

Save the Children's Emergency Responses for Conflict-affected Children and Families in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia:

A Summary Appeal for Support – April 4, 2011

The post-electoral violence in Côte d'Ivoire has sparked a major humanitarian crisis. Over 1 million people are displaced from their homes, of whom at least 500,000 are believed to be children. Some 122,000 people from Côte d'Ivoire had crossed into Liberia as of March 31 – often after an exhausting trek through the brush with little food or water. Save the Children is issuing a global appeal for \$40 million in new support to meet the immediate needs of 650,000 displaced and refugee children and families affected by the crisis.



Marie and son Michael eat a meal provided by a Liberian host family. She fled her village in the Côte d'Ivoire with only her son and the clothes on her back, and was lost in the brush for several days before reaching the border and reuniting with her family. Save the Children photo.

Save the Children, which has served the needs of conflict-affected and displaced children and families in the region for two decades, will focus on the immediate health, protection, shelter, water and sanitation, food, nutrition and education needs of those displaced by the crisis, with a special emphasis on reaching the most vulnerable children over the coming six months. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, we propose to allocate \$31 million of our target appeal for programs in Abidjan and its surrounding areas, as well as the west of the country, where the level of violence is high. In **Liberia**, we propose to use \$9 million of our appeal to work in eastern Liberia, where Ivorian refugees are in camps or with host families.

Crisis Conditions and Their Impact on Children and Families

Côte d'Ivoire: Presidential elections which were intended to end nine years of political instability have instead led to civil war. Since December 2010, the country has experienced its worst political crisis, and as a result the lives of millions of people and their livelihoods are at risk.

The clashes, both in Abidjan and in the west and their impact on the population, remain of great concern to the humanitarian community in Côte d'Ivoire and the region. Violence and inter-ethnic confrontations between supporters of the two presidential candidates and tensions between the north and the south of the country persist, and have been made much worse by the extended political crisis. There have been very serious violations of human rights and attacks on civilians. Even before the latest fighting erupted, at least 1 million people were displaced (of whom at least 500,000 are children), mainly from Abidjan and in the west. Continued insecurity in Abidjan, and the reports of massacres and interethnic violence elsewhere, may cause the displacement to be long-term.



Displaced children in Côte d'Ivoire are in grave danger because of a lack of shelter, their exposure to exploitation, and a lack of health services as the violence and instability cause health workers to flee their posts and hospitals and health centers to close. Food security is a major issue, as prices have increased. Families do not have access to cash due to bank closures and loss of livelihoods, and the scarcity of basic foodstuffs in markets. Children in some areas of the country, where malnutrition was already a concern before the crisis, are reportedly only having one meal per day.

In addition to meeting the immediate needs of those displaced, there will be a need to re-start and support the education, health and social services systems. Before the current fighting in Abidjan, over 1 million children were out of school due to the crisis. There have also been outbreaks of cholera, measles and yellow fever.

Liberia: According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some 122,000 Ivorian children and adults had crossed into Liberia as of March 31. Of them, some 60 percent are under age 18. There are serious concerns for the well-being and protection of newly arrived refugee children. Many families have reached the border after days of walking through the bush—they arrive tired, sick and without food or supplies, sometimes even without proper clothing. Some children are separated from their families—and many girls and boys have been through terrifying experiences, including the loss of family members.

Many of the refugees are reluctant to move from the border and surrounding communities to refugee camps. They desire to stay close to the border to monitor changes in the conflict, to be close to family members and because poor host communities inside Liberia are already overflowing with refugees. There are serious strains on shelter, water, sanitation and food resources. Save the Children is also concerned that children who remain close to the border may become targets for recruitment by combatants, are at risk of trafficking or gender-based violence, and could be at risk if the conflict spills over into Liberian border areas.

Save the Children's Response and the Urgent Need to Scale up Our Work

Côte d'Ivoire: Save the Children is launching responses to the massive needs of children and families displaced by the conflict, as well as needs of host families. As the crisis has been ongoing for several months, Save the Children has already initiated a limited response based on funding and staffing to date, including some distributions of food and non-food relief supplies child protection activities and preparations for health work.

Liberia: Save the Children has also begun responding to the refugee crisis, with emergency education activities, a Child-Friendly Space and the identification, registration and referral of vulnerable separate and unaccompanied minors in the Bahn Camp. Child protection and education activities are also being conducted in host communities in Nimba County, along with distribution of school kits. In Grand Gedeh County, Save the Children has proactively scaled up to respond to the crisis. We have a new operational base in Zwedru and are training 14 Child-Friendly Spaces volunteers in Janzon and Tuzon, where locations exist for the immediate launch of child-focused activities that help support the emotional needs of children. And, we have also begun providing relief (clothing and non-food items) to refugees.

Planned Interventions for Children and Their Families

Save the Children will pool contributions to our emergency appeal for direct, on-ground programs in Côte d'Ivoire and inside Liberia, and for the expert staff, technical assistance and other program services this response requires. We will continue to perform assessments of need and, because of the rapidly changing environment in which we are working, will be ready to revise and change our programs contingent on needs and the numbers of those displaced or becoming refugees.

Côte d'Ivoire: Save the Children plans to initiate or expand distributions of aid supplies (food, non-food items and shelter and household kits); address children's protection, health and nutrition, water and sanitation needs; address emergency education; and address livelihoods needs of families. While the majority of these interventions will target those identified as most vulnerable (displaced or host families with children under age 5, pregnant or lactating mothers), there will also be a need to



support the rebuilding of health, education and social sectors across the country.

Our target is to reach 600,000 people, among them 400,000 children. This target may be modified as assessments are done and conditions inform our work. Our main areas of intervention will be in the west (Man, Guiglo, Duékoué, Danané and surrounding areas), and in and around Abidjan. However if the displacement from Abidjan becomes long-term, then we are also ready to adapt plans to respond in other areas where displaced people may be. All of our offices in the country run education, child protection and civil society programs, and these will be expanded or adapted to include issues arising from the humanitarian crisis.

Zaye, 15, fled her village in Côte d'Ivoire when she heard gunshots nearby. At the time, her father was several miles away at the family farm, so she ran alone with her three younger siblings. She is staying with a host family in Liberia, and receives regular visits from Save the Children staff.

Liberia: The UNHCR estimates that at least 150,000 Ivorian refugees will travel across the border into Liberia in the next three months, swelling the total refugee population to more than 250,000. The great majority of the refugees are expected to cross the border into Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties, where Save the Children is already operational.

Funds from our appeal will enable Save the Children to scale-up and focus our response during the coming months. We will seek to reach a minimum of 50,000 children and adults; this target may be modified as assessments are done and conditions inform our work. Our priorities will center on ensuring that children have access to adequate protection from abuse, exploitation, and family separation, receive appropriate psychosocial care and support and ensuring that children are able to access safe and quality education.

Save the Children's Experience and Regional Presence

Save the Children has worked in Côte d'Ivoire since 1996, when we began providing support to children and their families fleeing the war in Liberia. We maintained our presence in Côte d'Ivoire during the 2002 crisis in the country and its aftermath, protecting children against violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, and working on family reunification. Our protection work with local communities has contributed to the care and social reintegration of over 5,000 children directly affected by the 2002 conflict. Since 2005, our programs have evolved into longer-term development, focusing on children's need for protection during the transition period from conflict to peace. To date we have contributed to the establishment of over 100 community-based Child Protection Committees and Children's Groups across the country. Since 2008, our protection program also includes a large focus on protection of orphans and vulnerable children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. We began our education program in 2006, and to date have provided access to quality education to over 440,000 children. We also have a child rights program focusing on building capacity of local civil society to improve their promotion and defense of children's rights.

Save the Children arrived in Liberia in 1991 to address the immediate needs of conflict-affected children. Through our work we have developed a strong relationship with local non-governmental organizations and communities in Liberia. Since the end of the

conflict in 2003, we have supported over 6,000 children associated with armed forces and groups to deal with their often horrific experiences and to rejoin their families and communities. Between 2005 and 2010 Save the Children implemented a child protection program in three counties, focusing on reducing vulnerability for Liberian adolescent youth and girls through livelihood support, border monitoring and strengthening of child protection reporting through the creation of local child welfare committees and children's clubs.

We have also renovated, constructed and furnished schools to increase children's access to education; trained teachers and provided education kits; and strengthened community structures for school management to improve the quality of education.



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