

KEY FIGURES:

>10 million people of concern in West and Central Africa*

>6 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

>1.3 million refugees

>1.7 million stateless

>26,000 asylum seekers

>1.2 million returnees

21 countries and 4 situations

Sahel crisis:

836,278 refugees: in Chad (472,110), Niger (229,455), Mauritania** (65,808), and Burkina Faso (25,492).

1,674,417 IDPs: in Burkina Faso (921,471), Chad (236,426), Mali (250,998) and Niger (265,522).

Nigeria situation:

294,798 Nigerian refugees in Niger (165,077), Cameroon (115,774) and Chad (13,947).

2,706,152 IDPs in Nigeria (2,046,604), Cameroon (297,380), Chad (236,426) and Niger (125,742).

Central African Republic situation:

620,247 Central African refugees in Cameroon (296,190), the DRC (171,987), Chad (93,507), the Republic of Congo (22,198), Sudan** (34,181) and South Sudan** (2,037).

684,004 IDPs in Central African Republic

Cameroon situation:

50,443 Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria.

679,393 IDPs in Cameroon.

**Key figures include refugees, internally displaced, stateless persons and returnees.*

***Country not in West and Central Africa*

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS**Political and security developments**

▪ In West and Central Africa, the **COVID-19** has put already fragile national health systems and economies under increased pressure, adding to pre-existing challenges linked to conflict and political tensions in several parts of the region. Refugees and IDPs are particularly affected by this pandemic. Often residing in overcrowded and precarious conditions rendering impossible social distancing or basic preventive measures such as handwashing they are exposed to heightened risks of contamination. Governments have adopted measures to curb the spread of the virus including closing borders, imposing travel bans, prohibiting mass gatherings, shutting down schools, and closing markets. These restrictions had a dire impact on local economies and increased the risk of food insecurity in the region, particularly in the Sahel. With their livelihoods severely disrupted, many displaced families resort to negative coping mechanisms, including child labour. There are also great concerns regarding gender-based violence which is on the rise since the beginning of the COVID crisis as a direct result of the preventive measures enforced and the economic strain these restrictions have put on many households. In an effort to mitigate the negative socio-economic impact of the pandemic, many countries in the region are have started to relax restrictions despite the COVID-19 pandemic accelerating in West and Africa, and moving from the main urban centers into the remote rural areas hosting the majority of refugees and IDPs.

▪ The **Sahel** conflict continues to escalate and expand in the region, undisrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In **Burkina Faso**, on 2 May 2020, anti-terrorist units entered the camp of Mentao near the city Djibo and searched several houses and injuring 30 refugees during this operation. While expressing grave concern for the safety of refugees, UNHCR assisted all injured refugees and called for an urgent investigation into the incident after which most refugees left the camp. On May 11, a joint operation was launched by **Cote d'Ivoire** and **Burkina Faso** against jihadist armed groups near their shared border. This new development indicates that jihadist groups have been strengthening and expanding their range of operations, leaving coastal countries fearful that the violence may spill onto their territories. In **Niger**, on 30 May 2020, a coordinated attack against the Intikane refugee camp in the Tahoua region killed three refugee leaders, caused severe damages and forced thousands of persons to flee.

▪ In effort to curb the escalating violence, the leaders from the **G5 Sahel** countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) and French President Emmanuel Macron met in Nouakchott in Mauritania on 30 June, to discuss a common strategy to improve the security situation in a region while addressing the humanitarian and development crisis. Concerned with the growing number of human rights violations reported in the region, UNHCR along with other United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations issued a joint-statement on 12 June calling the G5 Sahel countries and the international forces to commit to protect civilian populations during their operations and to ensure unhindered humanitarian access.

▪ In **Chad**, four refugee children lost their lives and three got injured on 24 June after manipulating an explosive device while on their way back to the Kounoungou camp where they resided, in Wadi Fira province, eastern Chad. UNHCR is responding to the needs of the affected families on site. Although this is the first case reported this year, incidents linked to mines and IEDs remain a persistent issue in the refugee hosting areas East and North of Chad.

- Instability and violence reached unprecedented levels in May and June in the Northwestern States of Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina of **Nigeria** where criminal groups are intensifying their attacks on villages. The security situation is also precarious in Northeast **Nigeria** and in the **Lake Chad Basin** region. On 12 June, islamists groups affiliated to Boko Haram mounted a daylight attack on Monguno town, attempting to enter the Humanitarian Hub (HH), which serves as an office and residence for UN and INGO staff in the area. At least 20 soldiers and over 40 civilians have been killed in the attack which took place a few days after at least 81 civilians were killed in the village Gubio, in the same State of Borno, With the ongoing violence by Boko Haram and other armed groups, populations continue to be forced to flee across the Lake Chad region where some 2.5 million people are currently displaced, including some 1.8 million inside Nigeria, most of them scattered in overcrowded sites where living conditions remain precarious despite international assistance. On 22 May 2020, a large fire which swept through one of the IDP sites around Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, leaving two people dead and destroying the shelters and belongings of over 4,000 displaced people. The fire began after sparks from a cooking fireplace spread out and ignited a fire which soon engulfed shelters all around the camp. In the past few months, several fire incidents have occurred in congested IDP camps across North East Nigeria where shelters are too close for safety UNHCR is working with the authorities, aid agencies and local partners to make sure those affected receive shelter and other relief items as people are once again displaced inside and outside of the camp. Many, including young children, are living under the open skies, needing immediate help with shelter, food and clothing and other core relief items.



The Muna camp for internally displaced people in Maiduguri, Nigeria, December 1, 2016. © UNHCR/Afolabi Sotunde

Population movements

- Despite the restrictive measures taken across the region, limited **cross-border movements are continuing** through unofficial border entry points or allowed by the authorities based on protection needs. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in the border closures and other restrictions, cross-country movements have continued in the region, with spontaneous refugee returns taking place from Cameroon to CAR and from Burkina Faso and Niger to Mali and new refugees arriving mostly to Nigeria from North West and South West Cameroon and to Niger from Western Nigeria.
- In **Burkina Faso**, the number of IDPs reached over 920,000 at the end of June 2020, representing a 64% increase since the beginning of the year. Since the violent incident that took place in Mentao on 2 May, the over 5,700 refugees who used to reside in the camp have all fled. Some families were relocated to safer location in Burkina Faso while other opted to return to Mali despite the endemic insecurity in the area and the border closure. UNHCR is working with the Governments of Burkina Faso and Mali to allow for exceptional cross-border movements on the ground of protection and facilitates the return of those who seek support.
- In **Western Niger**, insecurity in the Tillabery and Tahoua regions continues to force a growing number of people to flee their homes. Malian refugees and Niger national are also fleeing their homes to find safety in neighbouring areas. An increasing number of Malian refugees thinks it is safer to return to their home country rather than remain in Niger. Following the security incident in Intikane on 30 May, over 9,200 individuals left the refugee hosting area of which some 400 have returned to Mali, mostly to the localities of Tamalat, Inchinanane, and

Aghazzarakane. UNHCR is working to support the survivors and is providing urgently needed assistance – for example organizing water delivery to make sure that refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities have water available for drinking and for hand washing, which is critical in preventing COVID-19 from spreading.

- In Northwestern **Nigeria**, 74 villagers were killed on 27 May in the border town of Sabon Birni in the State of Sokoto leading thousands of people to flee inside the country and into **Niger**, in the border region of Maradi. This massacre is one of the many attacks that have been taking place in that region since the end of April 2020, forcing thousands to flee their home, including in the Maradi region of Niger where UNHCR's partners signaled 10,000 new arrivals by the end of June. A joint mission with the authorities is planned by UNHCR to confirm these figures. The Nigerian criminal groups also carry out recurring raids across the border, causing the internal displacement of over 23,000 Niger nationals and the secondary displacement of many refugees. This new influx brings to over 70,000 the estimated number of Nigerian refugees who arrived in the area since April 2019. The Niger confirmed on 9 July that all of them would be granted prima facie refugee status. Most of them currently living in precarious conditions in villages scattered in a 20-kilometre deep band of land along the border. The priority for UNHCR is the relocation of the refugees to villages of opportunity away from the border, to ensure their effective protection and ease the pressure on host populations of the border area. As end of June, over 6,700 refugees have been relocated and the objective is to reach 15 000 by the end of August. The assistance provided by UNHCR and its partners also targets the host populations of these traditionally underserved areas basic infrastructures and public services are lacking.



Relocation efforts ongoing in the Maradi region where UNHCR has already transported over 6,700 Nigerian refugees to safer villages and better living condition. © UNHCR Niger / Selim Meddeb Hamrouni

- In the **Central African Republic**, while refugee returns from neighboring countries have reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country is facing a new refugee influx from the Democratic Republic of Congo 2020 following a wave of violence in area of Bouda since the end of May 2020. At the end of June 2020, an estimated 3,000 refugees from the DRC had arrived in the town of Kouango in the Ouaka prefecture, in the south of CAR. UNHCR is supporting the authorities to assist the new arrivals with core relief items including mats, blankets, tarpaulin, kitchen kit, jerrycan, bucket and hygiene materials.
- The conflict in the North-West and South-West regions of **Cameroon** continues to force hundreds of people to flee their home. Despite the border-closure with Nigeria, many are still crossing through unofficial entry points. UNHCR and its partners continue to provide protection services, healthcare, food and NFI assistance to new arrivals and UNHCR has additionally been undertaking sensitization in response to the pandemic.

Key Activities

- To address the challenges created by the **COVID-19** pandemic, UNHCR Operations across the region have also taken steps to ensure continuity of assistance and basic protection services. UNHCR Operations worked towards mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on persons of concern by introducing innovative approaches to address the practical challenges created by the pandemic. Protection activities and processes were adjusted to allow for social distancing through remote case management via telephone, preventive measure in registration processes. UNHCR stepped up its engagement and advocacy with Governments to advocate to maintain avenues for asylum

seekers to access international protection and safeguarding the principle of non-refoulement. UNHCR Operations have also increased their direct support to national health systems to strengthen their infection prevention and healthcare responses, including through the provision of medical equipment and supplies and training of health personnel. UNHCR has also enhanced communication with communities through the launch of an [online platform](#) in partnership with IOM to provide persons of concern and host communities with relevant, accessible, simplified, easy-to-understand information on COVID-19 and prevention measures to be adopted. UNHCR operations also implemented targeted shelter interventions and distributing core relief items to help decongest the most overcrowded sites and allow for the implementation of the most basic prevention measures. They also increased their focus on strengthening community-based protection mechanism and enhancing the capacity and self-reliance of refugee and IDP communities including through the ramping up of cash assistance. UNHCR also coordinated with the UN country teams, Inter-Agency platforms and key donor countries to contribute to a coordinated response to the COVID-19 crisis and to ensure that persons of concern are included in all relevant response plans.



A UNHCR chartered plane landed at Ouagadougou Airport with 88 tonnes of emergency aid on board for refugees and internally displaced people in Burkina Faso. © UNHCR / Moussa Bougma

- **Education.** As restrictions on movement are being lifted across the region, schools are progressively reopening for students in examination years. UNHCR is supporting the authorities and working with other UN agencies, such as UNICEF, to ensure a smooth return to school by contributing to sensitization and capacity-building activities for teachers and students on safety measures against COVID-19. UNHCR is also providing them with personal protective equipment and assists in the cleaning and fumigation of school premises. UNHCR is also supporting the improvement of ICT infrastructure to facilitate distant learning methods by providing increased connectivity, expanding radio broadcast coverage, establishing Wi-Fi hotspots, and providing laptops to teachers.
- **Sahel Appeal.** To highlight the immense needs in the Sahel and continue the ongoing response to the deepening crisis, UNHCR has launched an appeal on 12 June 2020. The objective is to help provide lifesaving protection and address the growing humanitarian needs of people forced to flee and host communities in the central Sahel region. UNHCR is planning to provide more shelters to decongest the most overcrowded sites, core relief items and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, which has become widespread and aggravated by confinement and overcrowding. The scale up also aims at supporting education, rehabilitating schools and classrooms or providing distance learning opportunities. With climate change heavily impacting the Sahel, our response will follow a do-no-harm and eco-friendly approach, strengthening community-based preparedness to prevent climate related forced displacement; and supporting the use of clean energy as well as plastic and waste management.

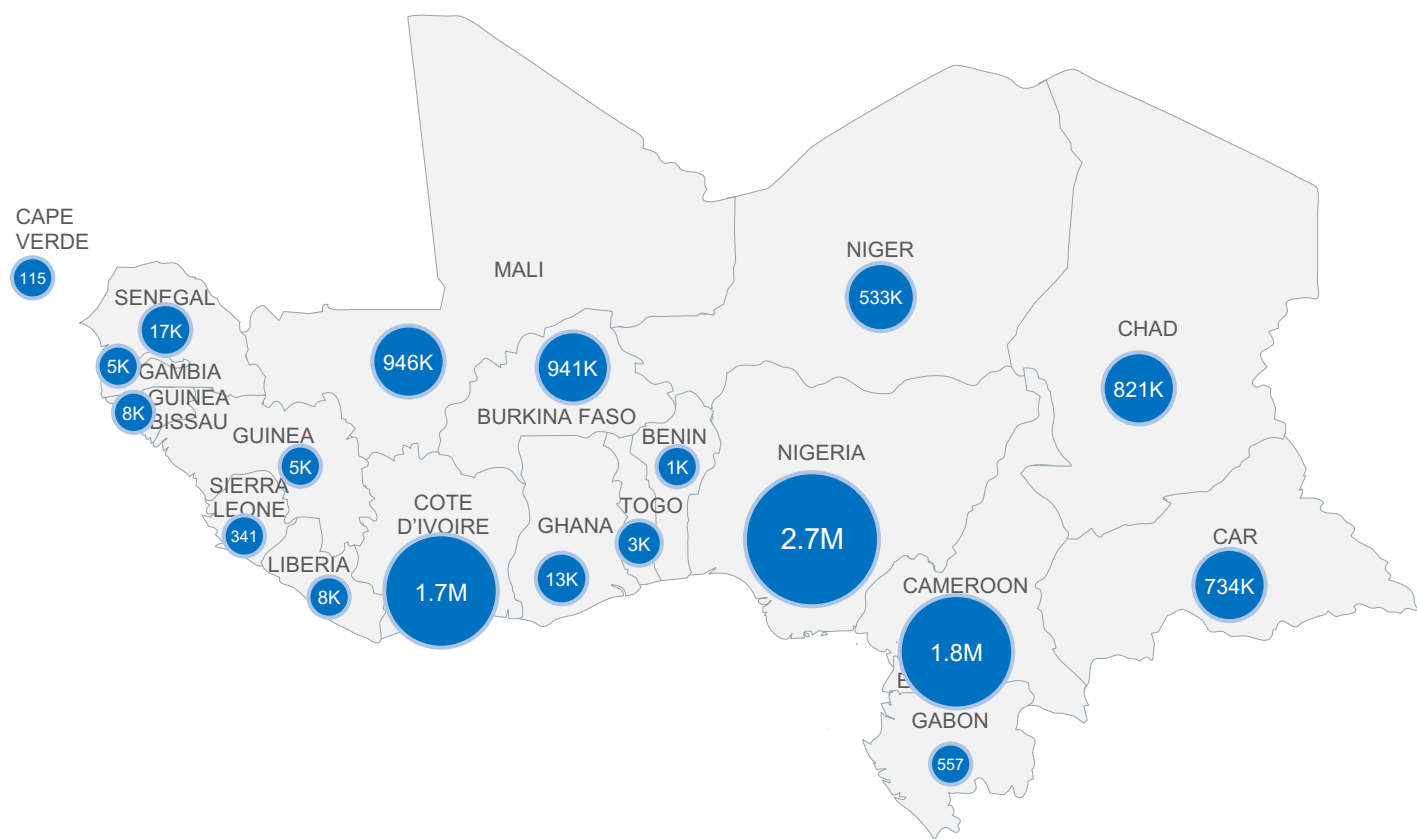
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The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

| | REFUGEES | REFUGEE LIKE | ASYLUM SEEKERS | REFUGEE RETURNEES | IDP | IDP RETURNEES | STATELESS | OTHERS | TOTAL |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| BENIN | 891 | | 335 | | | | | | 1,226 |
| BURKINA FASO | 19,837 | | 33 | | 921,471 | | | | 941,341 |
| CAMEROON | 414,852 | | 9,886 | | 976,773 | 354,328 | | | 1,755,839 |
| CAPE VERDE | | | | | | | 115 | | 115 |
| CAR | 8,666 | | 288 | 17,671 | 684,004 | 55,834 | | | 766,463 |
| CHAD | 472,110 | 5,292 | 3,905 | | 236,426 | | | 102,819 | 820,552 |
| COTE D'IVOIRE | 2,042 | | 405 | 75,358 | | | 1,656,330 | | 1,734,135 |
| GABON | 114 | | 443 | | | | | | 557 |
| GAMBIA | 4,399 | | 212 | | | | | | 4,611 |
| GHANA | 12,050 | | 1,259 | | | | | | 13,309 |
| GUINEA | 5,208 | | 87 | | | | | | 5,295 |
| GUINEA BISSAU | 7,734 | | 37 | | | | | | 7,771 |
| LIBERIA | 8,199 | | 29 | | | | | | 8,228 |
| MALI | 44,158 | | 972 | 83,833 | 250,998 | 565,905 | | | 945,866 |
| NIGER | 225,665 | | 3,790 | | 265,522 | | | 37,817 | 532,794 |
| NIGERIA | 60,845 | | 1,165 | | 2,624,723 | | | | 2,686,733 |
| SENEGAL | 14,648 | | 2,180 | | | | | | 16,828 |
| SIERRA LEONE | 341 | | | | | | | | 341 |
| TOGO | 2,301 | | 645 | | | | | | 2,946 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 1,304,060 | 5,292 | 25,671 | 176,862 | 5,959,917 | 976,067 | 1,656,445 | 140,636 | 10,244,950 |