

# TOGOLESE

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

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This booklet has been compiled by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to help state and territory governments, service providers and other key settlement stakeholders to settle new entrants under Australia's Humanitarian Programme.

Accurate information about the pre-arrival experiences of refugees, including environmental conditions in camps, can be difficult to obtain and verify. While every effort has been made to ensure this document is factually correct, it may contain some inaccuracies.

Refugee experiences can vary considerably between individuals. Readers should note that this document is intended to provide a general background of the possible experiences of arrivals under the Humanitarian Programme. Information presented here may not always be applicable to individuals within the community in Australia or to new arrivals.

Where possible, more detailed information on specific groups of arrivals will be provided to service providers as an adjunct to this and other community profiles.

Policies in relation to Australia's Humanitarian Programme change over time. For current information visit the department's website at [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au).

The information provided in this document does not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government or its employees.



## Introduction

Togo is a small country in West Africa. After gaining independence from France in 1960, Togo endured seven years of political turmoil culminating in a military coup which brought Gnassingbé Eyadéma to power. Eyadéma set up and maintained what was effectively a one party state backed by the army. Limited democratic reforms were introduced in the 1990s but Eyadéma clung to power in the midst of accusations of political violence and vote rigging. He ruled until his death in 2005 after which his son, Faure Gnassingbé, was installed as leader in defiance of constitutional procedures. After protests and pressure both at home and abroad, Gnassingbé held elections in April 2005. The poll was marred by accusations of electoral irregularities, and violence followed Gnassingbé's win.

Clashes in 1992 and 1993 between security forces and opponents of Eyadéma's rule caused the displacement of approximately 300 000 Togolese. Many of them escaped to Ghana or Benin, Togo's neighbours to the west and east respectively. Although the majority returned to Togo over the next few years, others have remained in neighbouring countries, many of them in refugee camps, ever since. The election held in 2005 sparked fresh violence which sent approximately 40 000 more people fleeing across Togo's borders.

## Community in Australia

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship's Settlement Database records show that in the 10 years before 2007 there were just 20 Togolese migrants to Australia. Nine of these were humanitarian entrants, seven were family stream migrants and four entered on skilled visas. Sixteen were aged between 18 and 44 years old, one was between 45 and 54 years old and three were children under the age of 15. Each of the six states received at least one Togolese migrant.





## Pre-arrival experiences

Many of the Togolese refugees now arriving in Australia under the Humanitarian Programme have spent a large part of their lives in refugee camps. There have been two major outflows of refugees from Togo, in 1992-93 and in 2005. Most of Australia's current intake are from the earlier group and were accommodated in Krisan camp in Ghana. The majority are of Ewe ethnicity.

### Krisan camp

Krisan is a small camp in the south west of Ghana which opened in 1996 to house Liberian refugees. The refugee population of the camp in mid 2006 was around 1700, of which approximately 550 were Togolese. The majority of the remainder were Sudanese, Liberians and Sierra Leoneans.

The camp is in a rural setting and there is some scope for residents to grow their own crops. However, most receive food aid through the United Nations and aid agencies working in the camp. Residents also receive charcoal, kerosene, cooking oil and soap. A joint report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme indicates that malnutrition is not a serious problem in the camp, safe drinking water is available and its quality is regularly monitored. A medical clinic provides basic health care and some schooling is provided.

Tensions in Krisan camp boiled over in November 2005 when rioting residents, some of whom had been in Krisan for 10 years, destroyed buildings and property in the camp. Camp residents later said the riots were driven by frustration with a perceived lack of progress in resettling refugees.

## Settlement considerations

Togolese entrants may face considerable challenges in adapting to life in Australia. They need time to adapt to a new location, language and cultural framework. Their everyday life skills may have been extensively eroded by their experiences in refugee camps.

### Work and education

It is likely that many entrants from Togo will require assistance to gain training, work experience and employment. Some are experienced, skilled or qualified as teachers, drivers, waiters, tailors, carpenters or welders. Others may have experience in service industries or as traders. Some will have had occasional paid or volunteer work for the UN or aid agencies in the camps. However, many camp residents are unskilled, especially long-term residents. Those who do have formal qualifications may find that their qualifications are not recognised in Australia.

Some children may be unfamiliar with formal schooling as a result of living in camps where there is little or no structure to day-to-day living. Moving into a highly structured environment such as a classroom may require assistance. Parents are likely to be unfamiliar with the Australian schooling system and will require encouragement to engage with schools and teachers. Illiteracy or low education levels may be more prevalent among rural people, especially women. Most Togolese entrants speak Ewe and may also speak some French, and many will require interpreting services and English instruction. Those who have attended school in Ghana or have had a lot of contact with Ghanaians are likely to speak some English.

### Health

Health care in camps where Togolese have sought refuge is often limited. Commonly reported medical conditions affecting Togolese refugees are malaria, vision problems, parasitic infections and diarrhoea. Some vaccinations are provided but this is not systematic or universal. However, all humanitarian entrants to Australia undergo medical screening for visa purposes and most from West Africa undergo additional screening prior to embarkation. Entrants who undergo this pre-embarkation screening may have medical documentation



detailing which tests, treatments or vaccinations have been administered. Some Togolese may be unfamiliar with a formal health system, western-style medicine and being treated by a doctor of the opposite gender.

### Culture and family

Traditional Togolese age and gender roles may be significantly different from those in Australia and settlement challenges such as unemployment, differing rates of English acquisition between family members and understanding Australian laws may cause some family friction. Western-style dress may challenge traditional gender norms. A greater sense of freedom in Australia may also cause inter-generational or gender conflicts within families and communities.

For some Togolese, religion may be a very important part of life and finding a denomination, religious community and place of worship may assist in the settlement process. However, Togolese incorporation of traditional beliefs into formal religions may be an impediment to finding appropriate places of worship in Australia. Additionally, although many Togolese entrants are Christian, some are followers of charismatic or Pentecostal Christianity which may differ from similar denominations in Australia.

Some Togolese families are large and suitable accommodation may be difficult to find for these families. Togolese from rural areas and refugee camps may have had no experience of a modern urban lifestyle. Settlers may not be familiar with living in western-style housing and may need help with using appliances and utilities (electricity, telephone, and internet), income support systems and accessing public services.



Togolese flag

# Togo country background

## Location

Togo is a small nation in West Africa. It has a long, narrow profile, stretching more than 550 kilometres from north to south but not exceeding 160 kilometres in width. At 56 785 square kilometres, Togo is roughly 20 per cent smaller than Tasmania. It borders Ghana to the west, Benin to the east and Burkina Faso to the north. Togo has a short coastline on the Bight of Benin to the south. The capital, Lomé, is a port located on this stretch of coast.

## Climate and topography

Togo has a tropical climate. Around Lomé in the south, there are two rainy seasons with the first running from approximately April to June and the wettest part of the second, shorter wet season occurring in October. In the north, the rainy season runs from around May to September. Temperatures on the coast are fairly uniform, with minimums in the low to mid 20s and maximums peaking at around 32°C. Minimum temperatures in the north are similar, but in the dry season average maximums reach around 37°C. The Harmattan, a dry dusty wind blowing from the Sahara desert, affects much of the country in the dry season, but rarely reaches the coast.

From the narrow, sandy coastal strip split by lagoons and creeks, the land gradually rises from a plateau to tableland. Beyond this region, the Togo Mountains with peaks averaging about 700 metres above sea level run across the country from southwest to northeast. To the north and west of this range is an undulating plateau which becomes more rugged in the extreme northwest of the country. Vegetation throughout Togo is primarily savannah, although there are patches of tropical rainforest in the mountains and river valleys.







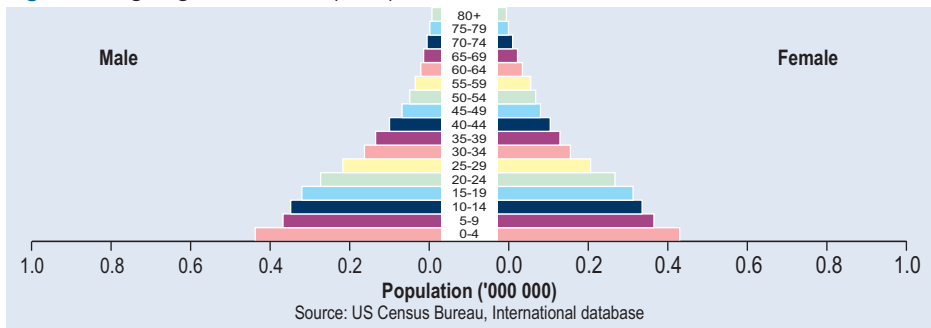
## Population

In 2006, Togo's population was estimated to be slightly more than 5.5 million. Lomé is the country's only major city, with a population approaching one million. The median age was 18.3 years and the population growth rate was 2.72 per cent per annum. Infant mortality was 60.6 per 1000 live births and life expectancy at birth was 55.4 years of age for males and 59.5 years of age for females. Figures 1, 2 and 3 provide comparisons with Australia.

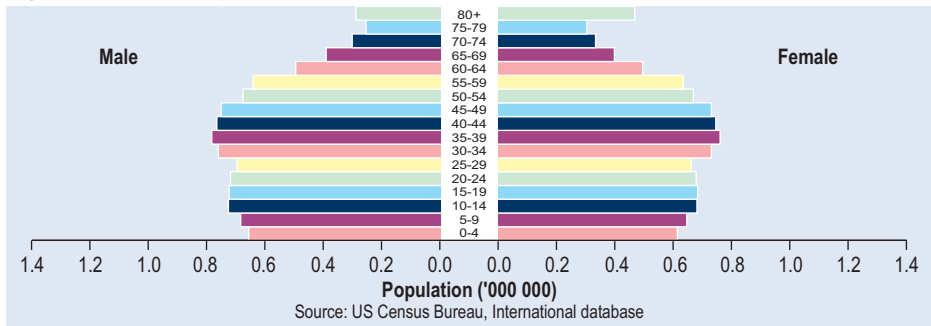
**Figure 1.** Togolese and Australian demographic comparisons (2006)

	Population growth (per cent)	Life expectancy (years)	Infant mortality (per 1000)	Median age (years)
<b>Togo</b>	2.72	57.4	60.6	18.3
<b>Australia</b>	0.85	80.5	4.63	36.9

**Figure 2.** Togo age distribution (2006)



**Figure 3.** Australia age distribution (2006)





Rural village, Togo © IRIN

## Ethnicity

More than 30 ethnic groups are present in Togo. The largest is the Ewe (21 per cent of the population) who predominate in the south, while the Kabye, also known as Kabre or Kabiye (12 per cent of the population) are the most populous group in the north. Both groups, along with other Togolese ethnicities, are also represented in surrounding countries.

President Eyadéma was born in the north of the country and was from the Kabye ethnic group. The Kabye dominate the army and police in Togo while historically the Ewe have been more heavily

represented in the civil service and in commerce, at least partly because of their location in the south where colonial administrations were based.

## Language

French is the official language of Togo and is used in government. Instruction in schools is in French along with some of the more common African languages – Ewe and Mina in the south and Kabye in the north. Between 30 and 40 other languages are spoken in Togo. English is taught in secondary schools and is spoken by some Togolese in the south and along the Ghana border. Refugees who have spent time in camps in Ghana may speak some English.

## Family

Polygyny, a form of polygamy in which a man may have more than one wife, occurs in parts of Togo but the practice is declining. Men are traditionally the head of the household and extended family links remain important for many Togolese. The average Togolese family has approximately five children.

## Gender and age

In rural areas, the role of women in everyday life is often restricted to domestic work and managing the family's crops. In more urban areas women work in markets and in manual jobs, but are seldom seen in business or professional life. Legislation designed to provide gender equality has been enacted but is



not always observed; in much of Togo, traditional systems and customary law hold sway. Customary marriage, as opposed to state-sanctioned marriage with full legal backing, is still common and as a consequence, many women do not enjoy rights such as child support after divorce or inheritance rights after the husband's death.

Although illegal, female circumcision or female genital mutilation has been performed on an estimated 12 per cent of girls, usually in the first year after birth. However it is not widely practised by Togo's larger ethnic groups.

As part of a wider West African network, Togo is a source, transit point and destination for child trafficking. Children are trafficked primarily for the purposes of domestic or indentured servitude, or street labour.

## Religion

Freedom of religion in Togo is protected by law. According to statistics from the University of Lomé in 2004, 47 per cent of Togolese are Christians of various denominations, with Roman Catholicism prevalent. Approximately 14 per cent are Sunni Muslims and most others follow traditional beliefs including Vodoo (Vodou or Vodoun), which originated in West Africa. Followers of Christianity and Islam may incorporate indigenous beliefs and practices into their faith. Christianity is more prevalent in the south of the country, while most Muslims are in the centre and north. Relations between followers of the various religions are generally harmonious.

## Food

A Togolese meal will usually consist of a starchy staple such as maize, rice, cassava, yams, sorghum, millet or plantains, which is pounded into a paste or porridge and served with a stew or sauce. Arguably Togo's most recognised staple is fufu, which is also found in other West African nations. The Togolese version is generally made from yams which are boiled and then laboriously pounded into a dough-like consistency. Fufu may be served with and flavoured by sauces made with meat (commonly beef or goat), peanuts, smoked fish, or vegetables such as okra or spinach.

## Health

Health care standards in Togo are not high. In 2004 there were only 225 doctors in Togo or one for every 25 000 people. Similarly low numbers were reported for nurses, pharmacists, midwives and dentists. The use of traditional health care is



Vaccination programme © IRIN

widespread in Togo. Many people consult traditional healers as well as or instead of a doctor.

Health problems in Togo are compounded by lack of infrastructure. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Report 2006* showed that an estimated 48 per cent of Togolese lacked access to safe drinking water and 65 per cent did not have access to adequate sanitation. Around 25 per cent were undernourished. Immunisation rates, which had been dropping since the early 1990s, have begun to rise again with 96 per cent of one year old children immunised against tuberculosis and 70 per cent immunised against measles in 2005.

## Education

The rate of literacy for Togolese aged 15 years or older has risen from 44.2 per cent in 1990 to 53.2 per cent in 2004. There is a significant gender imbalance with the literacy rate for males being 68.7 per cent and females 38.5 per cent.

Students in Togo spend six years at primary school and seven years in secondary school. Education is compulsory from the age of six to 15 but this is not reflected in actual enrolment rates of eligible children. In 2004, 85 per cent of boys and 72 per cent of girls were enrolled in primary school. In 2000, the latest year for which figures are available, secondary school enrolment rates were just 30 per cent for boys and 14 per cent for girls. A Togolese government commitment to provide free education has not yet been realised and school fees can be a substantial burden on poorer families.

## Economy

In the late 1970s Togo invested heavily in industrial infrastructure but this economic strategy was undermined by a worldwide downturn in commodity prices. The government has since undertaken major economic reforms and



restructuring in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank but progress has been slow, due in part to political instability and the associated circumspection of foreign investors and potential aid donors. However, by 2006, Togo's gross domestic product (GDP) was showing signs of reversing a trend of economic contraction. The UNDP's *Human Development Report 2006* ranked Togo at 147 out of 177 countries based on factors such as life expectancy, economic performance and education.

The agricultural sector comprises approximately 42 per cent of GDP and 65 per cent of the work force, engaging in both subsistence and commercial agriculture. Cash crops include coffee, cocoa and cotton, and these constitute Togo's major agricultural exports. Other crops grown primarily for domestic consumption include corn, sorghum, millet, cassava, rice, yams and peanuts. Cattle, sheep, pigs and goats are farmed, and fishing is important along the short coastline and in rivers and lakes.

The remainder of Togo's GDP consists of the services sector (35 per cent) and industry (23 per cent). Industrial activity includes mining and quarrying, agricultural processing, and manufacturing of cement and textiles. Togo's major natural resource is phosphate and the country also has reserves of marble and limestone. Phosphate is the major non-agricultural export. Togo imports consumer goods, food, petroleum products, vehicles, building materials and industrial equipment and machinery. Other West African nations are Togo's major export recipients, while France is the largest import trading partner followed by other EU nations, China, Canada and Côte d'Ivoire.

## History

Although there is evidence of prior habitation, some of the earliest identified migrants to the region now known as Togo were the Ewe people, who came from the Niger River valley between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries A.D. Other ethnic groups settled in the region during the following centuries. Europeans began visiting in the fifteenth century, with the Portuguese exerting early influence. The area was a major target for slave traders and consequently became known as 'The Slave Coast'. The Danes controlled the coastal region in the eighteenth century and the French set up trading posts in the area. German missionaries arrived in the 1840s and were followed soon after by German traders. A treaty signed by a local chief in 1884 established a German protectorate over coastal Togoland (as it was then known), from where Germany

began to extend its influence inland. Infrastructure was built and commercial agriculture encouraged resulting in Togoland becoming Germany's only self-supporting colony.

As happened elsewhere around the world, the borders of Togoland were formed with little regard to pre-existing cultural, ethnic or linguistic boundaries. Germany hosted the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 during which the European powers, basing their claims on existing possessions, reached agreement on the division of Africa into colonies. German Togoland was sandwiched between the British possession of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and French Dahomey (now Benin), and Germany negotiated treaties with Britain and France which delineated colonial boundaries in accordance with the European powers' spheres of influence. Ethnic and linguistic groups were therefore separated by colonial frontiers and as a result the Ewe people are now spread across southern Togo and Ghana, with the Kabyle straddling the border between Togo and Benin.

In August 1914, following the outbreak of World War I, British and French colonial troops invaded and occupied Togoland. After the war a League of Nations mandate formalised the arrangement with the British administering the western third of Togoland while the rest, including the entire coastline, came under French jurisdiction. British and French administration continued after World War II when both parts became United Nations trust territories.

Beginning in 1947, the Ewe people of British and French Togoland petitioned the UN for unification. However the proposal proved contentious and difficult to implement, partly because the Ewe ranged across three political entities – the two Togolands and the Gold Coast – and partly because the Ewe were intermingled with other ethnic groups with their own distinct interests and geographic distribution. In 1956 the people of British Togoland voted to merge with the Gold Coast, forming the nation of Ghana which achieved independence in 1957.

In 1956 French Togoland became a self-governing republic within the French Union, under Nicolas Grunitzky, the leader of the Togolese Progress Party (TPP). Elections in 1958 removed Grunitzky and installed Sylvanus Olympio of the Committee of Togolese Unity as prime minister. The new government kept its pledge to seek full independence and on 27 April 1960 the nation of Togo was created. Following elections in 1961, from which Grunitzky's TPP was



disqualified, a new constitution was adopted and Olympio became Togo's first president.

## Politics

Sylvanus Olympio's increasingly autocratic rule ended in 1963 when he was assassinated in a military coup organised by former non-commissioned officers dissatisfied with their prospects after being demobilised from the French colonial army. A young sergeant named Étienne Eyadéma (later known as Gnassingbé Eyadéma) later claimed to have fired the shots that killed Olympio, but subsequently retracted the claim. Grunitzky, who had gone into exile during Olympio's term, returned to Togo with the approval of the coup leaders and formed a new government. His rule proved short lived. In 1967, on the anniversary of Olympio's assassination, Grunitzky was removed from power in a bloodless coup led by Eyadéma, who by then had attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Eyadéma installed himself as leader and banned all political parties. A single political party was created in 1969 and Eyadéma was elected party president. His presidency of the nation was confirmed in a 1972 national referendum in which he ran unopposed. Eyadéma, who was part of the Kabye ethnic group from the north of the country, bolstered his position by appointing family members and other Kabye to key positions in government.

Togo remained essentially a one party state until the early 1990s. Two elections were held, in 1979 and 1986, but both of these were uncontested. Opposition to Eyadéma's rule manifested itself in other ways including bombings, violent demonstrations and strikes. In 1986, armed Togolese dissidents entered the country from Ghana in an unsuccessful attempt to oust Eyadéma. Gilchrist Olympio, the son of the assassinated former president, was held responsible by the government and was sentenced to death in absentia.

In the early 1990s, popular pressure forced Eyadéma to adopt a more democratic system. Political parties were legalised, an amnesty was granted to political opponents in 1991, and an election was held in 1993. Eyadéma won easily but the poll was marred by allegations of electoral fraud. Gilchrist Olympio, by now an opposition leader and survivor of an assassination attempt in which Togolese soldiers were believed to be implicated, was barred from participating.

Political violence escalated from 1992 to 1994. The army, comprised mainly of ethnic Kabye, cracked down on opposition parties and opponents of Eyadéma's





Togolese refugees © IRIN

rule, most of whom were ethnic Ewe from the south. A general strike crippled the economy. Clashes between demonstrators and security forces in 1993 resulted in reprisals by the military that forced an estimated 300 000 Togolese to seek refuge in neighbouring countries or Togo's interior. In March 1993 and again in January 1994, Ghana-based dissidents mounted raids on targets in Lomé. In response to human rights abuses and failures in democracy, the European Union suspended development aid to Togo.

Contested presidential elections were held in 1998 and 2003. Eyadéma won the 1998 poll but there were widespread claims of misuse of the electoral system and a subsequent enquiry by the UN and the Organization of African Unity found in 2001 that there had been systematic violations of human rights. A constitutional amendment in 2002 removed a prohibition on the president seeking a third term and another amendment to residential requirements for prospective candidates effectively prevented the exiled Olympio from contesting the 2003 election. Eyadéma was duly returned to office amid claims of election fraud.

President Gnassingbé Eyadéma died on 4 February 2005. Despite a constitutionally mandated process requiring the speaker of parliament to assume the presidency in such an event, Eyadéma's son, Faure Gnassingbé, was sworn in as president the following day with the assistance of the army. International protests included threats to cut off aid and the African Union denounced the succession as a military coup. Gnassingbé agreed to step down ahead of elections, which were held in April 2005. Olympio, potentially the





strongest opposition candidate, was again ineligible because of the residency clause and Gnassingbé was elected amid claims once again of electoral irregularities. Clashes between opposition supporters and security forces following the poll resulted in an estimated 40 000 people fleeing to Ghana and Benin. A subsequent UN report estimated that between 400 and 500 people had been killed and thousands wounded in the post-election conflict and cited evidence of summary executions, torture and arbitrary detention. The report found that Togo's security forces were responsible for most of the violence, although it noted that militias of both sides may also have been guilty of human rights abuses. An internal Togolese Government enquiry put the death toll at 154.



Protest in opposition stronghold, Lomé © IRIN

In March 2006 the government announced an amnesty for those responsible for all election related violence except murder. An accord signed by the government and opposition groups in August 2006 provided for electoral reform, the return of refugees, restructuring of the military and the end of political interference by the security forces. By the end of the year the number of Togolese refugees remaining in Benin and Ghana was estimated to be 14 000, the rest having returned to Togo. However many of those who remained in exile continued to fear persecution and expressed mistrust of the Togolese Government, citing the government's unwillingness to identify and punish members of the security forces responsible for the violence in 2005.

## Sources of information

The information in this report was compiled from a variety of departmental sources and the following organisations and websites:

### BBC News

<http://news.bbc.co.uk>

### BBC Weather Centre

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather>

### Encyclopaedia Britannica

<http://www.britannica.com>

### Countries and Their Cultures

<http://www.everyculture.com>

### Encarta

<http://encarta.msn.com>

### Encyclopedia of the Nations

<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com>

### Ethnologue: Languages of the World

<http://www.ethnologue.com>

### IRIN news

<http://www.irinnews.org>

### Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

<http://www.unaids.org>

### Oxfam

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk>

### Right to Education

<http://www.right-to-education.org>



U.K. Foreign and Commonwealth Office

<http://www.fco.gov.uk>

United Nations Development Program

<http://hdr.undp.org>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

<http://www.unhcr.org>

UNICEF

<http://www.unicef.org>

U.S. Census Bureau

<http://www.census.gov>

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<http://www.state.gov>

The World Bank

<http://www.worldbank.org>

The World Factbook

<https://www.cia.gov>

United Nations World Food Programme

<http://www.wfp.org>

World Health Organization

<http://www.who.int>

World Weather Information Service

<http://www.worldweather.org>