



# MIGRANTS REFUGEES

## Migration Profile

### IVORY COAST

#### A. Executive Summary

Once hailed as a model of stability in the surrounding region, Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire) enjoyed political stability since it gained independence from France in 1960 up until 2002, when the country was split into two. Violence continued amidst successive peace deals up until the presidential election in 2020. Despite these challenges, the country enjoys robust economic growth and is considered one of Africa's leading producers of cash crops like cocoa, rubber, pineapple, banana, cotton, coffee, cola nut, and rubber. Ivory Coast is the largest producer and exporter of cocoa beans globally and remains an economic hub in francophone West Africa. Agriculture remains the main economic activity in Ivory Coast - constituting 21.2% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employing 46% of the labour force. The majority of the national population is located in and around cities along the Atlantic Coast. Population is sparse in the Northern Savannah, which covers the upper half of the country, with some higher concentrations along migration corridors.

Before COVID-19, Ivory Coast had one of the most robust economies in Africa and in the world, with an annual average growth rate of 8% since 2012, driven by a middle class that maintains demand in all sectors of the economy. However, the effects of the pandemic on businesses and households slowed the growth rate to 1.8% in 2020. The Human Development Index (HDI) for Ivory Coast in 2020 stood at 0.538, and the country is ranked 162 out of 188 countries.

Since its independence in 1960, Ivory Coast has been hailed as the top migration destination country in West Africa - especially among labour migrants and refugees. With the tensions in the country from 2002 until the 2020 presidential election, immigration has declined. However, Ivory Coast remains among the top ten migration corridors in Western Africa, and is host to the highest number of migrants (2,564,857) in the region.

#### B. Country Profile

##### I. Basic Information

Ivory Coast was a French protectorate territory from 1884 until the country got its independence in 1960. It is located in West Africa with a total area of 322,463 km<sup>2</sup> and an estimated population of more than 26 million people. It is bordered to the west by Liberia and Guinea, to the east by Ghana, and to the north by Mali and Burkina Faso. The capital city of Ivory Coast is Yamoussoukro, and its economic capital is Abidjan, which is also the

country's most populated city, with more than 3 million inhabitants. The country has roughly 60 different dialects, and French is its official language. It has a heterogeneous population divided into the following groups: Akan (28.9%); Voltaique or Gur (16.1%); Northern Mande (14.5%); Kru (8.5%); Southern Mande (6.9%); unspecified (0.9%); and non-Ivorian (24.2%). The religious affiliation of the population is as follows: Muslim (42.9%); Catholic (17.2%); Evangelical (11.8%); Methodist (1.7%); other Christians (3.2%); animist (3.6%); other religions (0.5%); and none (19.1%).

## **II. International and Internal Migrants**

Internal migration was encouraged in the 1960s in Ivory Coast, when the country enjoyed economic prosperity. As in most parts of Africa, Ivory Coast has experienced rural-urban migration. This movement has contributed massively to the urbanisation of Ivorian cities, with more than 50% of its population now living in urban areas. There is no recent data on internal migration within Ivory Coast. The 1998 Ivorian census data indicates that there were 4,405,328 internal migrants in Ivory Coast - constituting 28.7% of the total population. At that time, the majority of these migrants were reported as living in cities. Due to customs of exogamic marriage and helping parents in the household, women are more likely than men to engage in internal migration. An estimated 50.5% of internal migrants were female. However, as a result of urban poverty, there has recently been an increasing degree of internal migration from urban to rural areas. Between 2002 and 2015, the rate of urban poverty in Ivory Coast grew substantially from 24.5% to 35.9%.

Since 2012, Ivory Coast has enjoyed robust and stable economic growth and remains an economic hub in francophone West Africa, attracting millions of migrants from across the region. Ivory Coast constitutes one of the top ten migration corridors in Western Africa, and is the number one destination country for migrants within Western Africa. As of mid-2020, Ivory Coast was host to 2,564,857 million migrants that constitute 9.7% of the population. The migration corridor from Burkina Faso to Ivory Coast had the largest number of migrants - 1,376,3540 migrants, followed by Mali with 522,146 migrants, and Guinea with 167,516 migrants. Like other regions in Africa, migration within this region is highly influenced by economic factors, including the prospects of finding work in the host country, economic hardship and poverty in the home country, and business prospects in the host country. Other remote factors include educational opportunities and family reunification. Migration within the region is partly influenced by an aspiration for regional economic integration, contributing to free movement of people within the region and the right to residency and establishment within the framework of the regional organisation of ECOWAS.

## **III. Emigration and Skilled Migration**

According to the global economy index, Ivory Coast experienced a decline in its flight and brain drain index from 7.30 in 2017 to 6.40 in 2021. As of mid-2020, there were 1.1 million Ivorian emigrants across the globe. The top countries of destination of Ivorians include Burkina Faso (557,732), Mali (188,250), France (99,031), Ghana (72,728), and Benin (33,996). Among Ivorian emigrants, 47.6% had received a lower level of education, while 30.7% had received higher education. These include medical doctors, nurses, and those involved in the manufacturing, distribution, and services activities. Despite the decline in personal

remittances from 2011, emigrants contributed 0.528% of the GDP in 2020 in the form of personal remittance payments.

#### **IV. Forced Migrants (Internally Displaced Persons, Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Climate Displaced Persons)**

Despite political tensions and social unrest in its past, Ivory Coast has kept its borders open to those seeking protection. Recently, there have been a greater number of refugees leaving Ivory Coast than entering. As of January 2021, there were 25,597 refugees who fled Ivory Coast to Liberia, Guinea, Ghana, and Togo. Liberia currently hosts 95% (24,234) of them. As of June 30, 2021, there were 1,167 refugees and 401 asylum seekers in Ivory Coast. The majority of them come from the Central African Republic (506), the Syrian Arab Republic (142), the Democratic Republic of Congo (132), Congo (86), Liberia (72), and Rwanda (55). A total of 174 are unspecified. The Ivorian government encourages refugees to integrate locally rather than placing them in camps. However, there are some refugee camps located in certain parts of the country. For example, there is a transit refugee camp in Tabou – designated solely for refugees in transit, and another in Peacetown in Niela, near Guiglo.

Internal displacement in Ivory Coast is primarily caused by conflict and violence. As of 2020, there were 308,000 people displaced by conflicts and violence, as well as 70 people displaced by natural disasters. As was the case with the aftermath of the presidential election in 2010-2011, the 2020 presidential election led the country yet into another period of post-election violence, causing massive internal displacement. This post-election violence has resulted in thousands of IDPs within Ivory Coast, mostly in the western region of the country. As of November 2020, the UN agencies and the Ivorian government had recorded 5,530 new IDPs within the country. Women in Ivory Coast have borne the brunt of internal displacement, as displacement caused by conflict and violence exposes women to human rights violation and adversely affects their sources of livelihood, since conflict results in the destruction of production capital.

#### **V. Victims of Human Trafficking**

Ivory Coast is ranked Tier 2 in the Trafficking in Person Report 2021, as the country does not meet the minimum standard for the cancellation of human trafficking activities. However, the government is making a significant effort to meet the minimum standards. Ivory Coast is a source, transit, and destination country of victims of human trafficking, specifically forced labour, sex trafficking, and to a lesser extent, drug trafficking. At the international level, Ivory Coast has established a formal agreement with other countries to combat human and child trafficking, including Burkina Faso. The government runs shelters for child victims of exploitation in Soubre and refers child trafficking victims to NGOs for long-term care. However, there is limited support for adults, making them vulnerable to re-victimisation. The majority of victims identified are children. Traffickers exploit Ivorian women and girls in forced labour in domestic service, restaurants, and sex trafficking. Traffickers exploit Ivorian and Burkinabe boys in forced labour in the agricultural and service industries, especially in cocoa production. Victims of human trafficking in Ivory Coast come from rural parts of the country, as well as Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Morocco, and China. They are mostly located in Abidjan, northern and central Ivory Coast,

and western mining regions, particularly near the gold mines in Tengrela. Nigeria human trafficking victims transit Ivory Coast en route to exploitation in sex trafficking in Asia, the United Arab Emirates, and North Africa. Religious leaders also recruit women and girls for work in the Middle East and Europe.

## **VI. National Legal Framework**

The most relevant law governing the identification of persons and the stay of foreigners in Ivory Coast relates to the migration policy, enshrined in Law No. 2004-303 of 2004, which amended Law No. 90-437 of May 29, 1990 on the entry and stay of foreigners in Ivory Coast. Law No. 2016-1111 is Ivory Coast's law against human trafficking, and Law No. 2018-571, combatting the smuggling of migrants, is operational. The asylum law in Ivory Coast is still in draft form and yet to be adopted. While legislation has not been passed, the Government has made progress in establishing the 2021-2025 sustainable development cooperation framework in collaboration with the UN. This framework is derived from the National Development Plan, and formally includes refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless persons in relation to gender discrimination, access to education, and inclusive governance. In September 2020, Ivory Coast became the first country in Africa to adopt stateless determination procedures.

At the regional level, Ivory Coast is a Member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). One of the main objectives of ECOWAS is to facilitate the movement of people within the region and ultimately remove obstacles to the free movement of goods and services, capital, and labour. Migrants have access to all public health and education services, regardless of their status. However, migrants are not eligible for the medical assistance scheme financed by the state. Regarding tertiary education, tuition fees for international students are often higher than for nationals, depending on whether they are ECOWAS nationals or not. In line with the 1999 social security code, all workers in Ivory Coast, regardless of their nationality, are entitled to the benefits of the National Security Fund (*Caisse Nationale de Prévoyance Sociale, CNPS*). Ivory Coast has agreements on the portability of retirement pensions with countries such as Burkina Faso. However, migrants do not have access to the government's social housing programme and are not able to be employed in the civil service. Ivory Coast grants nationality to migrants through marriage, naturalisation, declaration, and adoption.

In 1961, Ivory Coast ratified the 1961 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Geneva Convention). In 1991, the country ratified the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In 1998, Ivory Coast ratified the 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problem in Africa. In 2013, the country ratified the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention), the 1954 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and the 1961 United Nations Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

## **VII. Main Actors**

*The State*

Within the Ministry of Development and Planning (*Ministère du Plan et du Développement*), the National Population Office is responsible for the implementation of the National Population Policy that encompasses the migration policy. Among its objectives, this framework aims to manage migration as an opportunity for sustainable development.

Administrative and security-related immigration issues are under the purview of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (*Ministère de l'Administration du Territoire et de la Décentralisation*). The Ministry for African Integration and Ivoirians Abroad (*Ministère de l'Intégration Africaine et des Ivoiriens de l'Extérieur*) focuses on relations with the diaspora and l'intégration des migrants.

The Ministry for Solidarity, Social Cohesion, and Fighting Poverty (*Ministère de la Solidarité, de la Cohésion Sociale et de la Lutte contre la Pauvreté*) is the lead agency for combatting trafficking in persons. The Ministry of Employment and Social Protection (*Ministère de l'Emploi de la Protection Sociale*) is responsible for combating child labour with the support of the Inter-Ministerial Committee against Trafficking, Exploitation, and Child Labour (*Comité interministériel de lutte contre la traite, l'exploitation et le travail des enfants*). In line with the National Strategy and National Plan in Combating Trafficking in Persons, the National Committee against the Trafficking of Persons is in charge of implementing the aforementioned laws.

The Ivorian government has adopted several instruments (for example, organising disaster relief), which are applicable in times of crisis as a result of natural disaster. Through these instruments, assistance is provided to all disaster victims through the Ministry of Security and Protection.

### *The Catholic Church*

The Catholic Church is the second largest religious body in Ivory Coast, after the Muslim faith. There are currently 15 Dioceses in Ivory Coast: the four Archdioceses of Abidjan, Bouake, Gagnoa, Korhogo; and the 11 Dioceses of Abengourou, Agboville, Bondoukou, Daloa, Grand-Bassam, Katiolo, Man, Odienne, San Pedro-en-Côte d'Ivoire, Yamoussoukro, and Yopougon. The Catholic Church in Ivory Coast has a series of projects and organisations that assist migrants and refugees, including the Salesian Missionaries, Caritas, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Episcopal Commission for Migrants, Tourism and the Apostleship of the Sea (*Commission épiscopale pour les migrants, le tourisme, l'apostolat de la mer et les personnes en déplacement*) .

As a result of the years of conflict in Ivory Coast (especially the two civil wars), infrastructural development has been adversely affected. The Salesian Missionaries have provided life-saving shelters, food, security, and counselling services to thousands fleeing the war. They work with victims of the war to heal the country's deep wounds, reconcile the different factions, and provide training for young people - some of whom were actively involved in the war as foot soldiers. They are also currently providing primary and secondary education to help young students to gain a basic education. They also provide food security, health clinics, and workforce development services.

*Caritas Côte d'Ivoire* is present throughout the country aimed at assisting the most disadvantaged people in Ivory Coast. In partnership with national and international humanitarian organisations including CRS, UNHCR, the Global Fund, Ivorian government agencies, and others, Caritas has three main areas of focus: emergency assistance, human development, and healthcare with a special interest in the fight against HIV/AIDs and tuberculosis. In achieving these three main objectives, Caritas is involved in programmes that encourage agricultural development, improve access to potable water and sanitation systems, support income-generating activity projects, promote human rights, and protect vulnerable children from exploitation. Caritas has established projects that combat the worst forms of child labour in the cocoa-growing sector, as well as projects to reintegrate repatriated Ivorians.

Catholic Relief Services collaborates with *Caritas Côte d'Ivoire*, with technical assistance from the Africa Working Group for Justice and Peace, to support a 3-year peace and reconciliation project with the goal of restoring peace and social cohesion among Ivorians. The project promotes research into peace among profoundly divided Ivorian populations. It works with the Church and other religious communities in seeking peace and reconciliation by creating a platform for religious and civil society to meet, share experiences, and advocate for reconciliation. This project also aims to help restore confidence in ethnic, religious, and political groups.

The Episcopal Commission for Migrants, Tourism, the Apostleship of the Sea, and Displaced Persons is also active and has increased its activities since late 2014. Its mission is to reflect on all issues affecting people on the move and aims to ensure that the Church plays its role in working with and caring for people on the move. The Commission speaks to young people about the risks and dangers of irregular migration through sensitisation in parishes and Catholic communities.

### *International Organisations*

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Ivory Coast works in close partnership with the government in projects aimed at strengthening institutional capacities in the areas of immigration and border management, as well as migrant protection and assistance. The United Nations Refugee Agency in Ivory Coast focuses on humanitarian activities and strengthening protection for refugees, returnees, and stateless people. Other migration-related United Nations agencies in Ivory Coast include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). UNICEF helps returnees to keep their children in school. In partnership with the government, UNDP pilots projects aimed at attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly good governance and the fight against poverty. The World Food Programme (WFP) provides school meals to targeted children throughout the school year. Doctors Without Borders (*Médecins Sans Frontières*) left Ivory Coast in 2019 and returned in 2020 to support the national COVID-19 response team in the screening and referral of COVID-19 patients.

### *Other Organisations*

The Service of Aid and Assistance to Refugees and Stateless Persons (*Service d'Aide et d'Assistance aux Refugies et Apatrides*, SAARA) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is tasked with implementing the asylum policy as defined by the government of Ivory Coast. Their key responsibilities include coordinating the management of Ivorian refugees, stateless persons, and returnees, determining refugee status, and granting international protection and assistance to refugees. They also ensure respect for the rights and duties of the refugees and the stateless persons through the issuance of identification documents and coordinate the care of the internally displaced persons. Another locally based organisation that deals with refugee-related concerns in Ivory Coast is the law firm SCPA-Bazie-Koyo-Assa under the leadership of Ghislaine Moïse-Bazie, who is a resident lawyer in Abidjan. Ghislaine Moïse-Bazie is prepared to answer technical legal questions, for example, questions on documents from lawyers representing refugees from Ivory Coast, and if unable, will refer lawyers to other professionals who can assist. Search For Common Ground (SFCG) aims at reducing tensions, facilitating reconciliation, and empowering Ivorians to be in charge of mediation in their conflicts. The Association of Women Jurists in Ivory Coast (*Association des Femmes Juristes de Côte d'Ivoire*) fights against discrimination, social inequalities, and violence against women and children.

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