

## KEY FIGURES (as of 31 Oct. 2020)

>10,7 million people of concern in West and Central Africa\*

>6,3 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

>1.4 million refugees

>1.7 million stateless

>25,000 asylum seekers

>1.3 million returnees

21 countries and 4 situations

### Cameroon situation:

61,774 **Cameroonian refugees** in Nigeria.

711,056 **IDPs** in Cameroon (North-West/South-West Regions estimate).

### Central African Republic situation:

626,838 **Central African refugees** in Cameroon (310,097), the DRC (172,234), Chad (95,051), the Republic of Congo (20,700), Sudan\*\* (26,523) and South Sudan\*\* (2,049).

641,292 **IDPs** in Central African Republic

### Sahel Situation:

853,626 **refugees** in Chad (488,172), Niger (233,180), Mali (43,752) Mauritania\*\* (64,644), and Burkina Faso (20,065).

1,915,324 **IDPs** in Burkina Faso (1,034,609), Chad (336,124), Mali (287,496) and Niger (257,095).

### Nigeria Situation:

300,547 **Nigerian refugees** in Niger (165,077), Cameroon (115,774) and Chad (13,947).

2,896,548 **IDPs** in Nigeria (2,046,604), Cameroon (297,380), Chad (236,426) and Niger (125,742).

### Cote d'Ivoire Situation (as of 12 November 2020):

10,087 **Ivorian refugees** in Liberia (9,255), Ghana (563), Guinea (249), Togo (20).

5,530 **IDPs** in Cote d'Ivoire

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

\*\*Country not in West and Central Africa

## REGIONAL OPERATIONAL UPDATE - MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

### Political and security developments

▪ In **West and Central Africa**, the trends in the number of active coronavirus cases has been on the decline since late July. Nevertheless, the pandemic continues to weigh heavily on a region grappling with several challenges and vulnerabilities, including endemic poverty, fragile national health systems, limited access to water and sanitation facilities and precarious living conditions in most of the areas hosting displaced populations. Lockdowns and market closures have reduced income-generating opportunities, disproportionately affecting the livelihoods of refugees and asylum-seekers, many of whom are resorting to negative coping mechanisms. These restrictions represented additional constraints to UNHCR's operations, in a region where ongoing violence and endemic insecurity already hinders humanitarian access and delivery of assistance.

▪ The region has experienced a high level of political tension and violence between August and October 2020. In the **Sahel**, the conflict has continued unabated forcing thousands to flee across the region and Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger are the epicenter of this growing forced displacement crisis with more than 1.5 million internally displaced people (IDPs) and 365,000 refugees between the three countries, and with over one million IDPs inside **Burkina Faso** alone, which represents 5% of the population. Among other violence targeting displaced populations, on 4 October 2020 a gruesome attack near the town of Pissila, in **Burkina Faso's** Centre-Nord region caused the death of 25 IDPs, adding to the hundreds of people killed in the country this year, spread across dozens of attacks targeting civilians. Schools and teachers are also targeted across the region. On September 6, a school director was killed by gunmen in the Centre-Ouest region in **Burkina Faso**, while in **Mali** on September 29, a teacher was abducted in the Mopti region. On October 16, the lifeless body of a primary school principal was found on the Gorom-Markoye axis in the Sahel region, just days after school started. In **Niger**, violence against civilians is endemic across the country and attacks also target humanitarian workers, despite efforts made by the Government and its partners. On 9 August, six aid workers and their guide were attacked and killed by unidentified armed men during a private trip near Niamey, adding to a climate of insecurity that has hindered the humanitarian response and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities.

▪ In **Cameroon**, the security situation remains extremely precarious in various part of the country. Violence is rising in the Far North, after a spate of looting, attacks and kidnapping by Boko Haram and other groups. During the months of August and September, several attacks targeted villages hosting IDPs causing the death of over 25 people and wounding 30 others. Over 360,000 IDPs and 115,000 Nigerian refugees are currently living in impoverished areas close to the border with Nigeria, where local communities are often the first responders to those fleeing insecurity and violence. The Northwest and Southwest regions have also seen a spike in violence in the past months with civilians being regularly targeted, pushing thousands to flee within Cameroon and into neighboring Nigeria.

## Population movements

- In **Central African Republic**, although the number of returns has decreased significantly in 2020, due to the COVID-19 and the restrictions to international and domestic movements, refugees have been returning from neighboring Cameroon, Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo to their places of origins. Despite the operational challenges caused by the pandemic, UNHCR has facilitated over 1,500 of these returns so far this year. To mitigate the risk of COVID-19 infections during the process, UNHCR applied strict preventive measures, which included social distancing in waiting areas and ensuring refugees would wash their hands before boarding the trucks and planes and wear masks throughout their trip. Upon arrival, health checks and temperature screening were done and the suspected cases isolated and referred to the Ministry of Health and WHO for adequate treatment. UNHCR has also supported the reintegration of the repatriated refugees in their areas of return through a combination of shelter, NFI and cash interventions,



*Returnees receiving shelter materials and NFIs in Bambari in October 2020. ©UNHCR CAR*

- complemented by a reinforcement of public infrastructure including water distribution and hygiene systems, health posts and schools. Since the beginning of 2020, over 14,000 households benefited from NFI distributions, 15,000 households received shelter support and 7,000 persons were targeted for cash-based interventions targeting returnee and host communities.
- In **Cote d'Ivoire**, violent clashes erupted after the presidential election that was held on 31 October leaving at least a dozen dead and many more injured. As a direct result of these electoral tensions and the ongoing unrest, more than 10,000 Ivorian refugees have fled to Liberia, Ghana and Togo (as of 12 November). The vast majority of these new Ivorian refugees have fled to Liberia and over 60 per cent of them are children, some of whom arrived unaccompanied or separated from their parents. Older people and pregnant women have also fled, most carrying just a few belongings and little to no food or money. The majority have settled among local communities where UNHCR's teams have increased border monitoring to ensure that new arrivals are quickly identified and that they receive the appropriate assistance. UNHCR has also deployed technical teams to address water, sanitation, and shelter needs, in an effort to improve hygiene and living conditions in the main hosting areas and to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 contamination. UNHCR is also working with Liberian authorities to register the new arrivals and to provide them with food, while deploying additional staff in an effort to scale up its aid response and its monitoring activities. In Ghana, over 500 Ivorian refugees have settled in Ampain's refugee camp, which is nearly 60 kilometers from the border with Cote d'Ivoire. UNHCR has dispatched additional tents to the camp and is also assessing the needs of vulnerable new arrivals. Over 5,000 persons have also been internally displaced within Cote d'Ivoire in the aftermath of the elections. Despite restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, the governments of Burkina Faso, Liberia, Ghana, Guinea and Togo are keeping their borders open to Ivorian refugees and UNHCR is supporting them in their preparedness activities and contingency planning should refugee movements from Cote d'Ivoire accelerate.

## Key Activities

- Throughout August and September, the region has experienced heavy rains and severe floods which affected hundreds of thousands of people, destroying houses, damaging public infrastructures including medical facilities, contaminating water, hindering the national responses to COVID-19 and other illnesses such as malaria and measles. To address the situation, UNHCR scaled up its health, shelter, WASH and interventions across the region to reinforce existing settlements, build new ones in safer areas, and to relocate affected displaced families.
- **Sahel Crisis Response.** Among other key interventions in the Sahel, UNHCR's operation in **Burkina Faso** has launched, in October, the construction of a new blood bank, to be donated by the organization to the regional health authorities of the Sahel, as part of its contribution to the strengthening of national health infrastructures and services. The blood bank will enable a faster and more efficient response for blood transfusion needs for refugee, internally displaced and host populations referred to health centers in Dori. It will also significantly reduce the mortality rate due to blood shortage in the town of Dori. The town's nearest blood bank is currently located in Kaya and there is no possibility of on-site storage for blood collections. The blood bank will play a key role in the Government's COVID-19 response and in the national health system in the Sahel Region. The donation also included medication and masks. The construction work is to be completed in the next three months.
- **Support the return to school for displaced children.** As movement restrictions and preventive measures are being lifted across West and Central Africa, UNHCR operations are mainstreaming COVID-19 interventions into their general response. To support the progressive reopening of schools, UNHCR provided personal protective equipment and assisted in the rehabilitation and the cleaning of school environments. In the countries where a complete return to school is not yet possible for health or security reasons, UNHCR continues to support distance learning through various initiatives including the distribution of solar-powered radio sets, accompanied by school kits, to help refugee children follow school programmes broadcasted through national and community radios like in **Burkina Faso**, **Cameroon** or **Mali**. Since March, nearly 35,000 children have been directly supported by UNHCR across the region to help ensure continuity in their education despite the disruption caused by the pandemic and insecurity.

### Key achievement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- ✓ **3,5 million** displaced persons who had access to protection services
- ✓ **65%** of targeted areas where GBV services are maintained or expanded in response to COVID-19
- ✓ **445,233** persons received essential healthcare services
- ✓ **3 million** medical masks ordered
- ✓ **72,883** individuals in households most vulnerable to/affected by COVID-19 received livelihood support
- ✓ **34,868** children and youth supported with distance/home-based learning



All over West and Central Africa, children are starting to back school. In Mali, classes resumed on 14 September after nearly six months of school closure. ©UNHCR Mali

- Border protection monitoring and health screening in Nigeria.** In the Northeast Nigeria, as cross border movements have continued to take place between Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad despite border closures, the absence of dedicated isolation facilities for new arrivals has represented a significant risk of contamination in already fragile communities. To mitigate this risk and assist the most vulnerable, UNHCR additionally recruited 8 protection monitors and 6 nurses, on top to the 82 protection monitors already in charge of protection, detention, and border monitoring in the Northeast. These additional human and technical resources were dedicated specifically to border monitoring and temperature screening at the border. On duty six days a week at the border/ entry points since the beginning of the pandemic, these nurse and monitor teams conducted temperature screening, collected health-related data, and referred suspect cases to the nearest health facilities. Since April 2020, over 19,000 individuals were screened at the border/entry points in Nigeria. UNHCR also provided 50 Refugees Housing Units (RHU), to be used as a Self-Isolation area at the border/entry points, and an additional 250 RHU as shelters for refugee returnees and IDPs newly arrived in Damasak, a Nigeria border town with Niger. Over 200 sensitization and awareness-raising on COVID-19 were also conducted by UNHCR at the four main border entry points reaching over 4,100 individuals.
- Fighting statelessness.** On 2 September, the Government of **Cote d'Ivoire** has formally established a new set of procedures to regularize the status of stateless people. In line with the country's pledge formulated at UNHCR's High-Level Segment on Statelessness in October 2019, this decision represents a crucial component of Côte d'Ivoire's National Action Plan to fight Statelessness, in a country where an estimated 1,6 million people are either stateless or at risk of statelessness according to a joint study conducted in 2019 by UNHCR and the Government. Formal recognition of statelessness status will offer pathways for people, who until then had no recognized legal existence in the country, to receive identity documents, enroll in school, access health services, seek lawful employment, open a bank account, and buy land. The risks associated with statelessness have been amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic as stateless people can be left out of national responses or be unable to seek care if they fall ill. UNHCR is now closely supporting national authorities to help prevent and resolve statelessness and stands ready to assist Côte d'Ivoire in implementing these new Statelessness Determination Procedures. UNHCR is also supporting other countries in West and Central Africa in their fight against statelessness. In this context, nine other countries in the region have also pledged to put in place similar procedures, and 11 countries from the region have launched studies on statelessness or included questions to collect data on statelessness in upcoming population censuses.

## Funding Update

**\$665.0 million**

UNHCR's financial requirements 2020 <sup>1</sup>



**WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA**

as of 10 November 2020



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