

... hope is rebuilt



Tarikom Refugee Settlement,
Upper East Region, Ghana.

Launch of the ECOWAS – Ghana Joint Support Project for People of Concern (PoC).



MARKS A LANDMARK COMMITMENT TO STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE AND DIGNITY FOR OVER
2,000 BURKINABE REFUGEES AND THEIR HOST COMMUNITIES THROUGH COORDINATED
HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT, LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES, AND REGIONAL SOLIDARITY.

**Tuesday
16th September 2025**

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4

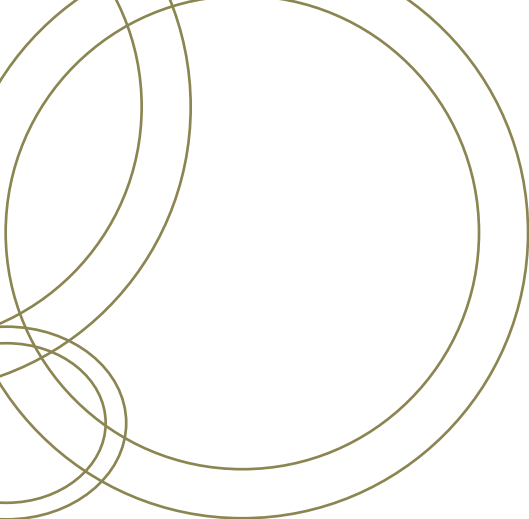
OVERVIEW 5

HUMANI INTEREST STORIES 7

CHALLENGES 8

RECOMMENDATIONS 8





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Executive Summary

The ECOWAS–Ghana Joint Support Project for the People of Concern (PoC) was officially launched in Tarikom Refugee Settlement in Ghana’s Upper East Region, a location that currently hosts the largest number of refugees in Ghana. The launch of the ECOWAS Ghana Persons of Concern (PoC) Project in the Tarikom settlement—home to over 2,000 Burkinabè asylum seekers, predominantly women and children—marks a significant milestone in regional humanitarian cooperation, offering renewed hope and support to those who need it most.

The project is financed with USD 604,576 by the ECOWAS Commission through its Humanitarian Affairs Directorate and implemented by the national NGO Right to be Free in collaboration with the Ghana Refugee Board and the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO). The initiative targets displaced persons, returnees, and asylum seekers across four locations: Ahafo Ano North Municipal, Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, Bawku West District, and Sissala West District.

The launch underscored ECOWAS’s commitment to transforming humanitarian policy into tangible action at community level. The remarks of Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe, Director of Humanitarian Affairs, emphasized solidarity, resilience, and the spirit of localization, highlighting how regional institutions and national actors can work together to address urgent needs while strengthening long-term resilience.

The presence of government representatives, traditional authorities, NADMO, the Ghana Refugee Board, and community leaders reflected the inclusive nature of the target intervention. Refugees, host communities, and local authorities all affirmed their readiness to collaborate in ensuring the project achieves its intended impact.



From left to right

Mr. Tetteh Padi, Hon. James Ayamwago, Hon. Albert Akoka Alalazuuka, Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe, The District Police Commander, Mr. Eric Peasah

Overview

The Tarikom launch was chosen deliberately, given the Upper East Region's role as a frontline host for refugees fleeing conflict in Burkina Faso.

The settlement in Tarikom, with its close ties to local communities, serves as a living model of how integration can foster resilience. Host families have already offered farmland, access to water resources, and shared health and education services, creating a foundation on which the project will build.

The project's focus is twofold: immediate humanitarian relief and longer-term resilience. Beneficiaries will include internally displaced persons, returnees, and asylum seekers.

Assistance will range from food and non-food distributions to community interventions such as boreholes, vocational & agro-business training, cash and voucher assistance, and livelihood support.

Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe's session was a highlight of the launch. Speaking in a warm, inclusive manner, she praised the generosity of the host community and reiterated ECOWAS's strategic role in supporting member states.

She stressed that humanitarian assistance is not only about emergencies but also a channel to build resilience and sustainable integration.

Her remarks were framed around four key messages:

1. West Africans are one people, bound by shared humanity beyond cultural and linguistic differences.
2. Refugee settlements should be approached as integrated communities, not isolated camps.
3. Regional policy must translate into practical support at local level.
4. Localization is a guiding principle, ensuring that interventions are community-led and context-driven.

These points resonated strongly with participants, demonstrating how ECOWAS is bridging regional policy frameworks with realities on the ground.

Her optimism that beneficiaries will one day share their own testimonies of resilience captured the essence of the initiative.

"In the face of adversity, shelter is not just a necessity—it is a lifeline for those in dire need. For the refugees of Ghana, it will be the foundation upon which hope is rebuilt."

— Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe, Humanitarian Affairs Directorate.



The event also showcased the alignment of the project with Ghana's national development agenda. Through partnerships with the Ghana Refugee Board, NADMO, and GRASP (Ghana Refugee Agribusiness Sustainability Programme), the project is synchronized with national efforts like the Feed Ghana Programme. This ensures interventions are sustainable and contribute to national goals.

Importantly, the project highlights that refugees are not a burden but can become contributors to their host communities. Equipping them with skills and opportunities, the project acknowledges their agility and potential.

The launch also provided an opportunity to thank traditional leaders of Tilli and Tarikom, who were the first responders in welcoming refugees and sharing scarce resources. Their inclusion in the project ensures that host communities benefit alongside refugees, reducing tensions and strengthening social cohesion.

The presence of dignitaries, including representatives of NADMO, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ghana Refugee Board, and local chiefs, highlighted the joint ownership of the project and reinforced the principle that humanitarian action succeeds when local, national, and regional actors collaborate.

"What we witness among the refugees is extraordinary: a steadfast resolve to work, to rebuild, and to thrive. In their determination, we see not just need, but boundless hope and unshakable resilience."

— Mr. Tetteh PADI, Executive Secretary, Ghana Refugee Board



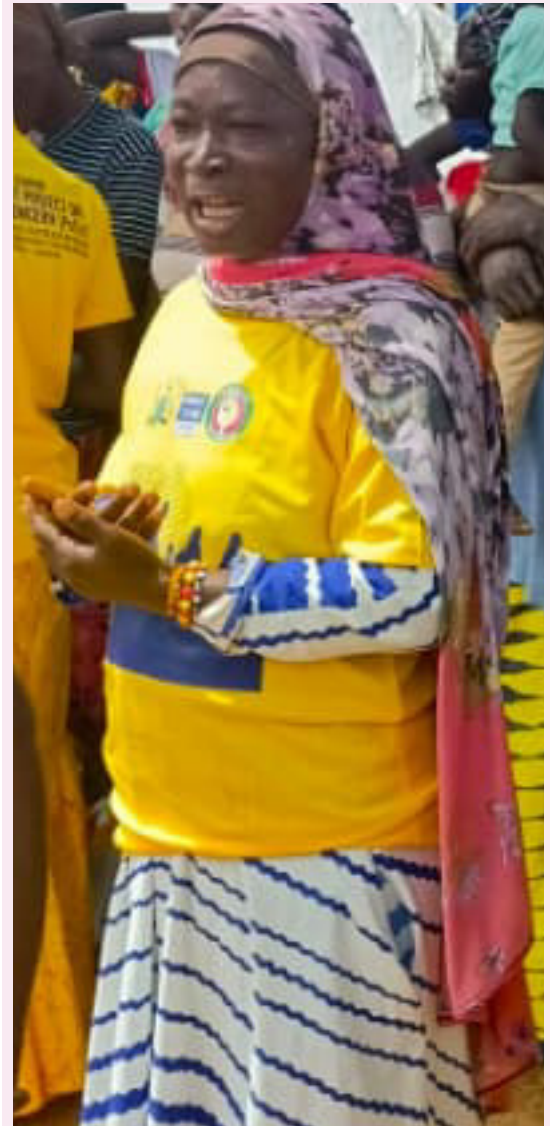
A delegation from the Directorate of Humanitarian Affairs, ECOWAS Commission, led by Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe's, engaged with Burkinabè refugees —primarily women and children—in the Tarikom district of Ghana's Upper East Region, reaffirming the Commission's commitment to protection, dignity, and sustainable solutions for people of concerns.

Human Interest Stories

When Madam Fatima Seone fled the violence in Burkina Faso, she carried little more than hope for survival and safety for her family. The conflict had torn apart her community, forcing her to make the painful decision to seek asylum across the border in Ghana.

On the 15th of June 2023, her family was received with dignity by the Ghana Refugee Board and the host community in Tarikom district, Upper East Region. Since then, she and her family have been living in the settlement, where she recalls how warmly the host community welcomed them, offering access to farmland and scarce services such as health care and WaSH facilities. This generosity, combined with the support of humanitarian partners, gave her family the stability they desperately needed.

Fatima explains that life in the settlement has not been without its challenges. As more refugees continue to arrive, the pressure on existing shelters grows. Many of the structures are wearing out under the high temperatures of the region, leaving families at risk of being exposed to the elements. Despite these difficulties, she emphasizes that the assistance provided so far has been timely, with supplies arriving before stocks run out. For her, this consistent flow of support is what has allowed her family to maintain a measure of dignity and security amid displacement.



Fatima Seone

ECOWAS, through the Humanitarian Affairs Directorate led by Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe, has played a critical role in strengthening this safety net. By working alongside the Ghana Refugee Board and the host community, ECOWAS has ensured that refugees like Fatima receive not just emergency relief, but also opportunities to build resilience. She is particularly hopeful about upcoming programs that aim to improve livelihoods and reinforce community cohesion. These initiatives, she believes, will help displaced families transition from mere survival to rebuilding their lives with dignity and purpose.

Beyond material assistance, Fatima and other women in the settlement have developed ways to cope with the emotional scars of war. Through recreational activities such as dance events, they create spaces of joy and solidarity that help ease the mental strain of displacement. For Fatima, these gatherings symbolize hope—a reminder that even in the shadow of conflict, communities can come together to heal.

Challenges

While the launch was a moment of optimism, several challenges were acknowledged.

1. Shelter remains a pressing concern. Existing structures are deteriorating under harsh climatic conditions, and the growing influx of refugees intensifies the strain.
2. Limited infrastructure compounds the challenge. The absence of electricity and poor access roads hinder both service delivery and livelihood opportunities.

Despite these challenges, the project provides a framework for addressing gaps in partnership with government, donors, and local communities. Combining humanitarian relief with resilience-building, ECOWAS and Ghana are setting an example for collaborative responses in the region.

Ultimately, the launch of the ECOWAS–Ghana Joint Support Project for the People of Concern is more than an event. It is a commitment to people uprooted by crisis, a recognition of the generosity of host communities, and a demonstration that regional solidarity can translate into meaningful change. The coming months will be critical in translating this promise into lived improvements for displaced persons, returnees, and refugees across Ghana.

Recommendations

1. Invest in durable and climate-resilient shelters, ensuring inclusion of both refugees and host communities.
2. Expand access to off-grid renewable energy, especially solar, to power schools, health posts, and community spaces.
3. Improve access roads through collaboration with local authorities and cash-for-work schemes involving refugees and hosts.
4. Scale up agricultural support, vocational training, and small business grants under the GRASP framework.
5. Strengthen psychosocial support, create safe spaces, and build inclusive protection committees.
6. Enhance joint monitoring and use digital tools for data, reporting, and accountability.
7. Advocate for pathways to integration, resettlement, or return, while linking humanitarian aid with national development plans.



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