Adventist humanitarian agency aiding in Ivory Coast

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The Adventist Development and Relief Agency is assisting Nigerians fleeing recent attacks in Ivory Coast and is developing an emergency health and hygiene project in the country.

United Nation investigators estimate months of postelection conflict cost the lives of 3,000 Ivorians, but now, poor access to basic health and hygiene care could threaten thousands more. Already, dozens of cholera cases have been reported in the nation's capital, Abidjan.

ADRA’s project will target a district of Abidjan most affected by clashes between Ivory Coast's Republic Forces and armed groups loyal to the country's former president. The agency is expected to distribute 4,000 hygiene kits provided by the World Health Organization.

ADRA will also refurbish a community health center that incurred extensive damage and looting during fighting and equip it with four months of medical supplies.

ADRA is also expected to expand the capacity of three community-based women's organizations that work to raise awareness of health and hygiene issues in Ivory Coast.

Meanwhile, the agency is also responding to the needs of thousands of Nigerian refugees fleeing Ivory Coast.

Neighboring countries have turned away the refugees, forcing many Nigerians to travel across Ghana, Togo and Benin on their way to Nigeria without the necessary food or clothing for the journey. ADRA is expected to provide 400 of the most vulnerable families with a two-week supply of food. Top priority is given to families with children as prime beneficiaries, the agency said.

Many of the exiles, although ethnically Nigerian, have never stepped foot in Nigeria and face challenges assimilating into new communities and adapting to unfamiliar languages.

Since the beginning of April, thousands of Nigerian refugees arrived in the country by the busload. ADRA continues to assess the situation and will likely expand its relief efforts as needs arise.