity kits for vulnerable women. Water availability is 25 litres per person per day. Community latrines have been built although open defecation remains a challenge. In collaboration with the Environmental Health Department, awareness-raising campaigns on hygiene practices have been held regularly. No Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)-related illnesses have been reported.

A total of 547 Households made up of 1,596 individuals benefited from the cash-based transfers, which replaced the wet feeding programme. More than two million USD have been earmarked for food assistance through cash transfers.

The gross enrolment rate for refugee children in Tarikom and Zini is 31% at primary school, which is well below the 2020 regional enrolment rates (94% in Upper East and 102% in Upper West). This is mainly due to the language barrier and the history of some of the children not attending school before they arrived in Ghana. To address this gap, UNHCR and its partner Caritas launched the Complementary Basic Education in both Tarikom and Zini to prepare the children before mainstreaming them into the national educational system. Schoolchildren were supported with learning materials and school uniforms. Teaching materials were supplied to community schools. Capacity building for teachers with specific attention to psychological support was achieved.



©UNHCR  
Refugee children  
– Tarikom (Ghana)

The enrolment of asylum-seekers into the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) is ongoing. Their access to health services through the NHIS guarantees their right to health services on par with Ghanaians. The referral mechanism to district or regional hospitals for appropriate treatment is functional. Children benefited from immunization activities. Support for health services also included capacity building in the framework of the implementation of the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP), as well as supplies of essential equipment and commodities.

A midwifery emergency roster was deployed during a crisis and has been set up in the Upper East and West regions. In both sites, the Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) was 3% (involving 17 cases that were all treated). A nutrition programme is in place (treatment, sensitization, and targeted unconditional food assistance). Unconditional cash transfers to vulnerable asylum-seekers and host community populations have been provided. The food insecurity level (according to a data brief released by the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion Project (SOCO)) is currently 36%. The first livelihood activities have been launched either through multi-purpose cash assistance or the distribution of animals and agricultural inputs.

**Response outside Zini and Tarikom.** WASH services in eight healthcare facilities in communities/districts that are transit routes to Zini and Tarikom have been strengthened. At least 40,000 persons are benefiting from improvements to health services, and 125 healthcare workers were trained to ensure the sustainability of WASH services. In Banu, the mechanization (grid/solar hybrid system) of water facilities has been implemented at the community, school, and health center level. In the Bono East region, essential WASH supplies and non-food items were provided to 891 asylum-seekers. The Ghana Health Service was supported with capacity building, supplies of essential equipment, and commodities to enhance outreach services in the prioritized districts and communities regarding immunization and treatment of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM).

Protection monitoring has been extended to cover 60 communities. Building on the existing Government of Ghana's Integrated Social Services (ISS), various departments of the district assembly have been supported to prioritize social welfare services for the vulnerable populations. In particular, support was provided to include essential emergency preparedness, response, and resilience-building activities in the district costed work plan and various capacity-building efforts for the social service workforce. ISS helps bring together child protection, GBV, social protection, health, education, and justice services at the district level for the most vulnerable populations.

A food security assessment has been implemented to ensure the availability of reliable data on needs with the objective of starting a cash assistance program targeting vulnerable refugees/asylum-seekers and host communities. Additionally, the Solutions and Mobility Index (SMI) has been implemented in Ghana to assess fragility in 175 border communities»

Following the Government's approval for a response outside of Zini and Tarikom settlement during the month of September, partners are continuously strengthening their interventions in the various sectors to target the most vulnerable communities and refugees in close collaboration with authorities.



### 3. Coordination and synergy

**Strengthening the coordination mechanism.** In November 2024, an enhanced coordination structure was adopted. The structure will operate across three levels: national, regional, and district. The three-tiered approach ensures decisions are made at the most appropriate levels. A high-level strategic steering group, composed of heads of participating UN agencies, INGOs, and representatives of Government departments, is established to facilitate decision-making and coordination. The steering group will play a crucial role in monitoring progress at the outcome level, addressing operational challenges, and ensuring that the response remains flexible and adaptive to the changing operational context. The strategic steering group will meet quarterly, with support from the technical experts from UN agencies, INGOs, and Government departments. At the regional and district levels, sectoral groups were established and multisectoral meetings will be held monthly and biweekly, respectively, to share information and look at ways to address challenges and gaps. GRB and UNHCR will lead the overall Coordination at the regional and district levels, while the Sectoral Groups will be co-led by UN agencies/NGOs and Government departments.

Additionally, the roles of traditional councils and the House of Chiefs will be strengthened to enhance their engagement and ensure community-driven solutions are integrated into planning processes. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with traditional leaders and regional coordinating councils was signed to establish a framework for cooperation between UNHCR/Ghana Refugee Board and Regions hosting Burkinabe refugees and asylum-seekers in northern Ghana. This MoU solidifies commitments from all parties and outlines specific roles in the implementation of activities.

**Engagement with development actors.** In April 2024, the European Union Delegation (EUD) in Ghana conducted a joint mission with GRB and JRP partner. Following this mission and joint need identification, and as part of a regional INTPA project, the European Union will support agencies with a 2.5 million Euro budget to strengthen basic services, access to electricity, and permanent shelters in the two sites of Zini and Tarikom. At the end of 2024, discussions were held with the World Bank-funded SOCO project to enhance collaboration and coordination in 2025 and beyond. Discussions are also ongoing for the inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees in the national household registry, a preliminary step to consider refugee inclusion in specific national safety nets.

#### **Expansion of the Joint Response Plan partnership framework.**

The year 2024 has been characterized by an expansion of the Joint Response Plan partnership framework beyond its original composition of participating agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, and WFP). The partnership framework now includes additional UN agencies (UNDP, FAO, UNFPA, UN Women, UN-Habitat), INGOs (CRS, Plan International, World Vision, Qatar Charity, Caritas).



©UNHCR A refugee farmer – Tarikom (Ghana)

## 4. Overview of key needs and priorities in 2025



UNHCR Biometric registration of refugees - Zini (Ghana)

**Finalizing the registration.** There are over 7,500 asylum-seekers who are yet to be registered. The Upper West region hosts the largest number of unregistered asylum-seekers with a total of about 3,500 followed by the Upper East with 3,000 and Bono East with 1,000. In 2025, UNHCR and GRB will prioritize registration in the first quarter of the year to ensure all asylum-seekers are targeted. The registration exercise will need to be merged with enhanced quality data collection on the socio-economic profile of refugees/asylum-seekers to strengthen the decision-making progress of the actors involved in the response.

**Safe and secured cash transfer.** In 2025, WFP plans to facilitate safe and secure cash-based transfers. However, the current tabletop payment method may face the risk of discontinuation unless it is transitioned to mobile money transfers. This concern arises from the safety risks faced by WFP and ABSA bank staff, who are required to carry large sums of money to the Tarikom settlement for disbursement. With the planned expansion of the cash assistance program in Zini and Bono East in 2025, these risks are expected to increase. To address this, UNHCR will collaborate with the Ghana Refugee Board to prioritize granting refugee status to asylum-seekers through prima facie procedures and to help them acquire non-citizen Ghana cards and SIM cards. Obtaining SIM cards will enable a more seamless and secure cash transfer process, reducing the security risks to staff.

**Balance assistance between Zini/Tarikom and other host villages.** While the authorities initially emphasized the need for refugees to go to Tarikom and Zini to be registered and assisted, this approach has progressively and considerably changed. This paradigm shift opens a window of opportunity to accelerate the inclusion of asylum-seekers while supporting the development of hosting regions and villages outside Zini and Tarikom. As well as speeding up the strengthening of basic services in line with national norms and standards and improving access to economic opportunities for refugees and communities in Zini and Tarikom, it is essential to step up drastically the interventions in the other villages hosting refugees and asylum-seekers. Area-based approach programming needs to be strengthened. By tailoring interventions to the specific needs of the various regions, districts, and communities, local authorities can more effectively plan, prioritize, and manage resources. This localized approach will ensure that responses are context sensitive, addressing the unique challenges faced by host communities and refugees in each area. The district assembly and existing community structures including traditional leaders will be crucial to achieving this.



The sheer spread of the over 60 host communities seems to pose a serious challenge to the individual protection response. Challenges remain with the limited resources to address various protection concerns, including gender-based violence, birth registration, family reintegration of unaccompanied and separated children, and prevention of harmful practices such as child marriage, among others.

**Reinforcing access to agricultural economic opportunities.** Humanitarian funds available for the response in the northern regions of the Gulf of Guinea countries are low and will remain so. Accelerating the socio-economic inclusion of refugees already present is the only option. Stabilizing past movements is also the best way to be prepared to manage future ones. A two-pronged approach needs strengthening to address the situation from a humanitarian and sustainable development nexus. The first prong emphasizes a rapid response plan (humanitarian plan) to address immediate needs, such as food, WASH, protection, and healthcare with the added pressure that the presence of refugees and asylum-seekers brings. The second prong focuses on building resilience and sustainable solutions for the affected communities. Agri-business was identified as the most compatible with the refugees' experience and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) in line with Ghana's development agenda. A large majority of Burkinabe asylum-seekers have a rural profile and strong agricultural expertise. All stakeholders agree on the importance of making land available to strengthen the food security of refugees and accelerate the resilience of communities as a whole. The technical agricultural skills of the refugees combined with the availability of agricultural land offer considerable leverage to accelerate the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees and the resilience of the host population.



©WFP Cash based transfer – Tarikom (Ghana)



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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

Olivier Guillaume Beer  
Representative  
[beer@unhcr.org](mailto:beer@unhcr.org)

Needa Juhu-Mazou  
Head of Office – Ghana  
[jehuho@unhcr.org](mailto:jehuho@unhcr.org)

### **World Food Programme (WFP)**

Vimbayi DHLIWAYO  
Emergency coordinator  
[vimbayi.dhliwayo@wfp.org](mailto:vimbayi.dhliwayo@wfp.org)

### **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**

Fiachra McAsey  
Deputy Representative  
[fmcasey@unicef.org](mailto:fmcasey@unicef.org)

### **International Organisation for Migration (IOM)**

Fatou Diallo NDIAYE  
Chief of Mission  
[fndiaye@iom.int](mailto:fndiaye@iom.int)