

Strategic Programme Document West Africa: 2016-2018



Burkina Faso – Côte d'Ivoire – Guinea – Liberia – Mali – Niger – Nigeria

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Contents

1. Summary	3
2. Situational analysis	4
2.1. Root causes of conflict and displacement	4
2.2. Situation of refugees, IDPs and other affected population groups	5
2.3. Capacity of key duty bearers.....	5
2.4. Activities and plans of other assistance actors	6
2.5. Critical conditions for provision of assistance	6
3. The DRC/DDG's strategic vision and objectives.....	7
3.1. Vision and contextual exit criteria.....	7
3.2. Strategic priorities	8
3.3. Application of critical operational principles	9
4. External relations and institutional capacities	10
4.1. Relations with key stakeholders and partners	10
4.2. Internal capacities	10
4.3. Funding.....	11
5. Annex	12
5.1. Map: DRC/DDG presence in the WA region.....	12

1. Summary

DRC/DDG began its operations in West Africa (WA)¹ in 1998. Since 2006, the organisation has been pursuing a regional strategy determined and shaped by the displacement patterns stemming from conflicts and more recently by the Ebola outbreak. West Africa remains one of the world's most fragile regions and recurring political crises, ongoing conflicts and epidemic outbreaks have exacerbated the humanitarian situation. Ethnic, cultural, linguistic and historical ties between groups living in border areas have enabled displaced populations to find assistance and protection across borders but capacities of host communities remain weak. Given the proliferation of small arms and recurrent conflict in the region, DDG initiated armed violence reduction programming in the region in 2013.

In that perspective, during the next three years the priorities of DRC/DDG will be to strengthen operations in the most affected areas, particularly in the Sahel sub-region encompassing Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, and to expand activities in the Lake Chad region, with a presence in Nigeria, Niger and a possible expansion to Cameroun. At the same time DRC/DDG will progressively phase out of from the coastal sub-region, starting with Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, as the situation is gradually stabilizing and opportunities for voluntary return or local integration are becoming more concrete.

DRC/DDG's programmatic objective in WA is to protect and promote durable solutions for displaced and conflict-affected populations based on humanitarian principles and human rights. DRC/DDG will continue to develop programming aligned with its global mandate and core areas of expertise, which responds to the unique needs, realities and opportunities in the region. In order to meet the different needs in the region, it is essential for DRC/DDG to insist on a comprehensive set of activities reflecting the specific local situations but at the same time referring to the three DRC's global strategic platforms:

- *Emergency Preparedness and Response*
Objective I: Saving lives and alleviating suffering via integrated emergency responses.
- *Solutions to displacement*
Objective II: Supporting durable solutions through integration and/or voluntary return and enhancing local and national institutional capacities *Solutions to displacement*
- *Resilience and Stability*
Objective III: 3. Reinforcing local capacities and resilience through an integrated protection, community safety & social cohesion community-based approach.

In addition, DRC/DDG will open a Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) for West Africa for purposes of data collection, research and information sharing. DRC/DDG will furthermore consolidate its cross-border programming approach, expand its AVR

¹ West Africa as a region is typically defined by those countries which are members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which consist of the following 17: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, island of Saint Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. DRC/DDG is currently present in the Sahel sub-region, consisting of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger) and the Coastal sub-region - also called Mano River sub-region - (consisting of Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Guinea). In addition DRC/DDG recently started a programme in Nigeria.

programming and focus on promoting resilience and stability, especially through integrated DRC-DDG responses.

2. Situational analysis

2.1. Root causes of conflict and displacement

Forced displacement and population movements across the region as a whole are mainly caused by political tensions, disputes over natural resources, inter-communal conflicts, epidemics, climate change, extreme poverty, and extremist violence.

The coastal sub-region² is characterised by complex patterns of displacement triggered by political instability, conflicts and pandemics. The three countries of operation in the sub-region are exposed to similar protection vulnerabilities with relevant cross-border repercussions, and at the same time face specific domestic challenges. The sub-region as a whole benefited from gains in peace and stability in the aftermath of the Liberian civil war and of the Ivorian electoral violence in 2010-2011. However these fragile gains may be disrupted by latent political tensions and unaddressed causes of conflict, particularly in border regions characterised by significant presence of armed groups, small arms proliferation and weak state authorities.

The Sahel sub-region³ is a perfect illustration of the concept of "complex crisis" with roots in poverty, prolonged food crisis along with the political crisis in Northern Mali. The Mali crisis gravitates around the question of the status of Northern Mali and is fuelled by the proliferation of competing armed groups. The conflict in Mali generates spill-over effects on neighbouring countries, with displacement axes to and from Burkina Faso and Niger. Insecurity prevails especially in Northern Mali and in bordering regions where the situation is further worsened by trafficking (drugs, people and weapons).

The Lake Chad sub-region⁴ is the largest crisis area in West Africa, and has its epicentre in Nigeria with more than 2.15 million IDPs and 90,000 refugees, mostly from the North-East. The Boko Haram insurgency and consequent military action has prompted mass displacement, both internally and across borders, and destabilized the whole sub-region. The active involvement of security forces from countries affected by Boko Haram operations is rapidly taking prominence. As Chadians, Cameroonians and citizens of the Republic of Niger are affected by insurgent attacks spreading out from Nigeria, they are simultaneously affected by the military response directed by the national armies of the four states bordering Lake Chad.

The West Africa region is also a major global hub of **mixed migration flows**, both within the region (especially after the ECOWAS free movement protocol) and towards Northern Africa and Europe. Such flows are triggered by a complex interplay of factors, including drought and climate change, political instability and conflict, lack of basic health and education services, as well as by the limited availability of livelihood opportunities in countries of origin.

² DRC is present in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea

³ DRC is present in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger

⁴ DRC is present in Nigeria and Niger

2.2. Situation of refugees, IDPs and other affected population groups

In general, most of the problems faced by IDPs, refugees, returnees and host communities in the region are related to protection and human rights violations, conflict and insecurity, limited income-generation opportunities, and food insecurity.

In the coastal sub-region, the Ivorian crisis of 2010-2011 represents the main driver of cross-border displacement. UNHCR has planned an exit strategy from Guinea in 2016, which will lead to a gradual phase out of assistance. The closure of Ivorian borders with both Guinea and Liberia, due to the Ebola epidemic, currently poses a barrier to Voluntary Repatriation (VolRep) movements and led UNHCR to discontinue the VolRep programme from Liberia. At the same time, the refugee population in Liberia almost entirely depends on a decreasing stream of humanitarian assistance. Considering the cultural and linguistic affinities between Ivorian refugees in Liberia and hosting communities, local integration prospects appear generally favourable, especially for political refugees who could still face protection risks in Ivory Coast.

The slow recovery from the Ebola crisis in Liberia and Guinea has reduced the capacity of these two countries to respond to potential cross-border refugee inflows. The Ebola pandemic disrupted local livelihoods in border regions, and generated serious protection and cohesion challenges for affected communities.

In the Sahel sub-region, the two main axes of displacement arise from the security crisis in north Mali. The Mali crisis leads to both large-scale internal displacement and cross-border population movements between Mali and Niger and between Mali and Burkina Faso. At the height of the crisis, more than 200,000 people were forced to leave their places of habitual residence. In 2015, 137,000 Malians have refugee status in the Sahel sub-region. This situation has exacerbated structural development problems and also brought new problems relating to the protection of human rights. Drought, food insecurity, limited access to pasture lands, access to water and cross-border migratory movements (transhumance in particular) are the source and cause of high intra- and inter-community tension and conflicts, which divide farmers and livestock breeders. Lastly, the extreme permeability of national borders, coupled with the weak capacity of state authorities and security forces, has exposed civilians to the increasing threat of militias and armed groups and has contributed to a soar in trafficking activities (e.g. : human trafficking, drugs trafficking, arms trafficking)

In the Lake Chad sub-region, armed violence and human suffering are spreading across the four countries. A total of 2.5 million people in the sub-region have been displaced by the crisis related to the Boko Haram insurgency. This total includes IDPs in Nigeria (2,150,451); Niger (50,000); Cameroon (81,693); and Chad (68,434); and a total of 172,690 refugees in Niger, Cameroon and Chad⁵.

2.3. Capacity of key duty bearers

With the partial exception of Côte d'Ivoire, the capacity of local duty bearers remains extremely feeble. This has translated into low levels of trust in the political elite and in the presence of competing power structures. At the community level, there is limited trust,

⁵ According to UNHCR figures in September 2015

collaboration and information sharing between communities and state security providers. Limited capacity, corruption and impunity are widespread. State institutions are generally weakened by endemic corruption and by the intermittent application of the rule of law. Border control (with the partial exception of Côte d'Ivoire) is mostly ineffective in all states where DRC/DDG is present. As most of the central governments in the region largely fail to deliver on their development promises, the general public seems increasingly disillusioned, following the mismanagement of the various political and security crises (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria) as well as the Ebola crisis (Guinea and Liberia) by public authorities.

2.4. Activities and plans of other assistance actors

The activities of DRC/DDG are well integrated in the wider humanitarian and development assistance and coordination frameworks and in existing UN-led coordination structures. In the Coastal sub-region, many International organisations have recently reduced their activities or exited, but national NGOs are active and gradually taking over part of the activities previously led by INGOs. DRC/DDG collaborates closely with several national NGOs on its cross-border activities. In the Sahel region, in DRC/DDG's areas of intervention, there are very few international actors due to the fragile security situation, which poses significant operational constraints. In Nigeria a few larger INGOs, including DRC/DDG, have recently established a presence in the north east.

2.5. Critical conditions for provision of assistance

The mandates of DRC/DDG rest upon the principles enshrined in the relevant bodies of law: international humanitarian law, international human rights law and refugee law. In addition, DRC/DDG works within the applicable domestic legal framework of its countries of operations, and seek registration with relevant government authorities. DRC/DDG is also aware of potential risks related to the upcoming elections in Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso and is preparing to respond to potential crisis scenarios in coordination with other humanitarian actors.

Staff safety and security is critical and duty of care is a core operating principle of DRC/DDG. To this end, DRC/DDG adopts a safety level system with minimum operation safety standards and dedicated resources in country operations monitored by a regional safety advisor. Careful monitoring of the security situation is carried out and where potential risks to staff are considered unacceptable, operations are either temporarily suspended, relocated or terminated to ensure the safety of staff and beneficiaries.

Acceptance from communities and authorities is also essential for DRC/DDG to operate and is largely ensured through a participatory approach in programming.

Finally the funding situation impacts on the possibility to provide adequate assistance. As DRC/DDG relies almost entirely on institutional donors, the fact that less than 50% of identified humanitarian needs in the region are funded⁶ limits the organisation's capacity to respond.

⁶ UNOCHA, Financial tracking service, data for 2015 on response plans and appeals for West Africa.

3. The DRC/DDG's strategic vision and objectives

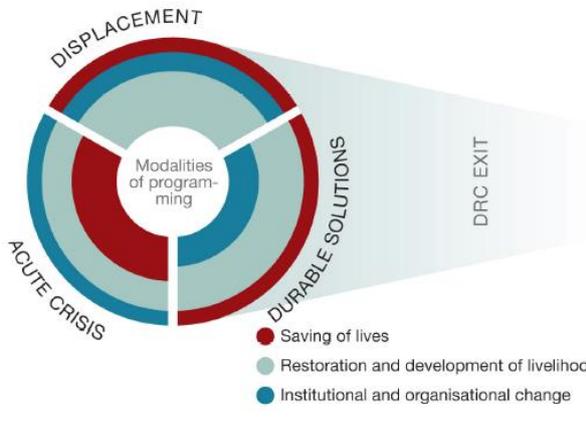
3.1. Vision and contextual exit criteria

DRC/DDG's mandate in WA is to protect and promote durable solutions for displaced and conflict affected populations based on humanitarian principles and human rights.

In terms of presence DRC/DDG will expand operations in the Sahel (Niger) and the Lake Chad regions (Nigeria and possibly Cameroon), in order to respond to the growing needs resulting from the conflicts in Mali and in Nigeria. As part of this strategy, DRC/DDG already established a presence in Nigeria in July 2015. In Côte d'Ivoire and in Liberia the situation is more conducive to voluntary return or local integration and no new displacement scenario appear likely. DDG will exit Cote d'Ivoire by end 2015. DRC will plan a responsible exit starting in 2016.⁷

The programme objectives for the period 2016-2018 are articulated around DRC/DDG programmatic platforms: (i) integrated emergency response; (ii) resilience and stability, and (iii) solutions to displacement. These three platforms are rooted in the core DRC protection mandate and in the DDG framework for Armed Violence Reduction (AVR).

The table below summarises the key strategic directions of DRC/DDG in West Africa:

Overall Programme Objective	To protect and promote durable solutions for displaced and conflict-affected populations based on humanitarian principles and human rights.		
Global Assistance Framework			
Platforms and Programme Objectives in WA	Emergency Preparedness and Response 1. Saving lives and alleviating suffering via integrated emergency responses	Solutions to displacement 2. Supporting durable solutions through integration and/or voluntary return and enhancing local and national institutional capacities	Resilience and Stability 3. Reinforcing local capacities and resilience through an integrated protection, community safety & social cohesion community-based approach.

⁷ DRC preconditions for exit:

1. The security situation is sufficiently stable and no renewed outbreak of violent conflict appears likely.
2. No renewed displacement scenario that would necessitate DRC's presence and assistance appear likely.
3. Local communities are able independently from external assistance to socially and economically integrate refugees and IDPs on their territory in a peaceful and sustainable manner thus ensuring social cohesion.
4. Responsible national and international institutions and organisations are able and willing to live up to their responsibilities with respect to upholding the basic rights of citizens.
5. Regional displacement and migration consequences such as; food insecurity, exclusion of young people and the breakdown of social cohesion can be prevented without the intervention of DRC.

<p>Key programmatic focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure timely response to displacement crises through the development of coordinated emergency preparation and response plans (EPRP) • Strengthen cross-border protection monitoring and reporting mechanisms. • Monitoring population movements for a more efficient humanitarian response and stronger advocacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support voluntary return or local integration of displaced populations through a cross-border approach • Build the capacity of local and national authorities and civil society organisations for the provision of basic services • Advocate for freedom of movement and access to basic services for displaced persons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the economic recovery of fragile communities through livelihoods activities (IGA, VSLAs, micro-finance, rehabilitation of community infrastructure, market-driven vocational training), and through the reinforcement of social cohesion and community based protection mechanisms • Enhancing Community Driven Recovery and Safety (CDRS) programmes to address root causes of conflict , armed violence and fragility
<p>Strategic priorities (detailed in section 3.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consolidate our cross-border programming approach - Promote resilience and stability especially through integrated DRC-DDG programming with a strong a CDRS component as well as response capacity in urban areas. - Expand our Armed Violence Reduction programming - Establish a Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) for data collection, research and information sharing. 		

The DRC/DDG strategy for the sub-region will be reinforced and complemented by coordinated **advocacy** on key protection and safety themes. DRC/DDG will deliver targeted advocacy messages both at the community level and to local and central government authorities on key protection issues. The main target areas for DRC/DDG advocacy in line with the three-year strategic orientation are: GBV, child rights, local integration of refugees and Freedom of Movement both within countries and across borders.

3.2. Strategic priorities

The strategy of DRC/DDG is underpinned by the following strategic approaches, which will be prioritised as part of the 2016-18 strategy to strengthen the organisation’s programmatic profile.

- **Consolidate the cross-border programming approach:** DRC/DDG’s cross-border approach is unique in the region, as it reflects the porosity and arbitrary nature of borders, the reality that borders cut across interrelated community and ethnic groups, and that vulnerabilities and risks faced by border communities need to be addressed on both sides. Unlike most organisations, DRC/DDG recruits national staff from border communities where few other actors are present. This raises the strategic profile of DRC/DDG and ensures a strong link to communities and duty bearers. DRC/DDG will continue to build on this approach and strengthen coordination and management aspects related to multi-country cross border programming.
- **Promote resilience and stability especially through integrated DRC-DDG programming:** Our focus will be on preventing conflict and displacement by building resilient communities and strengthening local stability. Where relevant, DRC and DDG will develop new integrated programmes based on joint needs assessment and complementary areas of expertise in order to meet the multi-dimensional needs of conflict affected populations such as CDRS. DRC/DDG will also explore integrated programming in urban areas based on our Youth, Empowered and Safe programming framework (YES).

- **Expand Armed Violence Reduction programming:** Insecurity and recurrent conflict are key features of the West Africa region. During 2016-18, DDG will focus on scaling up its border security and management programme in the Liptako-Gourma region across Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, as well as replicating this programme in other conflict-affected border areas, such as the Niger/Nigeria and Mali/Mauritania borders. DDG will also expand its conflict management and mediation programming, including with regards to natural-resource based conflict to address the contextual realities and needs of community-based conflict in the region.
- **Establish a Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) for West Africa:** Humanitarian community, key duty bearers and other relevant stakeholders in West Africa do not have sufficient information to respond to the needs of mixed migrants. DRC/DDG will facilitate and host the creation of the RMMS (similar to the one established in the Horn of Africa). The RMMS will be coordinated by DRC/DDG and focus on research, coordination and information sharing.

3.3. Application of critical operational principles

The operational principles of DRC/DDG are embodied in the Programme and Operations Handbooks and define how DRC/DDG plans its work, its engagement with stakeholders and with core programmatic themes. Broadly, DRC/DDG applies a rights-based approach as its programming 'lens', which is hinged on international laws, principles and standards and which forms the cornerstone of its accountability framework.

The activities of DRC/DDG are informed by the following principles:

What we want to do:	How we work with people:	How we plan:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protection - Advocacy - Capacity development - Resilience - Emergency Preparedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Age, Gender and Diversity - Information-sharing - Participation - Complaints-handling - Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conflict sensitivity - Complementarity - Sustainability - Environment - Replicability

DRC/DDG follows the Sphere guidelines and is HAP-certified since 2007 and active member of CHS (Core Humanitarian Standards). The CHS initiative integrates accountability and humanitarian principles and replaces the previous HAP framework. DRC/DDG upholds humanitarian accountability principles through active community engagement, transparent communication with stakeholders and the development of systems and procedures for the management and follow-up of complaints.

4. External relations and institutional capacities

4.1. Relations with key stakeholders and partners

Adequate representation in relevant country and sub-regional and regional fora is essential to position DRC/DDG as a key protection and AVR player, to build synergies with other actors and to cement relationship with donors. DRC/DDG participates in relevant humanitarian and security coordination mechanisms and working groups on protection, resilience, cross-border coordination, border security/management, mine action and emergency preparedness and response.

DRC/DDG maintains close collaboration with key stakeholders in the region, including INGOs; local NGOs; UN agencies; UN coordination mechanisms (cluster system and working groups where established); government institutions; transnational organisations (i. e. Mano River Union, ECOWAS); bilateral and multilateral donors (ECHO, EU, USAID/US Department of State, OFDA, DANIDA, GIZ, SDC, UK CSSF, Dutch MFA, UNMAS, and others). Therefore DRC/DDG is generally seen as a strong partner, with distinctive comparative advantages and effective response capacities.

The planned establishment of a *Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat* will contribute to further strengthening DRC/DDG's relations with other key stakeholders in the region.

4.2. Internal capacities

Organisation

The regional approach in displacement analysis, programming and operational capacity represents a key comparative strength of the DRC/DDG in West Africa. The regional coordination, synergies and knowledge sharing provides a solid operational basis for prioritization of assistance and resources, as well as utilization and further development of institutional knowledge within sectors and contextual settings.

Human resources

Expertise of DRC/DDG staff in West Africa reflects the specific sectors of intervention in the region. Given the contextual differences in the locations where DRC/DDG operates, cross-utilization of expertise, coordination and capacity building at the regional level represents an important asset. The WA regional office supports country operations through the following senior regional positions: a Director, a Safety Advisor, a Head of Programmes, a Grant Manager, a Head of Finance and Operations, a Logistics Manager and a HR Manager. In addition, senior staff follows induction training at HQ and an introduction programme at the regional office. The other staff starts with DRC with a local induction. We also conduct systematic international staff appraisals to facilitate development, motivate and improve performances.

Finance and Logistics

Financial and logistical systems in DRC/DDG West Africa are managed at the country level and supported by a regional office in Abidjan and Headquarters in Copenhagen. The focus on two sub-regions enables the dynamics and lessons learned from one sub-region to be gathered and analysed at the regional level and subsequently disseminated throughout the

region. In addition, DRC and DDG will merge support systems at regional and country levels in order to streamline operations, improve efficiency and reduce duplication of costs.

Safety management

DRC/DDG operations in West Africa often involve assistance to refugees and IDPs in areas affected by high levels of armed conflict, civil unrest, crime and/or environmental hazards. In order to reduce risk and safety of DRC/DDG staff, the global Minimum Operating Safety Standards (MOSS) apply, requiring the compliance of all DRC/DDG staff. At the programme level, MOSS is contextualized to the operating environment, based on a global Safety Risk Management system, managed at country level and supported by a Regional Safety Advisor. In addition, DRC/DDG ensures strong coordination with safety mechanisms of key international actors in the region, including UNMIL and ONUCI.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

The DRC/DDG MEL system is designed to closely monitor projects in quantitative and qualitative terms in order to improve the efficacy and relevance of interventions. These analyses result in a detailed knowledge of intervention zones and the needs of the people in real time. The MEL team is involved at all stages of a project: from development of the proposal and indicators, through the implementation phase, up until the final evaluation.

4.3. Funding

The funding situation varies according to the situation in the sub-regions, but generally in West Africa less than 50% of humanitarian response plans and appeals have been funded for 2015⁸. The coastal sub-region is seeing a decrease in funding and presence of traditional humanitarian actors whereas in the Sahel and the Lake Chad regions, the level of funding is comparatively higher. However, as recently demonstrated with the Ebola emergency in Liberia and Guinea, donors were able to deploy significant surge capacity. In post-emergency and recovery contexts, such as in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, where DRC/DDG is gradually working towards an exit strategy, and humanitarian donors have left or have informed of imminent departure, DRC/DDG will further engage its fundraising activities targeting development donors and foundations. This will allow funding for a responsible and well planned exit.

⁸ UNOCHA, Financial tracking service, data for 2015.

5. Annex

5.1. Map: DRC/DDG presence in the WA region

