

Return Migration to Togo

Monitoring the Embeddedness of Returnees

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Abstract

As a result of its violent past, for the past forty years Togo experienced great outflows of Togolese migrants who fled to neighbouring or Western countries. However, Western governments increasingly force Togolese refugees to return home, which often goes hand in hand with many difficulties. However, the re-insertion of returning migrants into their home societies has hardly been monitored. This report addresses this gap. The main research question that formed the basis of this study is: *What are the factors influencing the embeddedness of (involuntarily returned asylum seekers and) refugees and what is the role of assistance herein?* Within this research “embeddedness” is seen as a multi dimensional concept that refers to the individual returnee’s economic situation, psycho-social wellbeing and his/her social networks in the society of return. First, this study investigates the embeddedness outcomes of Togolese returnees seen from an economic, social networks and psychosocial point of view. Second, the factors that influence the different embeddedness outcomes are analyzed. Returnees’ individual characteristics are discussed followed by an elaboration of the migration cycle with special attention for the reasons Togolese migrate and the experiences and conditions they encounter both abroad and while returning. Lastly, the influence of assistance is looked at. Even though return assistance is scarce for Togolese returnees and has limitations, this research illustrates its importance in stimulating embeddedness.

The research project is coordinated by Marieke van Houte, country reports are co-coordinated by Mireille de Koning.

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Map of Togo



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List of Abbreviations

CAR	Comité d'Action pour le Renouveau (<i>Action Committee for the Renewal</i>)
CNAR	National Commission for assistance to refugees
EU	European Union
FAT	Forces Armées Togolaises (<i>Togolese Army Forces</i>)
FCFA	Franc Communauté Financière Africaine (<i>The African Financial Community Currency</i>)
HCRAH	Le Haut Commissariat aux Repatriés et à L'action Humanitaire (<i>High Commissioner for Repatriates and Humanitarian action</i>)
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRIN	Investor Relations Information Network
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OCDI	Organisation de la Charité pour un Développement Intégré (<i>Charity Organisation for Integrated Development</i>)
RPT	Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais (<i>Assembly for Togolese People</i>)
UFC	Union des Forces de Changement (<i>Union of Changing Forces</i>)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

1 Introduction¹

For the last forty years, Togo, a small West-African country, has experienced many migration outflows. Since 1967 Togo was bending under a long standing “terror regime” by the former president and dictator Eyadema Gnassingbé who ruled the country for nearly forty years until his death in 2005 (Amnesty International 1999). While the majority of Togolese sought refuge in the neighbouring countries Ghana and Benin, others chose to travel further abroad to Northern countries in Europe and the United States. However, especially after Western European countries began to see a large influx of asylum seekers from all over the world, combined with increasing numbers of illegal migrants and victims of trafficking, these countries adopted strict asylum policies to deter what they see as a refugee burden (Black en Gent 2006, 16). Whereas immigration was increasingly discouraged, likewise return migration was put high on the political agenda of Western European states (IOM 2001, 9). As a result of this, many Togolese are increasingly forced out of the asylum country, resulting in a return to areas that are ill-prepared to receive them and governments that have little interest in facilitating their embeddedness. In Togo there were even reports (Amnesty International 1999; Manley 2003, 6) of the government torturing returnees, some dying as a result of their injuries. Little attention is thus given to the problems that many of these people encounter upon return. It is all too often taken for granted that returning to one’s home country is a ‘natural’ and thus a ‘problem-free’ process (Rogge 1991, 10). In an attempt to support the migrants who face the increasingly restrictive asylum policies of Western European states that are focused on return, initiatives like the Mediation Agency² assists returning migrants to try to overcome the obstacles they face upon return. By doing so, they aim to contribute to sustainable return that might even lead to development in the home country. The question remains however, if and under which circumstances, the return of involuntary returning migrants can be sustainable. Whether these assisting-programmes are actually effective has never been properly analyzed (IND 2006, 13).

As a reaction to this scarcity of knowledge a case study was done in Togo. This study is part of a larger research that was conducted by the Radboud University Nijmegen in cooperation with the University of Amsterdam and was commissioned and financed by Bureau Maatwerk bij Terugkeer (The Mediation Agency for Return, a branch of the developmental organization Cordaid). The specific question raised by the Mediation Agency for return was, whether return assistance given to former refugees, rejected asylum seeker and irregular migrants was/is effective and how this assistance could be improved. Approaching this question from a broader perspective, the following research question was developed:

Which factors influence the process of re-embeddedness of involuntary returning ex refugees, rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants and what is the role of assistance herein?

During two months, a research project was conducted in which questionnaires were used and in-dept interviews were held with returnees and stakeholders of organisations concerned with migration issues to get a clear view on the embeddedness situation of Togolese asylum

¹ This study is part of a 6-country monitoring study conducted on return migration by the University of Amsterdam and Radboud University Nijmegen coordinated by Marieke van Houte and Mireille de Koning. I would also like to acknowledge the help received from Luuk van Kempen (CIDIN) and Theo van der Weegen (Research-Technical Support Group (RTOG) for the SPSS analysis.

² Other assisting organisations in the Netherlands are SAMAH, ROC Nijmegen, Stichting Wereldwijd, Perspectief and SNV Tilburg.

seekers who returned to Togo involuntary with or without the help of return programmes. Where a forced migrant is obliged to return to his/her country of origin, and does so without being forcefully expelled, this is generally referred to by policy makers and NGOs as ‘voluntary’ return. However, it can be argued that return can never be voluntary when there is no plausible (legal) alternative. In this study, return out of reasons, other than a personal desire to do so, is conceived of as involuntary. In practice, this usually means that any returnee, not possessing a permanent permit, is regarded as having returned involuntary.

Furthermore, this research examines the influence of social characteristics, the migration cycle, and the role of given assistance on the embeddedness process. To conceive of return as a process, and in order not to be normative about the way a returnee should behave upon return, sustainable re(turn) migration was labelled as a process of mixed embeddedness, rather than reintegration. Within this research “embeddedness” is seen as a multi dimensional concept that refers to the individual returnee’s economic situation, psycho-social wellbeing and his/her social networks in the society of return.³. Insight into the embeddedness of returnees is especially of importance for organisations and policy makers in both Europe and Togo, concerned with return migration and the well being of returnees, as this provides insight into the improvement of both the monitoring and facilitating of return migration and assistance.

Following this introduction, this report is set out in four main chapters. The next chapter discusses the context of Togo. Chapter three explains the methodology and challenges of this study. The results are presented in chapter four and finally in chapter five the report will be finalised with a conclusion and recommendations for assisting organisations.

³ In chapter three the theoretical background on embeddedness is emphasized in greater detail. For further theoretical information see the overall report.

2 Context of Togo

To understand the return process of Togolese returnees it is essential to know something about the context in which they return. Therefore a description of the situation in Togo is given in this chapter. First, the main background events in the country, which led to major migration flows, are described. Second, the current situation in the country is illustrated with special attention for the political, demographic, economic and social-cultural context. Third, the involvement of organisations in migration issues is discussed.

2.1 A history of political unrest and violence

From the year 1884 Togo has been largely in the hands of former colonisers. While Germany first claimed a small part of the country in the late 1890's, Britain and France divided Togo during World War 1. Eventually the part that made up British Togo was incorporated into neighbouring Ghana, leaving France to be the only coloniser in the country. Finally, on April 26, 1960 French Togo gained independence (IRIN 2007a).

'The Switzerland of Africa', and 'a rich and wealthy country'; this is how Togo was characterised in the early days", says Brownie Lee, director of Peace Corps Togo. Not long after Togo gained independence, the country's economy was characterised by relatively high skill and educational levels, French and German foreign investments and good infrastructure (Manley 2003, 1). Especially from the late 1960's to the 1980's, the country experienced an economic boom mainly as a result of nationalised phosphate mining (IRIN 2007a). The combination of high phosphate prices in the world, together with economic problems in neighbouring countries was highly beneficial for Togo's economy. It opened its doors to Ghanaians who were searching for products that were hard to find in Ghana and took advantage of import restrictions in Nigeria. As a consequence, Lomé became a strong commercial centre, characterised by a bustling marketplace, duty free shops and rich business women nicknamed "Nana Benz" (IRIN 2007a).

2.1.1 The early 1990s

However, since the late 1980s, things have gone rapidly down with Eyadéma Gnassingbé, the former president and leader of the Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais (RPT) being in power from 1967. As Eyadéma wanted to stay in power and remain president of the country, the former multiparty government was transferred into one with a highly centralised structure. This was accompanied by severe human rights violations, widespread ethnic violence, severe repression by the security forces, the victims being opposition members and independent journalists. This resulted in mass population flows into neighbouring countries and "the effective hijacking of the "democratisation" process by one of West Africa's most militaristic presidencies" (Manley 2003, 1). Extrajudicial executions were carried out by the army and police and many people were reported as having "disappeared" with total impunity in the country. There have been many reports of rapes, arbitrary arrests, years of detention and torture, sometimes even resulting in death (Amnesty International 1999), making the line between political and criminal attacks often difficult to draw (Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 2002). Additionally, a recession caused a drop in phosphate prices and neighbouring countries began to reform their own economies (IRIN 2007a). The once blooming economy of Togo collapsed during the height of the crisis in 1990-1993 as estimates put shrinkage in real GDP as high as fifteen percent. This economic change heavily affected the southern regions, both Lomé, and the phosphates sector in the Hahoté-Kpémé zone, in particular.

This detrimental effect on the south was caused by an ethnic division within the country, that was created by Eyadema himself. While southern ethnic groups were mostly working in the private sector, both commercial and professional, the Kabyé, the ethnic group to which the president himself belonged, and other people from the north, predominated the public sector. This priority recruitment for the Kabyé in particular, was especially seen in the customs services, the fire brigades and above all in the gendarmerie and other branches of the national police services (Madley 2003, 6). About 90 percent of all military officers and 70 percent of the soldiers in Togo belonged to the Kabyé. This also resulted in political parties having identifiable ethnic and regional bases; the RPT party was more represented among northern ethnic groups than among southern groups; the reverse was true of the UFC (*Union des Forces de Changement*) and CAR (*Comité d'Action pour le Renouveau*) opposition parties (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor 2006). The negative effect on the southern regions was thus partly a deliberate strategy by the presidency, to undermine this power base of the opposition that had mostly southern supporters (Madley 2003, 1). As one can imagine, this ethnic division was an important source for (political) tensions within the country. Often Ewé and other southern ethnic groups (and indeed also people from the north) clashed with security forces, resulting in the death of many civilians. Within this context Madley (2003, 5) notes: 'Ewé and others in the south have little but fear and contempt for the northerners who dominate the armed forces, the *gendarmerie* and other security organs. In Lomé and other southern centres the FAT (*Forces Armées Togolaises*) and associated organs are referred to as '*une armée des cousins*' (an army made out of cousins)'.

As these events continued, combined with a poor economic policy and a lack of democratic principles, more and more aid donors pulled out of their relations with Togo (IRIN 2007a; Madley 2003, 1). In 1993 the European Union, Togo's largest foreign donor, finally cut its ties with this country, freezing foreign aid (IRIN 2007a). Next to this, in 1998, the World Bank did not provide Togo with loans as the government did not pay off its debts (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2002).

During the crisis in the early 1990s, about 300.000-350.000 Togolese (mainly from the Lomé area) fled into the neighbouring countries Ghana and Benin when tensions intensified as civilian opposition to Eyadéma's manoeuvring was hardened by the brutality of the security forces. The military backed terror campaign intensified in late 1992, resulting in a massacre of hundreds of people in Lomé in January 1993 (Madley 2003, 3-4). While returnees were often ill treated and tortured, in the 1994-1997 period, as the Eyadéma regime stabilized, many of these refugees began returning, both spontaneously and with UNHCR assistance (Madley 2003, 4). On 27 November 1997 the UNHCR announced that "The repatriation program is now successfully completed". According to the US Committee for Refugees, approximately 5.000 Togolese refugees remained in Ghana and 1.000 in Benin at the end of 1997. The majority of these people were staying with relatives or friends (Madley 2003, 4).

2.1.2 Violent outbreaks in 2005

When Eyadéma died on Saturday 5 February 2005, violence erupted as his son Faure Gnassingbé ascended to the presidency with the backing of the military. Due to international condemnations, elections were held on 24 April 2005 which Faure won with 60 percent of the votes, a result highly contested by the opposition (IFRC 2005). Supporters of opposing parties clashed with security forces, which then opened fire on the crowds. As the UNHCR noted in an article that was published on May 10 2005: "This violence and the many assaults on the regime's opponents in the capital Lomé seem to be the main cause for civilians to seek refuge in neighbouring Benin and Ghana" (UNHCR 2005b). It is estimated that up to 500 people were killed in the violence and another 40.000 people fled into neighbouring Benin (25.000

people) and Ghana (15.000) in fear of persecution (IRIN 2007a). Some 12.000 people resorted to internal displacement, especially in the Plateaux and Central regions (IDMC 2005). In figure 1. (see appendix 1) the number of Togolese fleeing to Benin and Ghana from the period of 26 April 2005 until 19 May 2005 in particular is illustrated.

The majority of the fleeing Togolese were women and children. Later on these were followed by mostly young single males between 18 and 25 years, as these were the main supporters of the opposition and feared persecution (UNHCR 2005a). In both Benin and Ghana, most refugees resided with relatives and friends or temporarily rented a place to stay. About 37%, that is about 11.600 of the Togolese refugees in Benin, were housed in one of the two refugee camps, Come or Agamé, about 10 kilometres from the nearest border (Diallo and Kagunda: 2006: 5, UNHCR 2005b). Another 15.000 crossed over to Ghana, where the majority was given shelter by host families. One-third moved into the northern and central districts of the Volta region, and two-thirds moved into in the southern districts (mainly in the border town of Afloa (WFP n.d., 6)⁴. In both countries, the involvement of the local and traditional authorities and the existing humanitarian network, have been crucial to provide assistance to the refugees (UNHCR 2005b). The influx of refugees has been coordinated, food and non-food items were provided, health care was ensured and Togolese children were incorporated in the foreign local schooling system (WFP 2006, 8).

Right after the violent outbreaks some refugees expressed fear that the Togolese army might take retaliation measures against them if they return to their homeland (UNHCR 2005b). Even a year after the violent outbreaks reluctance to return remained for many returnees as a result of the paucity of independent and reliable information on the treatment of individuals who returned to Togo (UNHCR 2006b). However, in August 2006 a treaty was signed between the government of President Faure Gnassingbé and the opposition parties. The agreement, initiated by all participants, calls for the formation of a government of national unity and envisions legislative elections by October 2007. Furthermore, the accord pleads for the reform of key democratic institutions (IRIN 2006b). As a result of this, relative calm has been restored to the country and the Togolese government has been encouraging the repatriation of refugees, assuring them of their safety and offering incentives to return (IRIN 2006a). The latest inter-agency assessment figures also shows a fall in the number of IDP's, from 12.000 during the early days of the crisis to an estimate 3.000-1.000 at present (WFP 2006, 8).

2.1.3 International migration to Europe

The situation for Togolese fleeing to the West is remarkably different from those who fled to neighbouring countries. First and foremost it is important to note that due to a lack of systematic data, the profile of those who migrated to Europe is not well defined. A study by de Haas (2007, 36) showed that European bound migration from Togo has remained extremely limited. From the 222.008 Togolese emigrants, the majority resides in other Western Africa countries (65.9%). Solely 1.9 % arrives in Northern America and 16.3 % of its total emigrant population goes to Europe, the majority of which being 10.598 Togolese, living in France (Ratha and Xu 2007). These relatively small numbers are partially explained by the fact that most Togolese who flee to Europe often do this through ways of illegal and costly methods which generally makes it quite difficult to go. It takes months, even years of saving before one can afford this trip. Next to this, the journey can sometimes take weeks as most interviewed Togolese are smuggled by boat. In Togo the general idea is that those who

⁴ Figure 2. (see appendix 2) provides a good illustration of the migration situation in Togo, Benin and Ghana at that time and gives an estimated number of Togolese refugees and the Togolese Displaced Population as at 8 February 2006.

“flee” to Europe, especially those below the age of forty, often do this because of economic reasons, “in search of a better life”. With this in mind it is not surprising that the number of those seeking asylum in Europe did not increase significantly during major political upheavals and violent outbreaks. From the beginning of the 1990’s until this day Togolese have fled to Europe. However, while 2000 was considered to be a relatively “calm” year in terms of violence and political unrest, the highest number of Togolese (around 1600 people) applied for asylum in the west, mainly Germany (751 in 2000) and the Netherlands (375 in 2000) (Monnikhof en Van den Tillaart 2003, 34). In these asylum countries asylum seekers often live in precarious conditions in asylum seekers’ centres (Azielzoekerscentra), they receive inadequate assistance, are unable to establish their own livelihood, do not enjoy freedom of movement and can risk detention at any time of their stay, all this leading to great insecurity (UNHCR 2006a).

2.2 Present Situation

In 2007 Togo is still in a highly unstable political and economic situation, which has a great impact on its development, its educational system, and health system. Many Togolese have to live from less than one dollar a day; 32% of the total population lives below the poverty line (CIA 2007). According to the Human Development Index, life expectancy in Togo is 54,5 years and there is a 31% probability of dying before the age of forty. There are many cases of malnutrition, affecting 25% of all children under five. At this moment, Togo has six million inhabitants, with families having 5,4 children on average. However, as the socio-political crisis in Togo has had a negative effect on its health sector there is a high rate of child mortality (570 on every 100.000 live births). Public spending on health has dropped significantly, from 12.3% in 1999 to 5.7% in 2002 and governmental per capita health expenditure these days is only US\$4. In terms of education, adult literacy is 53.2%, caused by a relatively low gross enrolment (55%) in the primary, secondary and tertiary schools combined (IRIN 2007a). From conversations it appears that, because of this current fragile situation, many Togolese keep wanting to leave the country. Western countries are often referred to as “paradise” where one has access to health care as there is a social system, the chances of finding a job are greater, and good education is available.

On the 14th of October 2007 parliamentary elections were held⁵, that were considered by donors as an important benchmark for whether the country is ready to start receiving foreign aid again. The acting head of the European Union delegation in Togo, Joao Melo de Sampaio, told IRIN before the election (2007b): “A transparent and democratic legislative election could lead to the full resumption of EU’s cooperation with Togo.” When speaking to representatives of organisations, many of them noted that these elections might finally lead to some positive changes within the country. Even though the main opposition party UFC opposed the elections, the European Community of West African States (ECOWAS) declared them to be “free, fair and transparent” (IRIN 2007b). No demonstrations or violent outbreaks were reported.

Following these recent developments the United Nations (UN) has hailed Togo’s progress in the field of human rights. “There is change for the better, a new dynamic in this country, if we take as a barometer the conduct of the legislative elections on October 14,” the country representative of the UN human rights commission, Olatokunbo Ige, said on national

⁵ At Election Day, there was a high turnout of 95%. On the 17th of October the results were made public, disclosing that from the 81 states, the RPT won 50 states, making it the largest party to be presented in the parliamentary, followed by the UFC (21 seats), the largest opposition party.

television. As a result the European Union stated in November 2007 to resume full relations with Togo. A start was made as aid was given in the form of 40 million euros for development and 26 million euros for institutional projects and urban renewal (Republic of Togo 2007).

2.3 Involvement of (governmental) institutions and organisations in return migration

Since Togo is in a post-conflict situation there are refugees who are still residing in neighbouring countries and others who would like to return to their home country now that the situation seems to be calm. Within Togo there are a number of organisations that take in a leading position concerning the assistance of these refugees and deal with a great range of refugee issues within the country, namely: UNICEF UNHCR, HCRAH, CNAR, *Croix Rouge* (Red Cross Togo) and OCDI. Within these organizations there is especially a lot of attention for the thousands of people who fled to the neighbouring countries Ghana and Benin and for those who have been internally displaced. Flights are being coordinated and people receive emergency feeding, shelter and medical services while residing in the host country (IFRC 2005). People's return to Togo is furthermore managed by these organizations, and once Togolese refugees arrive in their home country these associations provide (durable) assistance in numerous ways such as: the realisation of micro credits, the re-entrance into schools, the provision of agricultural projects, and additional aid is given to children that fled non-accompanied. Specifically, mid 2007 joint projects for the reintegration of repatriates were developed by UNHCR, PAM (*Programme Alimentaire Mondial*), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation), UNICEF, UNFPA (United Nations Fund for Population Activities) and HCRAH. Besides, in order to ensure the sustainable reintegration of refugees a project for the mobilisation of resources from the *Human Security Fund* (UNTFHS) is being finalised by the entire United Nations System in Togo in the year 2008 (OCHA 2007, 2).

Togolese men and women that return from Europe have far fewer organisations to approach for aid. In Togo there is solely one organization, the OCDI, that provides these returnees with some financial aid which comes from different Western assisting organisations such as Cordaid in the Netherlands, Caritas Belgium and Germany and Solwodi Germany. These organisations indicate which persons they want to help in Togo and then the OCDI functions as a mediator between the partner organizations in Europe and the returnee of concern. However, with the exception of the OCDI, no other organisation within Togo provides any form of aid for those returning from Europe. This has to do with the fact that the representatives of these organisations consider returnees from Europe not as being refugees but as re-immigrants, who left their home country for economic reasons, in search of a better life. The idea is that those who go to Europe take a voluntary risk when applying for asylum in the West and therefore they must also deal with the consequences (of being sent back and becoming embedded). This is the reason why returnees from Europe generally do not receive assistance from most local assisting organisations. Only those who fled to neighboring countries are considered to be political refugees who feared persecution and had no other choice but to leave Togo and are thus provided with aid upon return.

3 Methodology

In this chapter the focus will lie on the methods that have been used in this research. I will touch upon the scope, sample and location(s) of the research. Next to this attention is paid to the methods that have been used, followed by a short description of the research bias and challenges that were encountered.

This research took place in an urban area, as the two months of fieldwork were mainly spent in Lomé, the capital of Togo, with additional daytrips to Kpalimé, a smaller city located in the South-West of the country. Most interviews were conducted at the respondent's home, which gave the interviews an informal character and also provided insight in the living conditions of the respondents. The sample of this research consists of twenty Togolese returnees. For the purpose of this research, the individual outcomes of three types of returnees were taken into consideration; those assisted by The Mediation Agency for Return (Maatwerk bij Terugkeer), those assisted by other organisations and those who returned without any assistance. From these twenty respondents, the majority (12 people) returned without the help of any assisting programme. As mentioned in the former chapter, this is linked to the fact that with the exception of the local partner organisation of Cordaid, OCDI (*Organisation de la Charité pour un Développement Intégré*), no other local organisation within the country is assisting returnees from Europe. Next to this, only a few Togolese returnees are helped by foreign assisting organisations. The majority of returnees from Europe thus return without any assistance, which is reflected in the sample. From the total sample, two cases had been assisted by The Mediation Agency for Return and five other returnees were helped by other organisations; Caritas Belgium (1 case), Caritas Germany (2 case⁶) and Solwodi Germany (2 cases).

The sample consists mainly of men as only five respondents are female. The interviewees are between the age of twenty-two and forty-nine years old, with ten people, the majority, being between the age of thirty and forty. Furthermore two ethnic groups can be identified within the sample; the Ewe (mainly Catholique), generally living in the south and the Kotokoli (mainly Muslim) who come from the centre of Togo. There has been contact with five Ewe and fifteen Kotokoli⁷. To get a better view of the lives of returnees in the country, apart from the twenty respondents, representatives from different assisting organisations have been interviewed⁸. With the exception of one returnee who had been helped by both Caritas Germany and Karavaan, all those who were assisted, including the two Mediation Agency cases, were found with the help of the local partner organisation OCDI. Remarkable was that the other organisations were only in contact with refugees returning from neighbouring countries, so unfortunately no returnees from Europe were found through these channels. As expected it was difficult to get into contact with those who returned without any help, as they are not "related" to any organisation. In this case, the snowball technique (chain sampling) was used. To avoid the serious bias of only using one particular network, all respondents and other local inhabitants were asked whether they knew returnees from Western countries, in this way finding as many different and non-related respondents as possible.

⁶ One of these cases was also assisted by a German assisting organisation Karavaan, after he fled Togo for the second time and was residing in Ghana.

⁷ See appendix 3 for a table with an overview of the main sample characteristics.

⁸ Two representatives, one from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Togo (UNHCR) and one from the Organisation de la Charité pour un Développement Intégré OCDI have been interviewed. Next to this, informal conversations took place with employees from the National Commission for assistance to refugees (CNAR), UNICEF, Le Haut Commissariat aux Repatriés et à L'action Humanitaire (HCRAH) and Peace Corps.

For this research, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used. A questionnaire was used to collect structured data on the situation of embeddedness and the factors influencing that embeddedness⁹. This data was later analysed through regression analysis. Additionally, qualitative data was collected in semi-structured in-depth interviews with a life history character to expand on topics addressed in the questionnaire, or those relevant to the situation of the particular respondent¹⁰. Most of the interviews took place with the help of an interpreter. This person was a returnee who spoke French, Dutch and Kotokoli. While respondents felt comfortable speaking freely about their migration history due to their corresponding background, the finer meanings of things said or done were often not fully understood and both expressions and different intonations of voice were difficult to distinguish. The interviews were complemented by informal conversations¹¹ and observations made prior to, during and after the interviews to see how returnees live, and go about their daily lives.

Because this research is informed by a small sample, the research cannot make generalisations that are immediately applicable to a wider population. This research has an urban bias. The situation in rural areas and urban areas deviates greatly and the outcomes of the research should be considered with this in mind. Furthermore, children who returned, returnees who have re-emigrated and Togolese from the non-migrant population are not included in the sample¹². In most cases where a whole family returned, only one family member was interviewed. Even so, the research findings indicate some of the most important issues, problems and solutions that Togolese return migrants are confronted with. Another possible bias is the fact that respondents were found through the local assisting organisation OCDI. Migrants outside of the OCDI network or those who may not have been on good terms with the organization were thus left out.

In the following two chapters the results of this research are discussed and attention is paid to returnees' embeddedness, and the factors that influence this process.

⁹ Furthermore the use of questionnaires made it easier to identify general patterns and significant differences in the results of the studies in the different countries.

¹⁰ The in-depth interviews took place with two Maatwerk cases, two non-assisted cases and two cases who returned with help from other organisations. For each in-depth interview a specific interview guide was developed and respondents were given the space to speak freely about their situation and experiences.

¹¹ Informal conversations with people in the streets, representatives of organisations, friends and family of returnees and returnees themselves provided additional information about Togo's history, the current situation in the country and the situation of returnees in particular.

¹² It would have been interesting to include the non-migrant population in this sample. As this would provide better insights into the situation of returnees in comparison with the rest of the population.

4 Embeddedness and influencing factors

4.1 Embeddedness

To gain more insight in the situation of returnees after they return to Togo, in this chapter attention is paid to the process of embeddedness of Togolese returnees. More specifically, three dimensions of embeddedness are distinguished: economic, social and psycho-social embeddedness¹³. Embeddedness should be seen as a continuum in which each returnee takes his or her unique place. Despite this continuum, for the purposes of this research, values were assigned to the levels of embeddedness to be able to calculate a score along the continuum. This score was calculated by attaching values to each of the elements of embeddedness. The mean of these values forms a number between zero and 100, which indicates the level of embeddedness. These scores should be seen as relative rather than absolute indicators, as a person is always to a certain extent, but never entirely embedded. Moreover, as embeddedness is considered to be a process, the scores of the returnees on the different dimensions of embeddedness, are never static.

To visualize the general situation on embeddedness in the country, the scores of embeddedness were ranked into three levels of embeddedness. Low embeddedness indicates 0-40, middle embeddedness 41-70 and 71-100, high embeddedness. Considering the fact that each returnee has a unique combination of scores on the different elements of embeddedness, it is only possible to generally indicate what these low, middle and high levels consist of. It can be said that a low score on embeddedness roughly indicates a very insecure position on respectively the economic, social networks or psychosocial dimension, a middle score suggests that a returnee is starting to find his or her way, but is not embedded in a sustainable way yet, while a high score would indicate a movement towards a sustainable embeddedness.

For each dimension the most important elements are highlighted, the general patterns of the division are being indicated and the difference between low and high embeddedness is illustrated together with an explanation of the consequences this has on people's lives. In the end the different dimensions will be interlinked, followed by a section in which three influential factors, individual characteristics, migration cycle and assistance, will be discussed that have an effect on the embeddedness process.

¹³ A description of how embeddedness is conceptualized and measured is described in the general report.

4.1.1 Economic embeddedness

After Nourou was forced to return to Togo in 2005 he borrowed 200.000 FCFA (300 Euros) from a friend to start up a business in selling medicines. He gave the money to a woman who would buy the products in Ghana. However, while travelling she got into a deadly accident leaving him without both money and medicines. The poor economic situation in Togo makes it extremely difficult for him to find a job and on top of this he still has a debt of 200.000 FCFA that he has to pay back. At this moment he resides with a close friend, who he can ask for money if he has no other choice. Every now and then he is lucky to earn something by doing small jobs for people in the community. His poor economic situation has a great impact on his life: ‘My mother lives outside of Lomé, far from here. I have not seen her for years, simply because I do not have the money to visit her. Also, I would love to have a family, a wife and children, but how am I going to support them? This is why I am still a single man at the age of 33. Life is really difficult in Togo.

Source: Interview with Nourou, (33, 17 October 2007) ¹⁴

Nourou’s situation is typical for those who return from Western countries; becoming embedded economically is an extremely difficult task, especially given the country’s poor economic situation. Table 1. illustrates the number of returnees that are either low, middle or highly economical embedded. In this report a number of core elements of economic embeddedness are distinguished that will illustrate this ranking. More specifically, economic embeddedness consists of seven components, namely: the ownership of, and access to, assets, having an income, the (in)dependency, sufficiency and stability of income and access to health care and education.

Table 4.1.1 Score on economic embeddedness

Economic embeddedness	Number	Percentage
Low (0-40)	8	40%
Middle (41-70)	12	60%
High (71 – 100)	0	0%
Total	20	100%

Source: Remigration monitoring study Togo

The Togolese returnees that were interviewed do not own many assets such as housing, working materials or land, as they often do not have the financial means to purchase them. Months or years after their return, all respondents still live in a rented room or the house of a friend or family member. A few of the returnees are currently living in extremely insecure housing conditions as they have to leave the house of their friend on a short notice. Nevertheless 60 % has some form of an income which is mostly generated from wages (65 %). 30 % receive an income from allowances that are given by family and friends. However, many times, payments from friends and family are given very sporadically and can stop abruptly if their beneficiaries cannot afford to give money any longer. While returnees have different income sources and receive some financial means, this income is generally indicated as not being sufficient. For example, solely 6 people are able to afford working materials. Thus a very small group of returnees actually possess assets, even so these assets are many times of bad quality or not sufficient.

¹⁴ To protect the privacy of the interviewees, pseudonyms are used.

Look at my car, yes it is mine, but almost every day something is the matter with it. The backlights are almost falling out, the doors do not close well, it often does not want to start, the gearbox is not working properly and the upholstery of the seats looks terrible. I can better sell it now, now that it is still working, I still have a chance that people will buy it (Amadou, 25, 12 September 2007).

40% of the respondents are considered to be economically reasonably well embedded as they are formal entrepreneurs and have their own small businesses or in the case of one respondent, a permanent wage income. They have relatively good housing conditions and have less worries about how to eat on a daily basis. One returnee even indicated that other people from the Togolese community ask her for financial aid as she has a booming store selling many products. However, having an income from such a business is not a guarantee for permanent economic embeddedness, as many returnees indicate the fear of losing their job since there is a lot of competition, and therefore end up in an even worse economic and unstable situation. Nevertheless, having a business appears to be a prerequisite, as it secures financial stability to a certain extent in comparison to those who receive far smaller amounts from their family, or from doing small jobs for people in the community.

The shortage of (stable) jobs and the lack of (a proper) income seem to be the biggest problem for returnees in Togo and places them in a vulnerable position. For example, because of their financial situation many returnees do not have access to proper healthcare. While 70% states they have access to medical care, the lack of money often makes it difficult to buy the proper medicines, and going to the hospital or another clinic is simply unaffordable. As a result, the majority of returnees indicate the only thing they can do is pray not to get sick. Furthermore, 50% does not have access to education, generally due to a lack of money. 'I really would love to go to school, to study and buy books, but how am I going to afford this? I do not have a job I do not have a sufficient income. Education is expensive you know. I am lucky if I can eat properly' (Moussa, 27, 17-09-2007). Other, mainly older returnees (35%) from around thirty years old and above can not afford to receive an education but also consider themselves too old to go to school, and see working and earning some money as a greater priority. After returning, solely 20% has received some form of education. From the 55% who has children the majority, 50% of these children currently go to school in Togo. However, for many returnees it is difficult, financially, to send all children to school. This instable economic situation forms an important incentive to re-migrate once again. 90% of all interviewees indicated they rather live in a Western country as their economic situation is far more secure.

Partial conclusion

As table 1. illustrates, Togolese returnees are generally either moderately or low economically embedded. While owning a proper business or having stable employment secures financial stability to a certain extent and seems to form a precondition for economic embeddedness, this is not a prerequisite for permanent economic embeddedness as great economic insecurity is caused by concurrence and relatively low wages. As a result, reaching a level of high economic embeddedness is extremely difficult. In Togo the unemployment level is high and those who are low embedded generally live in relatively poor housing conditions and are dependent on unstable wages from small jobs or allowances from friends or family which puts them in a highly vulnerable position. As a result of this unstable economic situation for returnees in Togo trips to visit family members who reside in other regions of the country cannot be afforded, decent health care can not be paid for and both proper housing, other assets and education, even for one's children, is often too costly. Additionally, respondents often lead an introverted life and suffer from stress and depression

due to unemployment and lack of future prospects. This often enhances the willingness to leave the home country.

4.1.2 Social networks embeddedness

Here in Lomé I know a lot of people and I think this is sufficient. I do not want more contacts. You know, having returned from Europe, people start to gossip. “He did not bring anything home”, which can create problems. I have one friend with whom I share my problems, who I can fall back on when I need money and with whom I can stay. He is very important to me. I would not know what to do without him. But the others, these are just people I know. I can not ask them for help or anything. We just laugh and talk together, that’s it. They are really of no importance to me, because what will they do for me? This one friend is my everything (Amadou, 25, 12 September 2007).

In this section attention is paid to the social networks embeddedness of returnees. Table 2. provides an overview of the scores on social networks embeddedness that will be founded by a discussion of the main elements of this dimension. Three components are distinguished, namely the sufficiency of social relations, the use of social relations in terms of material needs and emotional needs and the participation in associations.

Table 4.1.2 Score on social networks embeddedness

Social networks embeddedness	Number	Percentage
Low (0-40)	12	60%
Middle (41-70)	7	35%
High (71 – 100)	1	5%
Total	20	100%

Source: Remigration monitoring study Togo

When taking returnees’ social networks into account Amadou’s situation is typical for many respondents. 50% of the Togolese returnees from the sample indicated they have enough social contacts. Just like Amadou they state they know a lot of people from the local community, however these contacts generally do not stimulate the embeddedness process. Only one or two friends or family members are really of great importance to them, as they provide them with different forms of aid. In general, respondents (60-70%) approach family members and friends in the home country for both material and emotional needs. Next to this, one person indicated he can rely on his association, the mosques that he regularly visits for aid. 60% of all respondents consider their social relations to be (very) important and 25% of the respondents say that because of these networks they feel more at home. These useful social contacts function as a support network and facilitate the process of re-embeddedness. In times of need these relations are often also the only references of stability. Not having such a support network is a great deficit in the ability to re-embed in Togo. A good example of how social contacts can facilitate embeddedness is told by a young man who was able to start a small business in provisions with the help of his current girlfriend and her parents. His parents-in-law had a garage that they rebuilt into a store so that he and his girlfriend were able to sell products and generate an income. Today he is reasonably well off economically and emotionally he benefits greatly from his network, as all problems can be discussed with his girlfriend.

However, as many returnees rely solely on a few social contacts they find it often difficult to reposition themselves in Togolese society. If important friends or family members pass away, returnees are literally lost, as these are the only contacts that are relied on for

money, housing, jobs and even mental support. Respondents often have no idea how to go about if this would happen. Some even said they would chose to take their own life. In this sense Noël, a returned woman of 35 years old, is an exception as she is surrounded by many important and influential contacts in Togo on which she can rely. This explains her high level of social networks embeddedness. Next to the fact that she is married and has a stable relationship, she has intensive and good contacts with her other family members. Since one of her cousins is a high and wealthy priest in Togo, she can always approach him for aid.

40% of the respondents point out that they do not have enough social relationships as they can not rely on their former contacts as these were difficult to maintain due to migrating or because these former relations are struggling themselves to fulfill their own needs. The lack of useful contacts seriously undermines social networks embeddedness. As a result these returnees would like to get into contact with other people from the community. Those respondents who are not satisfied with their contacts, as they can not be approached when needed, generally consider their social relations to be of no substantial importance (30%).

While many interviewees (65%) had contacts while living abroad, these networks were rarely mentioned as being useful. Rarely do returnees receive financial aid from abroad. Additionally, transnational contacts are often difficult to maintain. Only one respondent received money from his former partner in the Netherlands. However, as this small amount was only provided once, this was insufficient for a proper investment.

A noteworthy finding is that while only one returnee indicated he can rely on his association in the home country, seventy percent of the respondents is a member of either a church, a mosque or even (only a small percentage) a political party. A man said about this:

‘Yes I am a member of a mosque, and being a member you can approach your association when you are in real need. However, I do not want to go there and ask for money. People know I returned from Europe and then begging for money at your mosque is impossible. I rather get money from other resources’ (Moussa, 27, 17 September 2007).

Returnees are thus often ashamed to ask their association for money because they do not want the community to know they are even worse off than most remaining locals, while having resided in Europe for several years. This, however, counts for most of their social relationships. Even if people have severe financial problems they rarely ask the community for money due to a sense of shame. Family and friends are generally only approached when returnees have no other option than doing so. As one respondent stated:

My brother lives here in Lomé. I can ask him for money if I really have serious financial problems, but I do not like to do that. You see, he has a wife and children. I can not expect him to take care of me too (Nourou, 33, 17 October 2007).

Partial conclusion

As table 2. shows, most returnees (60 %) are poorly embedded on a social networks level. The majority of returnees consider themselves to have enough social relations and often know a lot people in Togo. However the majority of these relations do not stimulate the embeddedness process. Only a few of these relations may be relied on in times of need and provide returnees with essentials such as housing, money, food, emotional support and even a job. These essentials help establish social networks embeddedness and are furthermore crucial for facilitating economical and psycho-social embeddedness. The fact that returnees are dependent on these contacts for aid puts them in a highly vulnerable position. Additionally as these contacts are very few these limited sources of aid can easily be lost. Moreover, some returnees indicate to lack social relations as former contacts were difficult to maintain as a

result of migrating or because these contacts have difficulties themselves fulfilling their proper needs. They thus have no one to fall back on, a shortcoming that negatively influences social networks embeddedness. Additionally, a sense of shame makes returnees often reluctant in approaching people from the community for help. While returnees have contacts living abroad, these relations do not function as a source of support. Next to the fact that transnational aid is rarely provided, transnational contacts are often difficult to maintain due to financial restrictions. Solely one returnee can be considered highly embedded on a social networks level as she is surrounded by both a relatively large and useful network.

4.1.3 Psychosocial embeddedness

Mohammed is a 49 year old man who had to flee Togo in 1994 since he belonged to the opposition party CDPA. He went to Germany due to the fact that it was relatively easy to receive asylum here, given the country's colonial past. He applied for asylum three times while residing in his host country, However, he was not lucky and he was finally forced to return to Togo in 1996. Now, having spent over ten years in Togo after his return, he still dreams of going back to Germany. He explains: 'There I felt good, I had money to eat and I was feeling healthy. I looked good and felt strong.' Here in Togo he indicates to have nothing. Luckily he can stay in a small room that belongs to a friend. However, soon he will have to leave as his friend wants to occupy the room himself. He will most likely end up in the streets like before. His life in Togo has been extremely difficult and unstable. He states: 'Maybe today I have some money to buy food but what about the day after?' Next to this he also felt and still feels very unsafe due to his political past as an opposition member As he was the treasurer he was arrested, tortured, and thrown into jail. His two bent middle fingers are still visible scars of these brutal treatments. 'You see these?', he says while pointing to his bended fingers on his right hand, 'This is what they did to me. I can not use them anymore, they can not stretch.' People from the local community often make fun of him. He is being laughed at and he notices that other people often talk about him in a negative way. 'I came back empty-handed', he says. 'After returning I am worse off then most people here in Lomé.' Because of his situation he does not feel at home and would do anything to go back to Germany. Yes he is Togolese, but since his country has nothing to offer him he'd rather leave to another country where he can live as a free and safe man.

Source: interviews with Mohammed (49, 18 October 2007)

The third dimension of embeddedness, returnees' psycho-social embeddedness, is slightly difficult to measure as it is based on people's perceptions and feelings. This form of embeddedness consists of four elements, namely the ability to construct one's own identity, the feeling of homeness, the feeling of safety and psychological wellbeing. A discussion of these components will explain the overview of scores in table 3.

Table 4.1.3 Score on psychosocial embeddedness

Psychosocial embeddedness	Number	Percentage
Low (0-40)	12	60%
middle	7	25%
High (71 – 100)	3	15%
Total	20	100%

Source: Remigration monitoring study Togo

Half of the respondents do not identify with their home country at all. This is first of all closely connected to the fact that, just like Mohammed, returnees often encounter negative behaviors from the non-migrant population; they are being laughed at, looked down upon as they returned empty-handed and they are talked about in a negative way. Returnees often face generalisations made by the Togolese that stayed in Togo. Those who return from Western countries are often seen by the non-migrant population as being rich, as they resided in wealthy Europe or the United States. Returnees indicated that family members, friends, even neighbours expect them to return with a “bag filled with money and goods” as Europe is seen to have good working opportunities. Unfortunately many Togolese returnees arrive in Togo without any financial means, as they are often forced to return to their home country and are only allowed to bring a small bag filled with some clothes. These expectations frequently lead to disappointments and incomprehension within the non-migrant population. The local community often does not understand why people left the “Western paradise” and returned to Togo which is in a highly unstable political and economic position.

Additionally, 55% does not feel “at home” in Togo. Most returnees deal with these negative attitudes themselves; social contacts are of not much use in coping with these discriminate treatments. However, some returnees are able to discuss these problems with one or two close contacts: their close friend, partner or close family members. Nevertheless, their feeling of alienation is not only a consequence of this treatment, but also due to their unstable economic situation. As one respondent noted: ‘If I do not have money to live a decent life how can I feel at home?’ A second crucial factor for becoming psycho-socially embedded is thus having enough financial resources. For example, while many returnees (55%) indicate facing trauma’s from the past and dealing with memories that have become more intense, even to the point of restricting their daily life, these traumas often are not the result of their experiences abroad in Europe, but of their ways of living in Togo. People worry about how to survive on a daily basis, especially those who do not work or who do not have a stable income. As a result, returnees often have difficulties sleeping, they stay at home and live a secluded life. A few returnees noted that other Togolese returnees who returned went mad and even chose to take their life as a result of their insecurities.

With the non-migrant population returnees do not discuss their migration history. Returnees indicate that it might be dangerous to talk about this past as they fear to be imprisoned. Because of their political background, 50% does not feel safe in their home country.

A third element that affects returnees’ feeling of “homeness” and psychosocial embeddedness is their change in mentality due to their stay abroad. As one respondent says about this:

After having lived in Germany, Europe, my mentality changed. Now I know what my rights are as a human being and as a woman in particular. People tell me I became much more emancipated. I learned about other ways of working, of handling things, of doing things. Life in Europe is just totally different. I think it really helped me in becoming who I am today, a strong independent woman (Sattou, 43, 28 August 2007).

This realization of one’s rights can have a negative impact on the psycho-social embeddedness process as returnees start to realize how oppressed they have lived and how corrupt their home country is. While some feel estranged, insecure and worse off in Togo and want to re-migrate due to their experiences in Europe, and their changed ways of thinking, others, like Sattou, incorporate their mentality change in their ways of living in the home country. She noted that this experience contributed to her being a more powerful woman, not only in Europe but also in Togo where people responded positively to her change in attitude. Including Sattou, 45% of all respondents state that they do feel “at home” in Togo as this is

where they were brought up. They too have worries, but find it more important to live in their home country where they belong, than to live abroad where they feel lonely and mistreated. As one respondent says about this:

In the Netherlands I was put on a boat! It was ridiculous! They treated us like animals! I was there for six months and saw many people go crazy. I too had psychological problems at one point in time. It was like living in prison. We could not leave this asylum seekers' centre, were not allowed to work. We could only stay in our room day after day. Here in Togo I feel at ease, I live with my mother, this is where I belong. [...] I do not want to leave this country again. No, I hope that I can contribute to the development of this country in a positive way (Kosi, 46, 13 October 2007).

Just as Kosi, several other returnees expressed their resentment towards the way they were treated in the host country. They often had to endure long-lasting asylum procedures resulting in great insecurity and furthermore the degrading behavior of the staff in the asylum seekers' centers was often mentioned as a source of psychological discomfort in the host country. As a result of this, three returnees decided to return to Togo on their own initiative. This was especially the case for Togolese females who divorced their husbands while living abroad and thus suddenly had to deal with many insecurities themselves.

Similar to Kosi's case, one other returnee sees a positive future for herself in Togo and wants to make a positive contribution to her home country. An influential factor for this high psychosocial embeddedness in particular is the fact that these returnees have a good social network to fall back on. They live together with their family and are able to discuss psychological problems with their close relatives.

Partial conclusion

Table 3 illustrates that the majority of returnees (60%) is poorly embedded psychosocially. Returnees' psycho-social wellbeing seems to be dependent on three sources. First the generalisations and negative treatment by the non-migrant population often makes returnees feel alienated. A second important source relates to the inability to meet financial needs. Due to the fact that many returnees worry daily about how to manage when their money is scarce, they often deal with stress, depressions and live an introverted life. Third, psychological problems also derive from mentality changes and the experienced secured life while residing in the asylum country. For many returnees these factors often make it extremely difficult to deal with their current unstable life in Togo, they see no future in their home country and want to leave they have the possibility to do so. However, 25% is psychosocially embedded on a moderate level and 15% feels completely at ease in Togo and does not experience any resentment from the Togolese society towards them as returnees. These returnees identify strongly with Togolese culture, people and society, which is largely related to their negative experiences in Europe that made them more appreciative of Togo. They want to make a positive contribution to their home country and are positive about their future in Togo. A high psychosocial embeddedness level is furthermore influenced by a good social network; contacts one can fall back on in times of emotional need.

4.1.4 Conclusion on embeddedness

What becomes clear from this section is that becoming embedded in Togo after one's return is often not an easy task. The poor economic situation in the country, together with the fact that most returnees (especially those who were forced back) return empty-handed, makes it extremely difficult for these people to build up something (buy a house, start up a business) or earn enough money and live a decent life. As a result of their poor economic embeddedness

level the majority of returnees would re-migrate if they had the possibility to do so. The willingness to re-emigrate is thus the most prominent sign of a failure to embed. If this situation does not change, the stimulation to stay is extremely small. Even so, most returnees would feel at home, and prefer to reside in Togo if they had enough money to live a decent and secure life. Luckily some returnees managed to generate an income from their business or permanent labour wage that seems to be a prerequisite for economic embeddedness. While the majority of social networks do not stimulate one's embeddedness, fortunately many returnees know a few people from the local community that can help them with their economic and emotional needs, in this sense being interlinked with returnees' economic and psycho-social embeddedness. Nevertheless, the fact that most returnees are greatly dependant on these few contacts puts them in a highly vulnerable position. Feeling "at home" in Togo, being psychosocially embedded is for many returnees a difficult issue due to the negative treatment of the non-migrant population, their unstable economic status, their sense of insecurity and the fact that most of their social contacts are of not use when dealing with emotional problems. Additionally, their change in mentality due to their stay abroad often influences their sense of "belonging" in a negative way. Problems to express one's identity and dealing with problems in adjusting to life in Togo are also important incentives to re-migrate again. Less frequently mentioned, yet also important issues for returnees are related to safety and the lack of it. Nevertheless, other returnees have become more appreciative of Togolese society due to their stay in asylum seekers' centers, the degrading treatments in the asylum country and great insecurity during the asylum procedure. Since some of these returnees stay with family members, who they can approach when emotional problems arise, this has an additional positive impact on their psychosocial embeddedness. If returnees feel "at home" in Togo and want to stay in their home country, they are also often more persistent in rebuilding their lives and finding employment or setting up a business. Hence, being psychological embedded can also have a positive impact on returnees' economic embeddedness.

4.2 Influencing factors

The former sections provide an overview of the embeddedness of returnees. However this concept does not stand on its own but is influenced in many ways. This report identifies three influential factors of embeddedness: the returnees' individual characteristics, their migration cycle and the effect of assistance. In the following three sections, these three factors are analysed to determine the extent to which they influence the embeddedness process of returnees in practice. Table 4. provides an overview of the most prominent influencing factors for each dimension of embeddedness.

Table 4. Factors influencing embeddedness¹⁵

Embeddedness	Primary factors	Secondary factors
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reason migrating • Status upon return • Reason return • Post-return NGO assistance • Financial (business) assistance • Family/friends assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending remittances • Sex • Age • Having children • Transnational contacts

¹⁵ The primary factors indicate the factors that affect embeddedness to a large extend, the secondary factors indicate the factors that affect embeddedness to a lesser extend but are stil relevant.

Social networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status upon return • Reason migrating • Reason return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex • Sending remittances
Psychosocial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reason migrating • Sex • Being married • Post-return NGO assistance • Reason return • Status return • Financial (business) assistance • Family/friends assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Sending remittances • Transnational contacts • Having children

Source: Remigration monitoring study Togo

4.2.1 Individual characteristics

For the purpose of this research, individual characteristics are divided into: sex, age, marital status, children, ethnic background and pre-migration education. Of these six factors several will be discussed in greater detail since their effect on the embeddedness process is somewhat more substantial. In this section those factors that have the largest effect on the embeddedness process of returnees will be discussed in greater detail.

After analysing these factors it is clear that each factor has a distinct impact on the different types of embeddedness. On average females seem capable to embed more easily than their male counterparts. This difference in ease between male and female embeddedness is likely a result of the lower expectations women encounter when they return. For example, even though they left Togo for political reasons and were forced to leave their home country, men stressed that the local community is disappointed when they return empty-handed and that they often face negative attitudes from the non-migrant population. On the other hand, the women interviewed did not have a similar experience. This is related to the fact that four out of five women initially left Togo to reunite with their partner. Thus, the interviewed women left Togo for a different reason that was somewhat in their control. Also, they chose to return to Togo themselves, in sharp contrast to most males interviewed who were forced to return. Thus, they were able to return in dignity and somewhat prepared. Women chose to leave their host country because they were uncertain about the outcome of the asylum procedure, were alone and were fully aware that ultimately they would be forced back to their home country. This uncertain situation in the host country made most of these women more appreciative of Togolese society. Additionally, the younger returnees are, the more they seem to be embedded. While both old and young returnees struggle with finding employment, in general it seems easier for younger people to make contacts within the local community and to find a job than it is for older people. Additionally, in comparison to the older returnees, several younger Togolese psychosocially embed easier as they are able to handle the emotional challenges better that are brought on by relocation. Interestingly, children can in some cases help stimulate returnees' economic embeddedness and in other cases hinder such embeddedness. By taking care of elderly parents, children help to facilitate economic embeddedness. However, the expense attributed to children has shown to be a hurdle to becoming economically embedded.

25% of respondents are single, 20% are engaged, 30% are married and 25% are divorced. Returnees who are married are generally less stressed and less likely to suffer from depression as they tend to discuss emotional difficulties with their partner.

With my wife I can discuss my problems, only with her. Since she works as a hairdresser she earns a little bit of money to support this family, I do not have

anything. If I need money I can ask her. Also, when I have emotional problems, if I worry or do not know what to do I talk to her. It helps. She is really important to me (Mauwenam, 25, 19 October 2007).

While relevant studies, Togolese non-migrant Southerners and the quantitative data outcomes presented in this study suggest returnees from northern Togo ethnic groups embed more easily than their counterparts in southern ethnic groups, the qualitative data outcomes do not indicate that ethnic differences have any bearing on the process of embeddedness. The interviewed returnees belonging to the Ewe, the minority tending to reside in southern Togo, did not indicate that their ethnicity hindered their embeddedness. Similarly, the ethnic majority, the “Kotokoli” generally residing in the (northern) centre, also did not state that their ethnic background was a factor. In this instance the qualitative data presents a more accurate representation of Togolese embeddedness. Regardless of ethnic background, returnees all face similar problems such as having insufficient financial means, not having enough important social networks and not feeling at home. Currently all respondents, regardless of their ethnic background, state they can express themselves freely. However, 95% of all respondents stated that they do not dare to speak about their past migration for fear of imprisonment. While the human rights situation has currently improved significantly within the country, most returnees still remember the harsh treatment of those who returned to their home country in the past.

Preceding their departure to Europe the majority of Togolese received some form of education. While one person did not receive any diploma, 40% and 45% received primary education and secondary education respectively. Only one person had gone to a university. The returnees of this sample are thus relatively low educated. However, as Ibrahima Traoré head of the UNHCR in Togo noted, “in Togo one’s educational level does not matter.” Finding work is extremely difficult:

In Togo there are just not enough jobs available. You know the mototaxi drivers, the men who drive around the streets with their taxi (motor), these people are often highly educated with university degrees. However, due to the fact that they can not find a job, they have no other choice but to do this work. They often do not even own these motors but drive them around for someone else, earning only FCFA 1000 a day (Ibrahima Traoré, 20 September 2007).

When taking this fact into account, being highly educated, does not have a significant influence.

4.2.2 Migration cycle

Before he left, Amadou was living in the centre of Togo with his family, in Tchamba a semi-urban area. As a fifteen year old boy he did not work but went to school. He had no worries as he could count on his parents if he needed something. However, as Amadou stated, at the height of Eyadéma’s terror regime he had to flee for his life, as police would enter houses and shoot at everything that was moving. Someone helped him to get on a boat where he spent days, weeks in a closed container with hardly any food or water. Then, when the boat stopped, he managed to free himself from his dark hole and was surprised to see he arrived in “a white man’s land” (the Netherlands). In the Netherlands he resided in numerous places, in the north of Holland in an asylum seekers’ centre, in Bergen op Zoom and finally he had his own small apartment in Roosendaal. Even though he did not work and had to watch his expenses as he did not have a lot of money to spend, he felt comfortable in his host country. He had enough money to eat, to pay his

housing and he had numerous friends all over Holland. He also started a course of plumbing and had just started his last year when the police arrested him at 3 o'clock in the morning. He was imprisoned and three months later he was put on a plane to Togo. He was not allowed to bring any pieces of furniture for which he saved for years. Only a small bag of clothes, fifty euros and his cell phone were allowed to come on board with him. In Togo he travelled to Tchamba to find his family, but did not recognize anyone or anything. Later on he received the sad news that his family had been killed. He decided to return to Lomé where he thought to have the best chance of finding employment. Being in Lomé also made it easier to stay in contact with the partner organisation of Cordaid, the OCDI, who assisted him upon return. Luckily, at Lomé station he was recognized by his former neighbour in Tchamba, who provided him with his son's phone number with whom he stays upon this day. With the money he received from Cordaid he was able to buy a taxi that provides him with some income. However, as he noted himself, he is far worse off than before he left Togo. He does not have any family anymore that he can count on, he does not have proper housing and every day he is worried how he is going to manage financially.

Source: Interviews/informal conversations Amadou (25, 12 September 2007)

Amadou's story illustrates the migration cycle of returnees. Their lives before, during and after migrating, consists of significant and often sweeping changes. This section will discuss the reasons why the Togolese migrate, then detail the experiences and situation they encounter abroad, and finally elaborate on the same features surrounding their return.

Reason for migrating

Togolese leave their home country for various reasons. As table 5. shows, 45% of the interviewees left Togo because of general or personal unsafety as a result of conflicts within the country. Additionally, 30% felt discriminated as an opposition member, 15% left Togo for partner reunion and 10% left to improve their financial situation.

Table 5: Reasons to migrate in percentages

Reason to migrate	Percentage
General/personal unsafety	45%
Discrimination	30%
Partner Reunion	15%
Financial improvement	10%

Source: Remigration monitoring study Togo

There is a particularly strong and significant relationship between the reasons why the Togolese choose to migrate and their embeddedness process. Especially one's psychosocial level is strongly affected in comparison to the other two dimensions of embeddedness. Returnees who migrated as a result of unsafety and discrimination have greater difficulties becoming embedded, than those who migrated for financial and family related reasons such as partner reunion. If the reasons behind migration are thus somehow within the control of the returnee this increases the capacity to embed rather than if economical hardship or conflict related problems caused the migration. Within this context it is interesting to note that the majority of returnees who left Togo for reasons that were somewhat in their control also had some form of agency when returning. They decided to leave their host country due to a lack of future prospects as they experienced great uncertainty surrounding the asylum procedure.

This contrast is explained by the fact that those who were forced to leave Togo expressed greater fears in becoming imprisoned in their home country and were generally more reluctant to return to their home country.

Regardless of their reasons for leaving Togo, the majority (80%) expected to receive a permanent residence permit. For many returnees it often came as a shock that their application was rejected. A man said about this:

Of course I expected to receive a permanent permit. I thought it would not be a problem. Only after I heard that people were put on a plane back to their home country I started to become afraid. When I finally had to return myself I was devastated. I really did not want to go back. I was feeling good in the Netherlands. I still think of my life in Europe. I wish I could go back there (Naba, 25, 18 October 2007).

As table 6. illustrates, in 60% of the cases the asylum application was actually denied, 35% was still awaiting the outcome of the asylum procedure and solely one person, Noël, had received a temporary permit.

Table 6: Asylum status upon return in percentages

Asylum status	Percentage
Rejected	60%
In asylum procedure	35%
Temporary residence permit	5%

Source: Remigration monitoring study Togo

Returnees who received a temporary residence permit are generally better able to embed. This status stimulates the psycho-social and social networks embeddedness process, in comparison to those who did not receive asylum. As Noël states: ‘I know I can return to the United Kingdom without a problem. This provides me with a great sense of security. If violence erupts in Togo I can leave without any problems.’ Additionally, a temporary status provides migrants with various rights and other opportunities. Noël worked as a translator for an NGO, earned a fairly good income, rented a house and stayed in close contact with her family and friends in Togo. These possibilities made it possible for her to support her family while residing in the host country and upon return, which formed an important stimulant for the strengthening of her social networks.

Additionally, the rejection of a permanent residence permit has a significant negative effect on one’s economic embeddedness. An explanation for this is that those who were denied a permanent residence permit, were also forced to return to their home country. As mentioned before, these returnees were not allowed to bring a lot of clothes nor other personal belongings; they returned with hardly anything of value. They had no financial means to invest, faced disappointment from the non-migrant population as they returned empty-handed and, just as most returnees, had difficulties finding a job.

Conditions abroad

Returnees often dealt with various living conditions while residing abroad. While some interviewed returnees resided two years in their host country, others lived in Western countries for nearly ten years. Generally, returnees who stay abroad for a longer period of time have more difficulties to embed in their home society. The longer people reside abroad, the less social networks embedded returnees have as transnational contacts are often difficult to maintain due to financial restrictions. This also becomes clear from Nourou’s story. Since

he stayed in Europe for nine years he lost contact with his family and friends. Upon return he says he did not recognize a single person, thus making it almost impossible to fall back on his former social network.

In addition, the housing conditions in the host country effects one's embeddedness upon return. Returnees who lived in independent housing are generally better able to embed economically than those who resided in asylum centers. A possible explanation for this is that living independently generates greater opportunities to work and socialise with non-asylum seekers and people with a more stable position in the host society. A good example is a young man who lived with a Dutch woman, his former girlfriend. He had intensive contact with his neighbours and people from the neighbourhood and worked as a pizza deliverer. He had an income and stressed the fact that he felt useful and at home in the Netherlands. After his return he was persistent in earning some money and felt the need to generate some form of continuity regarding his usefulness, he started a business and is economically relatively well embedded. On the other hand returnees who stayed in asylum centres sketched a different picture and generally pointed at the limited freedom of movement. As they stayed in their room for months, often unemployed, they became passive and depressed and experienced great difficulties in re-establishing financial stability in Togo. While the quantitative data does not illustrate this, these stories stress the importance of an active and independent life abroad. However, there are exceptions. As mentioned earlier, a few returnees became so dissatisfied with the living conditions in the asylum centre that they are currently more appreciative of Togolese society. They are eager to rebuild their lives in their home country and are persistent in having a successful business.

Four returnees generated savings from their work abroad, however this money generally does not influence embeddedness. This is related to the fact that these interviewed returnees who had savings, were forced to return to their home country and had to leave their money behind. As a respondent notes: 'If I would have been able to take this small amount of savings along I could have been able to invest it in my business or give some money to my family. That would have been great' (Kosi, 46, 13 October 2007). Next to the fact that most interviewed returnees were not able to save money in the host country, their ability to learn new and useful skills was also very limited. Pierre Madzin of the OCDI says about this:

How the West treats African migrants these days, I do not think this is the right way. People come to Europe to earn some money and to return to their home country so they can build a house and live a comfortable life. Instead they reside in asylum seekers' centers, they are not allowed to work and do not acquire skills. What people should do in Europe is let Africans work for a few years, provide them with education, jobs so they acquire knowledge that they can then apply when returning to their home country. In this way it will be beneficial for Europe but also for Africa (Pierre Madzin, 18 October 2007).

Solely one respondent learned skills in the host country that are currently applicable in his wooden furniture business that he started after his return. With the knowledge that was gained from a course in wood carving his work in the home country can be improved. However, 65% can not use their skills due to a shortage of jobs. The problem in Togo is thus that these learned skills often do not fit the Togolese context as they are generally of no use in the home country.

Social networks and remittances

Maintaining social contacts in the host country is essential in facilitating the process of return. Relations in the host country can provide migrants with practical information of the asylum procedure and the situation in These insights in the conditions and the opportunities in the

home country enable returnees to prepare for the reality in Togo. This has shown to be positive for their ability to embed psychosocially.

Togolese friends in the Netherlands informed me about the situation in Togo. I was glad I knew people who could provide me with a realistic view of my home country so I knew what to expect. Before returning I was able to mentally prepare myself for the changes I would have to endure (Naba, 25, 18 October 2007).

Furthermore, transnational contacts are often important for migrants who reside in a foreign country. Due to financial restrictions solely 45% of all interviewed returnees were able to stay in contact with friends and family in Togo. Additionally, the majority of the interviewees felt obliged to support their families in Togo. Yet, as money was scarce only 6 returnees (30%) provided their relatives in the home country with financial support. These remittances are an important source for facilitating economic and psychosocial embeddedness. Economic embeddedness is related to reciprocity; families that received remittances generally have less difficulties with providing returnees with financial aid upon return. Additionally returnees indicate that the sending of remittances contributed to psychosocial embeddedness since their feeling of being a “failure” decreased as they supported their families in the home country. Moreover, the sending of small amounts of money provides returnees with a sense of satisfaction as they know they did not “abandon” their family while living abroad. Furthermore, judging from returnees’ stories, remittances are also beneficial for the stimulation of social networks embeddedness. As remittances stimulate the maintenance of transnational contacts, former local contacts can more easily be approached upon return

Conditions surrounding return

As was already briefly mentioned before, another factor closely related to the status of return is the reason for returning. Interviewed returnees with a temporary permit or those who were still in the asylum procedure also mainly decided for themselves to return to Togo. 35% returned voluntary as they had the feeling they had no other opportunities. The other 65% was forced to leave their host country. The reason of return is of significant influence on all three dimensions of embeddedness. Returnees who returned “voluntarily” were on average able to embed easier than those being forced to return. An explanation for this is that instead of being forced back to return to Togo against one’s will, these returnees were able to return in dignity and, to a certain extent, prepared.

In the United Kingdom I worked for an NGO as a translator and heard many horrible refugee stories; people who fled their home country, who were forced back, terrible. After me and my former husband divorced I could have stayed in England but there was a great change that I had to leave for Togo in the end anyway, I did not wanted to end up just like the others and being forced back on a plane, handcuffed, under the supervision of many guards. I decided to return on my own initiative, to return in a decent way and sparing myself a lot of sorrow. I am glad I made this decision (Noël, 35, 3 September 2007).

Additionally, other factors that contribute to this positive outcome is the fact that ‘voluntary returnees’ either received assistance or had a social network to fall back on. Their financial situation was thus relatively secure upon return. While returnees who returned forcedly were awaited by the local police force, questioned and sometimes imprisoned for several days which often contributed to their sense of shame and alienation, those who returned ‘voluntary’ did not experience such treatments or feelings. Additionally, they indicated that the negative treatments of the non-migrant population were far less than those who returned

forcefully. In this sense ‘voluntary’ return stimulated the psychosocial embeddedness process of these returnees”.

Changes in context and living conditions

During the migration cycle returnees often experience changes within the context and living conditions. Generally, returnees encounter more difficulties to embed as the post-return situation in Togo is worse compared to the pre-migration or migration phase. All returnees stress that the situation in Togo has deteriorated greatly. This makes it extremely difficult for them to find a job, housing, or whatever else is needed. Aminata (34, 17 October) says about this: ‘Everything is much more expensive; now you pay twice as much for the same product. The holes in the streets have become bigger, there are less jobs. Everything went backwards I seriously can not think of anything that has gone better while I was away’.

However, not only did the societal context change in a negative way, their lives have also often changed for the worse compared to their ways of living before they left Togo. While 15% of all respondents was unemployment before migrating, after return this unemployment percentage has increased dramatically; currently, 35% of all respondents do not have a job. Picking up one’s former business is an extremely difficult task as both work and financial resources for setting up or re-starting a business are scarce. A good example of this is a returnee who was a hairdresser before he left for the Netherlands and is currently doing small jobs for the local people from the community. Although he is glad to receive some income he thinks it is a pity that he can not work in the sector that he really likes and where he is qualified in. He earns less than he did before and his current work provides him with less satisfaction. He suffers from stress as he experiences many difficulties to support himself. It is thus easier to re-embed for returnees if they are able to have some consistency in their employment sector in their different migration phases.

4.2.3 Assistance

Before, during and after their return, Togolese can receive assistance in numerous forms. In 65 percent of the cases returnees noted that assistance made it significantly easier to return and 55 percent said that this aid partially removed obstacles to return. In this section the most influential forms of assistance are discussed: financial assistance from NGOs, aid from friends and family and physical and mental health assistance.

First, NGOs provide aid during different stages of return. The general procedure for assisted Togolese refugees is that they make contact with an NGO when residing in the host country. Generally Western NGOs provide these ‘selected’ returnees with financial aid upon return. In this case, the local partnerorganisation (OCDI) functions as a mediator and provides these returnees with financial aid that is provided by Western assisting organisations. Apart from the OCDI, other local assisting organisations are solely involved with assisting returnees from neighbouring countries. Thus, for those returnees who did not make contact with an assisting organisation in their host country preceding their return, the chances are extremely limited to receive return assistance in Togo.

If NGOs provide return assistance, this has a positive and significant effect on both economic and psycho-social embeddedness. Immediately after returning, returnees that were in contact with assisting organisations felt they could turn to this NGO in a time of financial need. As a result, these institutions provide a financial base right after return. When assisting organisations provide financial assistance the results are generally positive. The respondents primarily invested the money they received in new businesses and improved their own economic situation as a result. For 80 percent of the respondents, financial assistance invested in business, or “business assistance,” had the most positive impact on the embeddedness

process. For single women, considered to be more vulnerable by European NGOs, assistance is much easier to obtain. This helps to explain the disparity that exists between male and female patterns of embeddedness¹⁶. Related to economic embeddedness, psycho-social embeddedness is in large part derived from financial stability. It is clear that when given a job and compensation returnees are less worried about how to support themselves and their families. This feature distinguishes them from those who have little or no income or rely on small jobs available within the community or on close friends and family for money. These Togolese are clearly in an even more unstable situation and as a result their plight is also significantly greater.

Second, assistance from friends and family after return helps stimulate embeddedness. Assistance after return is often provided multiple times and varies from small amounts of money to housing or job opportunities. As a result, returnees both feel and are slightly more economically secured than those who have to re-build up their lives without the help of others. Curiously the quantitative analysis reveals that those who received assistance from family or friends seemed less embedded. However, the collected qualitative data shows a different picture. In general returnees indicate that this type of assistance has a positive effect on their return as they are provided with important necessities. Many returnees stated that without this aid from their social network, they would most likely end up on the streets, since they can not afford their proper house.

Third, next to financial aid, physical and mental health assistance also facilitates embeddedness. Since health care is expensive and therefore generally unaffordable, returnees often stressed the need for physical medical care. Their inability to pay for decent health care for themselves and their children often results in great worries. Additionally mental health care was often mentioned as being crucial in facilitating embeddedness as many returnees deal with stress and depressions as a result of negative treatments from the non-migrant population, adjustment difficulties and economic hardships.

While beneficial in many areas, assistance also has limitations; for example 25 percent indicated it did not make returning easier. This is linked to the fact that assistance often does not seem to be responding to returnees' needs; 95 percent of all returnees pointed to this issue. Two female returnees say about this:

I received money from Caritas Germany upon return. I was happy, having something is better than nothing, but the problem was back then that I did not have any projects, ideas of how I would spend this money. Right after my return I had to adjust, think of what I really wanted to do and at that time I already received the money. It would have been much better if they would have given this to me now since I have many good ideas of how I can spend it (Sattou, 43, 28 August 2007).

I received money from Solwodi. I am very grateful for that, but look at me now. My money is finished and I can not buy more fabrics or other material to extend my shop and make it more attractive for customers. I have to work very hard to keep this business going; it is difficult especially being a divorced woman with children (Fatima, 39, 24 August 2007).

Immediate assistance after return is often given by NGOs in the form of financial aid and friends and family generally provide returnees with small amounts of money or housing. While this form of assistance is essential, it is stressed that this type of assistance is generally temporary. One should carefully consider the sustainability of return, as aid is often provided for a short period of time and lacks a long-term vision. While this assistance is initially

¹⁶ This influence of gender is explained in dept in section 3.5.1.

beneficial, it thus provides only a temporary solution. In addition, returnees like Sattou regret the ways the immediate assistance was spent. Right after their return returnees do not always have a clear idea where they want to invest their money in and accurate considerations are often lacking. Sattou indicated that her own needs changed after she resided in Togo for a couple of months. Currently she has a number of projects in mind, that would be worth investing in. Additionally, What returnees indicated themselves as a factor that needs to be changed in assistance is the budget. 85 percent of all cases noted that more money should be available. A respondent said about this:

Yes I need more money. Cordaid only provided me with a certain amount of money but I only managed to rebuild half of my store with this aid. Look, there is still so much that needs to be done. I need to buy proper tools; I need to invest in wood, in employees. They only provided me with a small amount which is nice, but how do they expect me to set up a successful business with this assistance?! (Kosi, 46, 13 October 2007)

What these three case illustrate is that plans need to be well thought out together with the returnee for them to profit optimal from the aid that is provided. Assisting organisations have limited budgets and little money available. As this is the case, additional funding should be searched for elsewhere before returnees start on an overly ambitious project like Kosi.

Assistance is given in all stages of return. However, for the obvious majority (90%) assistance after return is valued highest. As Moussa (27, 17 September 2007) states: 'I'd rather receive aid now, after returning to Togo then before or during my return. I was forced to leave my host country anyway; there is nothing I can do about that situation. This is where I have to rebuild my life, so receiving assistance here will be the most beneficial.'

4.2.4 Conclusion on influencing factors

Returnees' individual characteristics, their motivations, experiences and conditions during the migration cycle and assistance from NGOs and family and friends have a significant influence on the embeddedness process. Especially, age, having children and gender impacts both economic and psychosocial embeddedness. Younger returnees have less difficulties to find work, socialise and deal with contextual changes and as a result embed relatively easier than the elderly. While having children can form an economic burden, on the other hand they often take care of their parents and therefore provide some form of social security. Women who left for partner reunion and return 'voluntary' generally embed easier as they encounter lower expectations from the non-migrant population.

Additionally, both the reason for migrating and returning greatly influences the embeddedness process. Returnees who initially migrated for financial or family related reasons that were somewhat in their control embed easier than those who left Togo because they suffered from violence or discrimination as an opposition member. In addition to this, returnees who had agency when migrating, also generally decided to return themselves as they were less feared of becoming imprisoned. These 'voluntary' returnees either had a permanent residence or were still in the asylum procedure and had less difficulties becoming embedded than those who were forced to return empty-handed. This is related to the fact that 'voluntary' return enhances one's sense of returning in dignity and stimulates the feeling of belonging. Preceding their departure, returnees either resided in independent housing or asylum centres. In comparison to those who resided in independent housing, the life in an asylum centre, which goes together with the absence of work and the lack of social contacts, negatively affected the ability to embed in Togo upon return. Yet, there are exceptions, as some returnees became more appreciative of Togolese society as a result of their negative treatments in asylum centres. However, independent housing and an independent lifestyle

generally stimulate returnees' persistency in rebuilding their life. While residing in Western countries, the maintenance of social networks in both the host country and in Togo facilitates embeddedness. While relationships in foreign countries can inform the returnee about the situation in the home country, transnational contacts and remittances stimulate the reciprocity of help from family members, and increase feelings of satisfaction.

Within the migration cycle, assistance is crucial. Even though assistance is not always sustainable and concrete plans and investment ideas are sometimes lacking, which can result in regrets on how immediate assistance was spent, it is of great importance for stimulating embeddedness. Especially post-return assistance from NGOs and family and friends is strongly linked to returnees' economic and psychosocial embeddedness. While financial aid from NGOs is in general successfully invested in the starting up of a business, thus lowering returnees' worries, friends and family members provide returnees with first necessities such as housing, jobs and emotional support. Additionally, attention for physical and mental health aid is crucial as financial means are scarce and emotional problems are significant among returnees.

The following and last section provides a general conclusion and discusses various recommendations for NGOs and policy makers.

5 Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

As a result of its violent past, for the past forty years Togo experienced great outflows of Togolese migrants who fled to neighbouring or Western countries. However, Western governments increasingly force these refugees to return to their home country, which often goes hand in hand with various difficulties. However, the re-insertion of returning migrants into their home societies has hardly been monitored. This report addresses this gap Togolese refugees are received in their home country and whether they are able to embedded from an economic, social networks and psychosocial perspective. The main research question that formed the basis of this study is: *What are the factors influencing the embeddedness of involuntarily returned asylum seekers and refugees and what is the role of assistance herein?*

To answer this question three dimension of embeddedness were discussed: economic, social and psycho-social embeddedness. While a business or permanent wage labour is a prerequisite for economic embeddedness, the majority of Togolese returnees is poorly economically embedded. Unemployment and unstable incomes seriously hinder economic embeddedness which often leads to stress, frustration and depressions. Additionally, a vulnerable social position is caused by the lack of social contacts or the reliance on a highly unstable social network. Most respondents had only a few social contacts who could be approached for material and emotional needs such as housing, small amounts of money, work or mental support. Yet, even though usefull contacts are limited they form an important facilitating role for all types of embeddedness as they provide returnees with basic necessities. Furthermore returnees deal with psycho-social problems as their daily lives are filled with insecurities, disappointments and negative reactions from the non-migrant population. In addition, mentality changes often hinder adaptation to the ways of living in Togo. As a result, many returnees do not feel “at home” in their home country and indicate they prefer to re-migrate once again. On the other hand, for some returnees their cultural heritage and degrading treatments in the host country seem to stimulate psycho-social embeddedness. A feeling of belonging is both strengthened by cultural background and an increase in appreciation for Togolese society. These returnees would prefer to stay in Togo and are persistent in re-building their lives in their home country.

These embeddedness processes are influenced by returnees’ individual characteristics, their migration cycle and assistance they receive. Important influential individual characteristics are gender, age, having children and one’s migration past. Both women and younger returnees are generally better embedded than men and the elderly. Women’s voluntariness in the reason to migrate and return together with the fact that they are females, lessened expectations and negative treatments of the non-migrant population. Furthermore, the treatments in the host country made them more appreciative of Togolese society. Additionally, since women are considered to be a vulnerable group by NGOs, all the interviewed women received financial aid that was successfully invested in a business. Older returnees generally have more difficulties in re-establishing social contacts, finding work and adapting to significant changes within the country. Furthermore, children have a positive effect on economic embeddedness in particular, as they often provide some form of social security. While returnees’ educational level does not influence the embeddedness process due to a shortage of jobs in the country, one’s migration past often limits embeddedness as returnees often live an introvert. This is largely caused by the negative treatments they encounter from the non-migrant population and their fear to become imprisoned when they publicly talk about their experiences as a migrant.

Conditions within the migration cycle that are particularly influential are the reason for migrating and returning. Returnees who initially left Togo because they felt unsafe or discriminated upon as an opposition member faced great difficulties to embed psychosocially upon return. A sense of control is thus crucial for stimulating embeddedness and fear for imprisonment forms a serious hindrance to a sense of belonging. The reason to migrate is strongly interlinked with one's motive to return. Most returnees that left for financial or family related reasons also choose to return themselves. Returning 'voluntary' enhances the feeling of returning in dignity and those who received assistance and had a social network to fall back on faced less negative treatments from the non-migrant population and felt less ashamed than those who were forced to return. Furthermore, the conditions abroad impact the embeddedness process. As returnees stay abroad for a longer period of time, they often experience greater difficulties in becoming socially embedded. In addition to this, independent housing and an active and independent life in the host country facilitates economic embeddedness. The maintenance of both national and transnational contacts and sending of remittances to family and friends in Togo is also crucial. Social contacts in the host country can provide important practical information of the situation in the home country so returnees can prepare themselves properly for their return. Investing in transnational contacts and sending remittances makes it easier to fall back on ancient contact upon return. Additionally, sending remittances lessens the feeling of having "abandoned" one's home country and generates a sense of satisfaction as family members are supported. Furthermore, the changes in the Togolese context and living conditions of returnees often hinder economic and psychosocial embeddedness. Since jobs are scarce and continuity of one's former businesses is extremely difficult, returnees suffer from unemployment and stress.

Assistance is an important stimulant for returnees' embeddedness. Assistance from NGOs, friends and family and physical and mental health assistance positively contribute to the embeddedness process. NGOs often provide a temporary financial secure base. Additionally, the financial aid that is provided is generally invested in a business which generates an income and lessens worries. Furthermore, both help from family and friends and physical and mental health assistance is crucial. Family and friends provide returnees with basic necessities such as: housing, small amounts of money and even jobs. Physical and mental is important as returnees' lack financial means and often deal with psychological problems. Assistance is generally positively valued. However, assistance has limitations that need to be taken into account for future improvement; Is not always sustainable and concrete plans and investment ideas are sometimes lacking. As a result, assistance is not always effective. At times returnees regret the way immediate assistance was spent.

5.2 Recommendations

Following the presented findings, this section discusses a number of recommendations for NGOs such as the Mediation Agency for Return. An important point that needs to be addressed here is since migrants' ability to work and socialize in the host country has a strong influence on embeddedness outcomes, this should be addressed by assisting programmes. Within this context, NGOs should lobby for more possibilities to migrate temporary for work. In this way, they return with some money that can then be invested in their home country (for example housing or a business),. This is especially of importance when dealing with male migrants as the expectations of the non-migrant population are generally higher for males returnees for their female counterparts. Additionally NGOs should plead strongly for 'voluntary' return as 'voluntary' returnees who return in dignity, are generally well

embedded. In addition to this both assistance and the availability of important social networks are crucial in stimulating embeddedness.

Assistance is naturally a small part returnees' migration cycle which often consists of sweeping changes. However, as this research shows, assistance does form an important factor for stimulating returnees' embeddedness. As most organisations concerned with return and re-integration assistance have a limited budget, it is crucial to consider ways to use a small amount of money in a way that most efficiently stimulate embeddedness. Within this context it is of great importance to discuss returnees' plans and ideas before providing them with financial assistance. Considering the available budget, inform them about the possibilities they have and find out whether they have a clear idea of how they want to invest their money. If a project requires more money, inform and assist the returnee in finding additional funding. As a result, both regrets and overly ambitious projects can be avoided.

Financial assistance is only part of the solution. NGOs must recognize that other forms of assistance such as aid from one's social network is also crucial for the enhancement of embeddedness. Contacts in the host country are important in the preparation of return as they can provide valuable information about the home country. Furthermore, during the preparation of and after return it is especially important that (former) social relations in Togo are maintained as they often provide returnees with first necessities and play a crucial role in the embeddedness of returnees. As this is the case, in both the host and home country, NGOs should stimulate migrants' engagement in activities to maintain their networks with fellow returnees, former contacts and other Togolese. Specifically, stimulating the sending of remittances can enhance one's embeddedness in the home country as this provides returnees with a sense of satisfaction and enhances their chances of falling back on their former networks. Perhaps additional effort is needed in stimulating the social network when dealing with older returnees as they generally encounter greater difficulties in socialising and picking up former contacts than their younger counterparts.

Additionally, since small enterprises stimulate the embeddedness process, NGOs should consider providing micro credits as small loans can facilitate the starting up of a business. Moreover, NGOs must also closely consider the context of the community where a returnee comes back to. Since Togolese returnees often deal with disappointments from the remaining population as they return empty-handed, one could consider to involve returnees in development aid projects in the communities from which they come from. Even though the limited NGO budget can not facilitate great changes, these development aid projects will also benefit the non-migrant population. As a result, the appreciation towards returnees by the non-migrant population will increase. Next to the fact that this improves the social contacts of returnees, such a contribution to the local population also leads to a better psycho-social condition as returnees' sense of satisfaction will increase.

Even though there are a lot of assisting organizations operating within Togo, there is solely one local organization (OCDI) that actually assists returnees from Europe in close collaboration with numerous assisting organizations in Europe. It is important to invest in a better assistance network, thus stimulating cooperation and capacity sharing among organizations in Togo and involve more local organizations in the return process of returnees coming from Western countries as their knowledge about the situation in Togo and of returnees in particular is of great value. These organizations have a lot of contacts within the country, they have a more accurate view of what returnees need and they will be better able to contact relatives and friends from the local community and to sense the prominent needs of the local community.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Interviewed respondents

No	Name	Date(s) interview	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Left	Host Country	Back	Assisted by
1	Fatima	24-08-2007	F	39	Divorced	1996	Germany	2005	Solwodi Germany
2	Christel	25-08-2007	F	32	Single	2005	Belgium	2007	Caritas Belgium
3	Sattou	28-08-2007 08-10-2007	F	34	Divorced	1997	Germany	2003	Caritas Germany
4	Mariam	17-10-2007 29-08-2007	F	34	Divorced	1996	Germany	2000	Solwodi Germany
5	Abdou	29-08-2007	M	43	Married	1994	Germany	2004	-
6	Ama-dou	30-08-2007 12-09-2007	M	25	Single	1998	Holland	2006	Cordaid, Samah, OCDI
7	Noël	03-09-2007	F	35	Married	2003	United Kingdom	2006	-
8	William	10-09-2007	M	39	Married	1994	Germany	2004	-
9	Abou	10-09-2007	M	39	Married	1991	Germany	2004	-
10	Moussa	17-09-2007	M	27	Single	2001	Holland	2006	-
11	Naba	01-10-2007 18-10-2007	M	25	In a relationship	1999	Holland	2005	-
12	Ekoé	02-10-2007	M	22	In a relationship	1996	Holland	2000	-
13	Kofi	03-10-2007	M	31	Married	2001	Germany	2005	-
14	Ampa	10-10-2007	M	27	In a relationship	2001	Germany	2006	-
15	Chris	10-10-2007	M	35	In a relationship	1994	Germany	1997	-
16	Moham-med	12-10-2007 18-10-2007	M	49	Single	1994	Germany	1996	-
17	Alfa	12-10-2007	M	47	Divorced	1994	Germany	2001	Caritas Germany ¹⁷
18	Kosi ¹⁸	13-10-2007	M	46	Single	2001	Holland	2006	Cordaid, OCDI
19	Nourou	17-10-2007	M	33	Single	2001	Belgium, Holland	2005	-
20	Mauwe nam	19-10-2007	M	25	Married	1996	Germany	2003	-

¹⁷ This respondent was also aided by the assisting organisation Karavaan after he fled Togo once again and resided in Ghana.

¹⁸ On 13 October 2007 Kosi was interviewed by using a questionnaire. However, as this respondent elaborated on certain issues and provided important in-dept information, in the end this interview was in-dept in nature.

Appendix 2: Interviewed stakeholders¹⁹

Name	Institution	Function	Type of work (in relation to refugees/returnees)
Mr. Ibrahima Traoré	UNHCR Togo	Head of Office	Facilitating return, reintegration
Pierre Madzin	OCDI Togo	Head Human Promotion and Development Department	Coordinates assistance (European) returnees
Mr. M.K.D. Hotowossi	UNICEF Togo	Administrator child protection	Protection under-aged refugees
Mrs. Brownie Lee	Peace Corps Togo	Director	Coordinates volunteer work in Togo
Mr.Kokou Tcharie	HCRAH	High Commissioner	Facilitates return, reintegration
Various representatives	CNAR	-	Reintegration (foreign) refugees

¹⁹ Solely the first two representatives were interviewed in dept. Informal conversations took place with the additional stakeholders.

Appendix 3: Regression Analysis

Influencing factors	Economische Embeddedness			Social Networks			Psycho-social embeddedness		
	Constant	Coëfficiënt B (*sig) ²⁰	R square	Constant	Coëfficiënt B (*sig)	R square	Constant	Coëfficiënt B (*sig)	R square
Assistance									
Recieved assistance									
Assistance NGO	35.568	3.129 (*0.043)	20.8%	34.060	1.151 (0.461)	3.0%	20.837	6.120 (*0.004)	37.5 %
Assistance NGO or not	38.473	8.381 (0.388)	4.2%	35.292	2.677 (0.776)	0.5%	22.550	26.320 (*0.052)	19.4 %
Assistance host government	55.360	-5.206 (0.526)	2.3%	69.952	-12.919 (*0.089)	15.2%	77.846	-17.219 (0.139)	11.7 %
Assistance host or not									
Assistance home government	43.184	-27.184 (0.208)	8.7%	36.171	3.829 (0.857)	0.2%	33.240	-3.240 (0.920)	0.1%
Assistance home government or not	43.184	-27.184 (0.208)	8.7%	36.171	3.829 (0.857)	0.2%	33.240	-3.240 (0.920)	0.1%
Assistance institution	27.476	3.086 (*0.061)	18.2%	32.939	.736 (0.657)	1.1%	5.020	6.034 (*0.008)	32.8 %
Assistance institution or not									
Assistance family/friends	47.611	-3.306 (0.251)	7.3%	35.205	0.662 (0.814)	0.3%	43.814	-6.135 (0.138)	11.8 %
Assistance family/friends or not	58.805	-24.257 (*0.012)	30.5%	44.167	-11.149 (0.260)	7.0%	58.278	-36.000 (*0.101)	31.7 %
Financial assistance									
Conditional financial assistance									
Business assistance	36.976	16.162 (0.110)	13.5%	35.161	4.006 (0.690)	0.9%	26.988	20.300 (0.173)	10.1 %
Non-material labour market assistance	40.600	4.900 (0.658)	1.1%	35.233	4.517 (0.671)	1.0%	27.183	23.579 (0.132)	12.1 %

²⁰ * indicates significance at the 10% level.

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Non material information assistance	54.170	-12.995 (0.554)	2.0%		26.250	10.645 (0.614)	1.4%		9.380	24.945 (0.434)	3.4%		
Other non material assistance													
Pscho social or medical assistance	35.703	20.407 (*0.039)	21.6%		34.375	6.625 (0.508)	2.5%		30.733	7.817 (0.608)	1.5%		
assistance before return from NGO	39.359	7.045 (0.482)	2.8%		36.038	0.926 (0.924)	0.1%		24.502	24.504 (*0.082)	15.9 %		
assistance before return from Home/host gov													
assistance before return from friends/fam	43.618	-11.951 (0.369)	4.5%		33.074	21.926 (*0.076)	16.4%		30.566	16.744 (0.388)	4.29 %		
Assistance before return total													
Assistance during return													
assistance after return by NGO	34.548	24.257 (*0.012)	30.5%		33.018	11.149 (0.260)	7.0%		22.278	36.000 (*0.010)	31.7 %		
assistance after return by home/host gov	43.184	-27.184 (0.208)	8.7%		36.171	3.829 (0.857)	0.2%		33.240	-3.240 (0.920)	0.1%		
assistance after return by friends/fam	52.690	-16.715 (*0.084)	15.7%		43.571	-11.091 (0.243)	7.5%		54.239	-32.555 (*0.016)	28.1 %		
assistance after return total													
Social categories													
Sexe	9.423	25.921 (* 0.011)	31.1%		10.717	20.517 (*0.041)	21.1%		-35.359	54.749 (*0.000)	65.4 %		
• Age		17.234 (*0.071)				1.409 (0.890)				27.866 (*0.061)			
• Cs ²¹ : 20-27	31.502	7.474 (0.459)	31.0%		38.099	-10.859 (0.341)	5.7%		16.031	-10.183 (0.515)	21.7 %		
• 28-35													
• 36-43													
• <44		-18.316 (0.138)				0.414 (0.975)				9.866 (0.596)			

²¹ Cs. is an abbreviation for Constant, the factor of reference.

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Marital status • CS: Single • Engaged • Married • Divorced	31.502	5.043 (0.725)	12.8%	29.500	7.063 (0.620)	7.1%	24.182	-11.305 (0.518)	39.6 %
		11.667 (0.373)			6.083 (0.636)			4.375 (0.780)	
		19.266 (0.166)			14.500 (0.287)			39.378 (*0.026)	
Children	33.241	15.607 (* 0.093)	14.9%	33.333	5.508 (0.551)	2.0%	25.023	14.645 (0.291)	6.2%
Ethnic min/ma ²² CS: Majority	28.601	13.967 (*0.198) ²³	9.0%	30.900	21.850 (*0.029)	24.0%	22.757	22.757 (*0.004)	37.2 %
Pre-educatoin	28.601	4.990 (0.371)	4.5%	20.055	6.154 (0.247)	7.4%	21.532	4.357 (0.594)	1.6%
Migration Cycle									
First reason • CS: Personal unsafety due to conflict • general unsafety due to conflict • Discr. ²⁴ • Unability/ Desire ²⁵ • Other	39.810	1.763 (0.810)	25.8%	40.179	-1.339 (0.845)	43.1%	28.023	-10.354 (*0.105) ²⁶	80.5 %
		-6.169 (0.235)			-10.738 (*0.037)			-7.339 (*0.098)	
		7.802 (0.295)			3.661 (0.596)			12.269 (*0.059)	
		12.678 (*0.058)			7.202 (0.234)			30.252 (*0.000)	
Combined reason • CS: conflict&fear • economic • pers&family • fear (econ&pers)	36.726	13.274 (0.518)	25.8%	30.607	14.393 (0.475)	22.5%	18.633	29.287 (0.114)	73.3 %
		28.440 (*0.035)			23.976 (*0.065)			69.894 (*0.000)	
		1.689 (0.910)			14.393 *0.332)			24.967 (*0.069)	
Expectation asylum									
Duration abroad	27.950	2.413 (0.209)	0.86%	53.910	-3.052 (*0.093)	14.9%	40.490	-1.289 (0.652)	1.2%
Housing secure • CS: Asylum • Semi- insecure • Independent	33.227	12.773 (0.316)	24.5%	34.773	3.561 (0.797)	14.9%	29.806	-9.030 (0.654)	8.5%
		22.273 (*0.033)			3.519 (0.744)			15.420 (0.332)	

²² Ethnic min/ma is used as an abbreviation for: ethnic majority/minority.

²³ Since this factor is related to a double sided hypothesis (in two directions) one should divide the significance level by two which makes this value significant.

²⁴ Discr. is used as an abbreviation for: discrimination.

²⁵ Unability/Desire is used as an abbreviation for: Unability to meet financial needs/Desire to enhance one's economic situation.

²⁶ Since this factor is related to a double sided hypothesis (in two directions) one should divide the significance level by two which makes this value significant.

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Education Abroad CS: Yes	36.128	16.276 (*0.093)	14.9%		39.615	-9.294 (0.331)	5.3%		30.759	6.625 (0.651)	1.2%
Employed abroad CS: Not	34.650	14.350 (* 0.123) ²⁷	12.7%		36.875	-1.025 (0.912)	0.1%		27.413	11.330 (0.414)	3.7%
Savings abroad	42.312	-2.437 (0.839)	0.2%		35.141	6.109 (0.595)	1.6%		28.669	22.043 (0.197)	9.1%
Remittances abroad	36.012	19.376 (* 0.051)	19.5%		35.179	3.946 (0.695)	0.9%		24.467	28.703 (*0.047)	20.1 %
Contact abroad	35.136	14.864 (0.111)	13.5%		33.273	6.866 (0.456)	3.1%		20.636	27.648 (*0.037)	22.0 %
Health abroad											
Status return • CS: In asylum procedure • Temporarily protection • Rejected	53.237	4.921 (0.456)	31.3%	34.429	19.774 (*0.002)	46.6%	40.657	19.591 (*0.047)	34.9 %		
		-6.750 (*0.031)						-5.73 (0.816)			-5.843 (*0.169) ²⁸
Reason return • CS: Forcible returned • Fully voluntary • Voluntary but no opportunities	33.090	6.811 (*0.015)	35.6%	30.654	5.696 (*0.047)	21.4%	20.852	10.924 (*0.008)	36.5 %		
		5.477 (*0.068)						1.920 (0.527)			5.812 (*0.170) ²⁹
Years back	46.105	-1.206 (0.445)	3.3%		35.489	0.246 (0.872)	0.1%		40.189	-2.003 (0.3.82)	4.3%

²⁷ Since this factor is related to a double sided hypothesis (in two directions) one should divide the significance level by two which makes this value significant.

²⁸ Since this factor is related to a double sided hypothesis (in two directions) one should divide the significance level by two which makes this value significant.

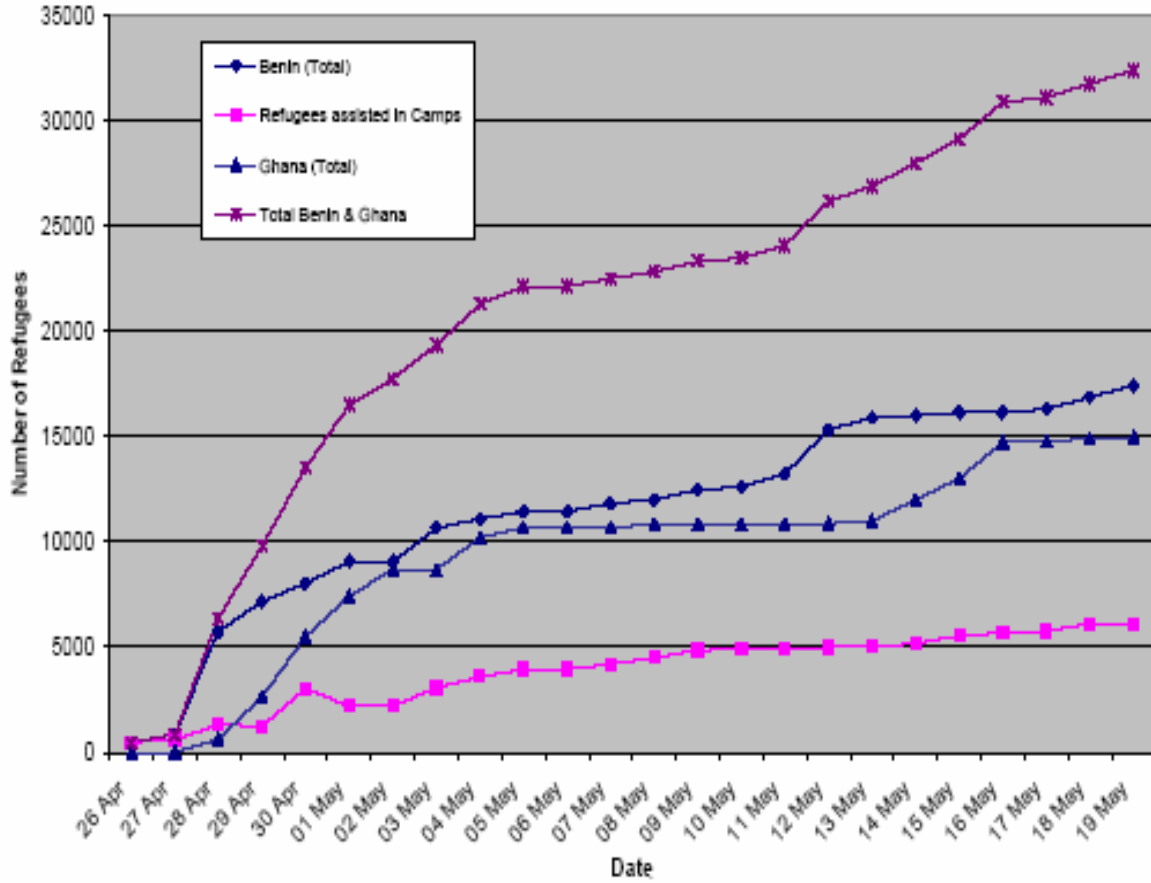
²⁹ Since this factor is related to a double sided hypothesis (in two directions) one should divide the significance level by two which makes this value significant.

Appendix 4: Main sample characteristics

Main sample Characteristics Total = 20 respondents	Number	Percentage
Sex	5 Female respondents 15 Male respondents	25% 75%
Age	20-27 28-35 36-43 > 44	30% 35% 20% 15%
Ethnic background	5 Ewe 15 Kotokoli	25% 75%

Appendix 5: Togolese refugee influx in Ghana and Benin 2005

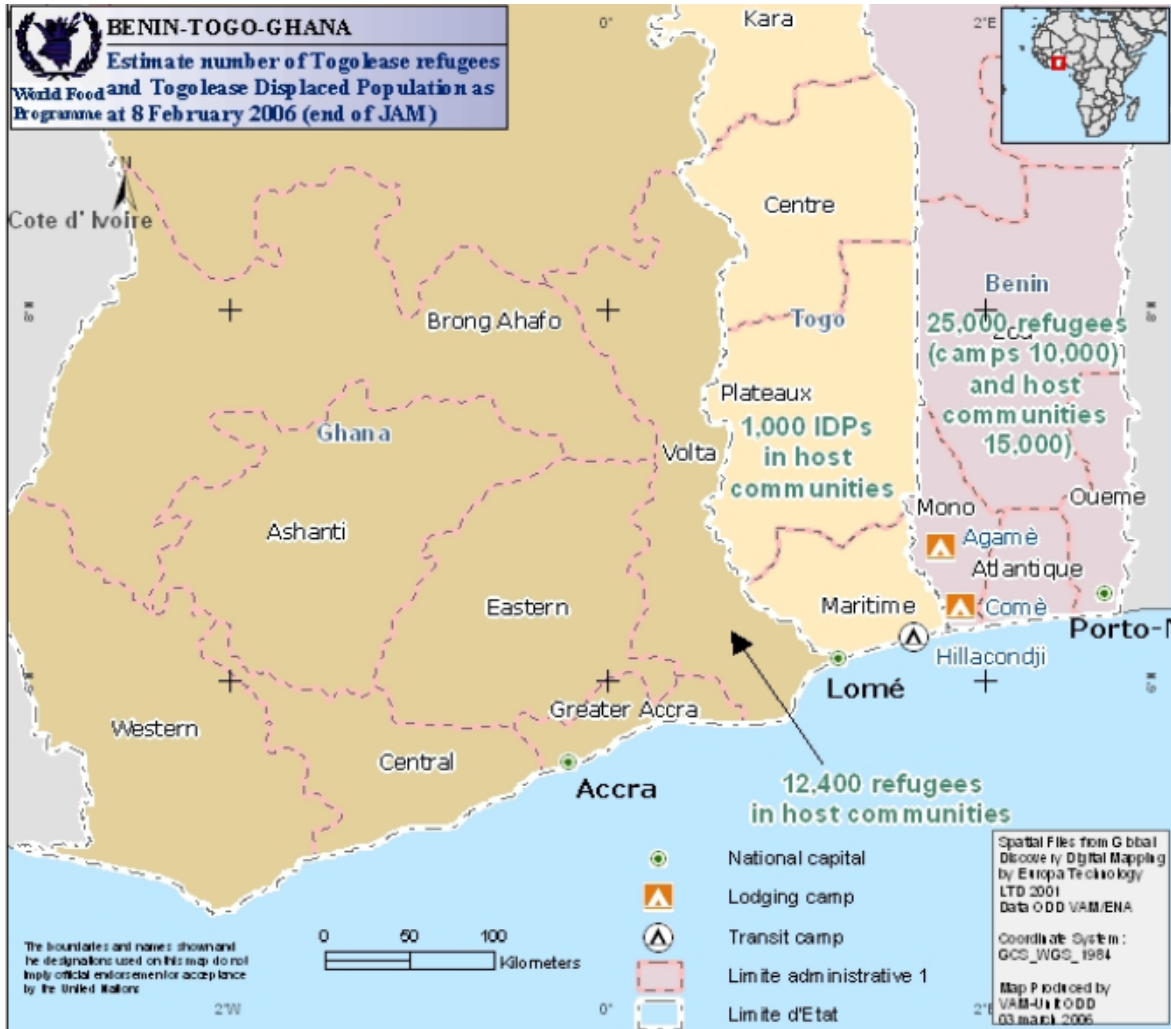
Figure 1. Togolese refugee influx in Ghana and Benin



Source: UNHCR May 20 2005c

Appendix 6: Place of residence Togolese refugees (8 February 2006)

Figure 2: Estimated number of Togolese refugees and the Togolese Displaced Population as at 8 February 2006



Source: WFP 2006