



Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: West Africa



This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers the West Africa (WA) region. The core countries of focus for this region are Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to any of the countries over the rest.

The QMMUs offer a quarterly update on new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and relevant policy developments in the region. These updates are based on a compilation of a wide range of secondary (data) sources, brought together within a regional framework and applying a mixed migration analytical lens. Similar QMMUs are available for all MMC regions.

The Mixed Migration Centre is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration.

For more information on the MMC, the QMMUs from other regions and contact details of regional MMC teams, visit mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

MMC's understanding of mixed migration

“Mixed migration” refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people in mixed flows have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Those in mixed migration flows travel along similar routes, using similar means of travel - often travelling irregularly, and wholly, or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

Front cover photo credit:

Jean-Baptiste Joire (2017)

Women watching boats in Joal-Fadiout, Senegal, February 2017.

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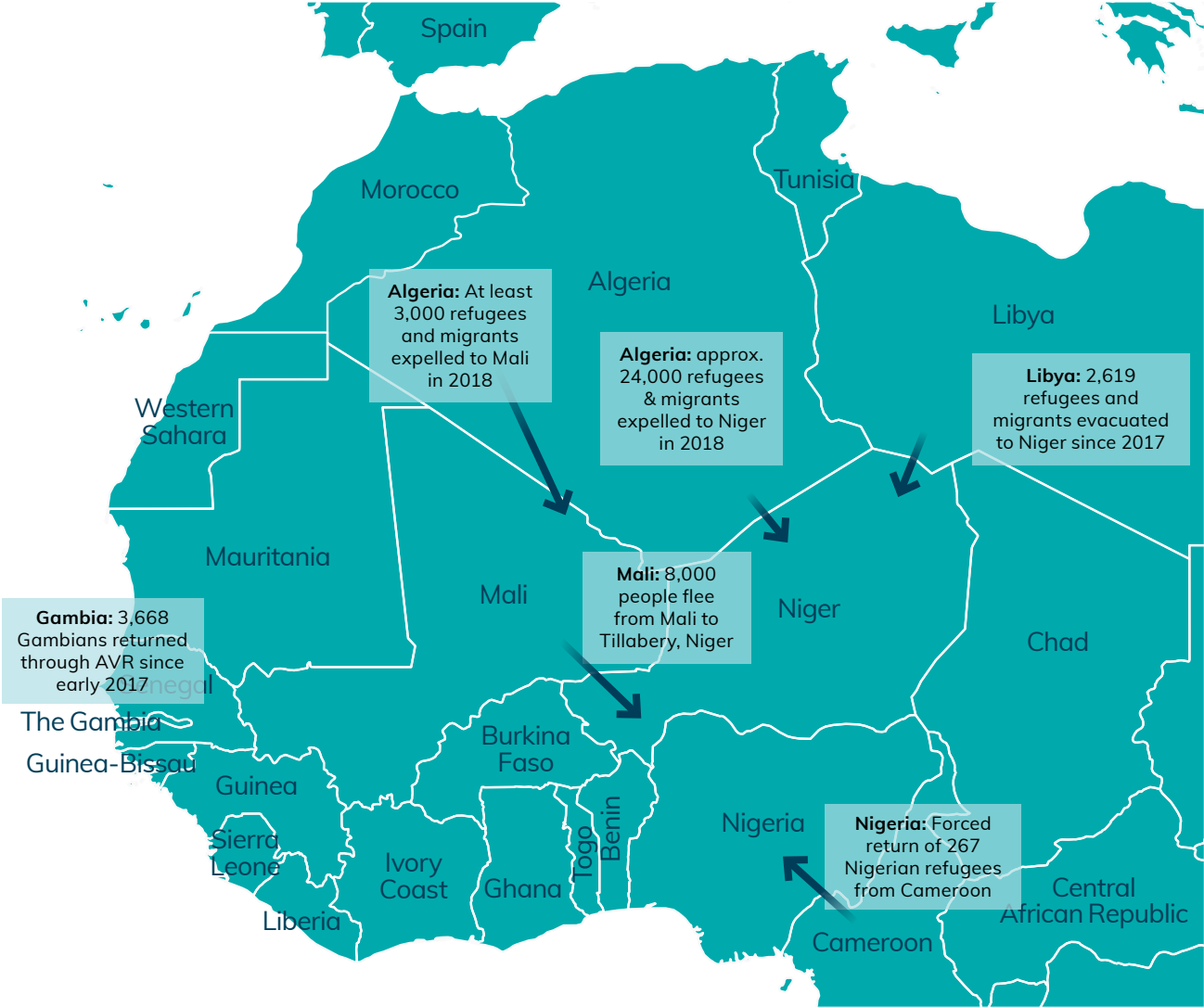
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Quarter 1 - 2019

Key Updates

- The first quarter of 2019 saw an upsurge in movements towards neighboring countries due to **escalating armed violence** in parts of Mali, the Liptako-Gourma region (the border regions of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) and the Lake Chad Basin.
- **Missing Migrants:** As of end of March 2019 the IOM had recorded 282 deaths on the Central Mediterranean and Western Mediterranean route in its' missing migrant project. While most of the nationalities are unknown, 50 of these are reported to be Sub-Saharan nationals.
- **Resettlement from Libya to Niger.** Since the start of the evacuation operation from Libya in late 2017, a total of 2,619 persons (including unaccompanied children) have been evacuated to the UNHCR Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Niger, according to the [UNHCR Resettlement Update #52 on the Libya-Niger Situation](#) of March 2019.
- **Refoulements from Algeria.** At the end of 2018, at least 12,913 Nigerien nationals were expelled in convoys to Agadez in Niger and at least 11,238 Sub-Saharan Africans were left on the border with Niger in 2018, according to a December 2018 [Amnesty International report](#). According to [reports from UNHCR](#), on 3 January 2019, individuals from Syria, Yemen and Palestine were stranded at Algeria's southern border with Niger.

Regional Overview



*Arrows on the map only relate to key updates and do not represent mixed migration flows within and out of West Africa.

Mixed Migration Regional Updates

West Africa

Increased movement of refugees and migrants towards neighboring countries due to insecurity

The first quarter of 2019 saw an upsurge in displacement towards neighboring countries due to escalating armed violence in parts of Mali, the Liptako-Gourma region (the border regions of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) and the Lake Chad Basin.

In March 2019 [Medecins Sans Frontieres \(MSF\) reported](#) that an increase in threats from armed groups operating between the borders of Mali and Niger, led more than **8,000 people to flee from Mali to Niger's Tillabéry region** in the village of Kongokiré. MSF [expressed concern](#) that the situation in the region may spiral, as the Tillabéry region is affected both by the conflict in Mali and the surge of armed groups in Burkina Faso, which is likely to result in a protracted situation.

In Niger's Diffa region the security situation continued to be marked by repeated attacks by Boko Haram. The [UNHCR estimated](#) in February 2019 that 25,000 people who had fled Niger into Nigeria were reported to have returned. On 15 March 2019 the [Government of Niger extended](#) by three months the state of emergency imposed in the south-eastern Diffa and the western Tahoa and Tillabery regions.

[UNHCR reported](#) in February 2019 that more than **11,000 people have fled Burkina Faso, mostly into Mali**, including some 3,000 since the beginning of 2019, due to insecurity, intercommunal violence and violent extremism.

Around 300 people from Burkina Faso also crossed into Ghana, after being forced to flee the northern part of Burkina Faso, following chieftaincy-related conflict in Zoaga. Movements towards coastal West African countries such as Benin, Togo, Ghana or Ivory Coast are likely to increase if the conflict spreads further into Burkina Faso. This could have destabilizing consequences for these neighboring countries, according to a [Briefing Note](#) published on 22 March 2019 by ACAPS.

By the end of January 2019, [according to UNHCR](#) more than 35,000 Nigerians fled to the Cameroonian village of Goura following a Boko Haram attack on the northeast Nigerian town of Rann, and returned towards the end of February 2019. Others sought safety in Chad's Lake Chad region. According to [UNHCR in January 2019](#), many paddled across the lake to arrive in the Chadian village of Ngouboua, located on the shores of Lake Chad, 20 kilometers from the Nigerian border.

[UNHCR expressed alarm](#) about the **forced return from Cameroun of 267 Nigerian refugees** on 16 January 2019 to Borno State in northeast Nigeria. They had crossed into Cameroon in 2014. According to UNHCR, Cameroon is currently home to more than 370,000 refugees, including some 100,000 from Nigeria.

Trafficked Persons

According to Nigeria's National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) there are many cases of women and girls who may have been trafficked from Nigeria to Mali and who were stranded after being forced into prostitution, [as reported by Reuters](#) in January 2019. Women and girls were reportedly repatriated from the Kangaba area of southern Mali in the preceding months. The women and girls, most aged 16-30, had been told they would be taken to Malaysia to work in hospitality but instead were forced into prostitution in Mali. In January 2019 [IOM Mali reported](#) to have worked with 260 of these victims since 2017.

The Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT) and the West African Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors (WACAP) held a [five-day training on tackling smuggling and trafficking, in Cote d'Ivoire in February 2019](#). GLO.ACT is a four-year (2015-2019), €11 million joint initiative by the European Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). 18 prosecutors, judges and police officers from Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Mali were trained on international criminal cooperation tools.

Other policy updates

During a meeting in Abuja, Nigeria on 26 February 2019, a Committee comprising of several Directorates of the Commission of ECOWAS drafted the Terms of Reference (TOR) for a consultant to design the [Sahel Strategy for 2020-2025](#). The Strategy will aim to provide enhanced security and stability, and will include a focus on illicit trafficking, irregular migration and displacement. As part of the strategy, an action plan comprising of joint programs with other regional and international organizations will be developed, as well as a monitoring and evaluation framework.

The commitments of the **Abuja Action Statement** were reaffirmed by governments of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria during the [Second Regional Protection Dialogue](#) on the Lake Chad Basin on 28-29 January in Abuja, Nigeria. The Abuja Action Statement is an agreement on comprehensive actions that would enhance protection and respond to the most urgent needs of refugees, IDPs and other affected populations. It proposes five priority areas for action, including on forced displacement and freedom of movement, civil-military coordination and civilian character of refugee and IDP hosting areas, persons with specific protection risks, a comprehensive solutions approach and nationality and documentation. During the meeting the governments encouraged the preparation of an updated regional action plan based on national action plans to maximize opportunities for further progress in these five areas.

Mixed migration from West Africa towards North Africa and Europe

Reduced northbound flows but higher risks and mortality rates

In March, [UNHCR reported](#) that 10,313 refugees and migrants have entered Europe by sea in 2019, including 6,647 in Spain (compared to 3,685 in the same period in 2018) and 426 in Italy (compared with [6,350](#) in the same period in 2018, which is the lowest number of arrivals by sea via the Central Mediterranean route since early 2013). The UNHCR [data on arrivals in Spain](#) until March 2019 indicate that West Africans are among the most common nationalities arriving in Spain during this period, including Guinean (24%), Malian (20%), Ivorian (15%) and Senegalese (13%). West Africans are not among the four top nationalities of arrival in Italy, according to UNHCR data on arrivals in Italy collected until March 2019.

In a March 2019 campaign taking stock of key achievements under the European Agenda for Migration since 2015, the [European Commission highlighted](#) the considerable reduction in arrivals as one of several success factors. However, while northbound flows may have reduced, the risks are greater for those who do make the journey, particularly for Sub-Saharan Africans: in January 2019 UNHCR's country representative in Niger was quoted by the [BBC](#) stating that 'for every death in the Mediterranean there are at least two in the Sahara, unknown and anonymous'. The same BBC report highlights that the law 2015-36 against irregular migration adopted in Niger in 2015 has led smugglers to take more dangerous routes to avoid police patrols, further from water points and where chances of being rescued is often extremely remote.

As of end of March 2019 [the IOM](#) had recorded 282 deaths on the Central Mediterranean and Western Mediterranean route in its' missing migrant project. While most of the nationalities are unknown, 50 of these are reported to be Sub-Saharan nationals.

On 4-6 March 2019 the African Development Bank held the [Africa Resilience Forum](#) in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on the theme of "Fragility, Migration and Resilience". The Bank's Senior Vice-President Charles Boamah opened the forum by detailing the benefits that safe, controlled migration bring to countries of origin, transit and destination. The forum aimed to discuss questions such as whether migration can really be described as a "crisis"? Is Europe threatened by an invasion of African migrants? What can migration bring to the countries of origin, transit and destination?

Southbound mixed migration from North Africa

South-bound movements from North Africa and Niger continued in the first quarter of 2019, including evacuation of refugees and migrants from Libya and Niger, assisted voluntary return and expulsions from Algeria (see thematic focus below).

Evacuations from Libya and resettlement

According to the [UNHCR Resettlement Update #52 on the Libya-Niger Situation](#) of 11 March 2019, since the start of the evacuation operation from Libya in late 2017, a total of **2,619 persons** (including unaccompanied children) have been **evacuated to the UNHCR Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Niger**. Entry in the ETM was suspended from June until October 2018 when the centre reached its full capacity of 1,536 individuals, which according to [Amnesty International](#) was a result of a large number of people waiting for resettlement.

According to the [UNHCR](#), since 1 September 2017, out of the 2,619 persons evacuated, **1,221 individuals have departed on resettlement** to 11 countries (Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States), 135 individuals are pending departure and 397 individuals have been submitted for resettlement and are pending interview or decision by a resettlement country. The majority of persons awaiting resettlement are Eritreans, Ethiopians, or Somalis who arrived in Niger from Libya.

In September 2017, the [European Commission](#) recommended a target of resettling **at least 500,000 persons** in need of international protection by October 2019, with a focus on Libya, Egypt, Niger, Sudan, Chad and Ethiopia. Expanding access to third-country for refugees through resettlement is also stated as a key objective of the Global Compact on Refugees adopted in December 2018. As of 11 March 2019, twelve States (Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) had pledged **6,351 resettlement places** for individuals in Libya and Niger, 4,411 of which have been/will be allocated to evacuees from Libya in Niger, and refugees registered in Niger. Increasing the number of resettlement pledges and speeding up resettlement countries' procedures is crucial to address the situation of protracted transit and reduce the exposure to human rights abuses in Libya.

Assisted voluntary return

In February 2019 the [IOM reported](#) that the **voluntary return of Gambians** to their homes is averaging about 143 men and women per month since the start of 2017. As of 8 February 2019, 3,668 Gambians have been assisted to voluntarily return home under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration. IOM reported that over 70% were returned from Libya and 25% from Niger. The remaining 5 per cent came home from Mali, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia.

In Mali the IOM temporarily suspended its **Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme** to 1,500 migrants in order to assess their eligibility after information emerged suggesting that some were trying to take advantage of the system, according to an [IOM report](#) from January 2019.

Thematic focus: arrests and expulsions from Algeria

Algeria has traditionally been a **destination country** for Sub-Saharan Africans seeking employment opportunities (primarily in the construction and agriculture sectors). Algeria has increasingly become a **transit country** for northbound migration, particularly since the implementation of increased migration controls in Niger. In December 2018 [Clingendael](#) reported a shift from the Niger-Libya corridor, to routes west of this axis, including through Niger towards Algeria, and through Gao in Mali. Monitors from MMC's Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism initiative (4Mi) in Gao also report that refugees and migrants transiting through Mali now mainly travel from Gao to Algeria (while previously they also took the route from Gao to Niger to get to Libya).

Legal and policy framework: In 2008, Algeria adopted Law No. 08-1, which governs foreign nationals' conditions of entry, stay and circulation, and treats irregular migration as a criminal offense punishable by up to five years in prison and expulsion from the country. Sub-Saharan nationals who migrate to Algeria in search of work are often undocumented and cannot regularize their position while in Algeria. Despite being a party to the Refugee Convention, Algeria has not adopted any legal framework recognizing the asylum-seeking process or the status of refugees.

In 2014, Algeria signed a [bilateral agreement](#) with Niger to repatriate Nigeriens from Algeria to Niger. An objective underpinning the agreement was to tackle the smuggling of Nigeriens going to Algeria for begging and prostitution, including many women and children, as reported in several [media reports](#). Malians are [exempt from visa requirements](#) in Algeria.

Expulsions of Nigeriens from Algeria: according to a December 2018 [Amnesty International report](#), at the end of 2018, at least 12,913 Nigerien nationals were expelled in convoys to Agadez in Niger. Algeria has been repatriating Nigerien nationals since 2014 following the bilateral agreement signed with Niger. Many originate from Niger's Diffa and Zinder regions.

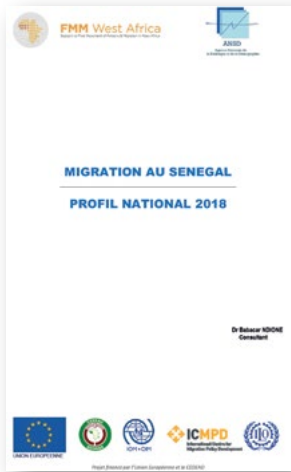
Expulsions of other Sub-Saharan Africans towards Niger and Mali: 2018 saw a rise in the apprehensions of Sub-Saharan migrants by authorities in Algiers, including nationals from Mali, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Cameroon, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Liberia and Senegal. [Amnesty International](#) reported that at least 11,238 Sub-Saharan Africans were left on the **border with Niger** in 2018 by Algerian authorities in a location known as 'Point Zero', from which they have to walk 15km to Assamaka in Niger, and that at least 3,000 Sub-Saharan migrants were abandoned on the **border with Mali** in 2018. [InfoMigrants](#) also reported how refugees and migrants are dropped off at the border with Niger, without food or water to survive. The UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe González Morales, criticized Algeria's deportation practices in a public mission statement, saying that these "collective expulsions from Algeria to Niger are in utter violation of international law, including the fundamental principle of non-refoulement and due process guarantees, and must stop immediately."

Expulsions of refugees and migrants from the Middle East: according to [reports from UNHCR](#), on 3 January 2019, individuals from Syria, Yemen and Palestine were stranded at Algeria's southern border with Niger. The group were reportedly detained at the Tamanrasset Centre in southern Algeria before being taken to an area near the Guezzam border post on 26 December. A representative from the Algerian Ministry of the Interior [justified the expulsions](#) saying that the approximately hundred people, the majority of which were Syrians, were expelled due to suspected Jihadist links. However according to the [UNHCR](#), a number of these are registered asylum seekers and refugees.

Several [sources report](#) on **protection concerns** for migrants transiting, residing and being returned from Algeria. In 2018 a [human rights team from OHCHR](#) interviewed 25 refoulés from Algeria in Niger (Niamey, Agadez and Arlit), and heard testimonies of some who had reportedly been detained in inhumane and degrading conditions in military bases in Blida and Zeralda on the outskirts of the city of Algiers or in a compound in Oran before being transferred to Tamanrasset in southern Algeria. In a [press briefing note](#) on Algeria and Libya of May 2018, OHCHR denounced the lack of due process, highlighting that many refoulés they had spoken to had not received individualized assessments, and were not informed of the reasons for their detention.

Presidential elections 2019: [Xenophobic politics](#) have thrived in Algeria in the context of falling oil prices, high unemployment and inflation. Elections in Algeria were initially planned for 18 April 2019. The president Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigned from office on 2 April 2019 and the president of the council of the nation [should organize elections within three months](#) according to the Constitution. In this context it remains to be seen what the impact will be on refoulement and migration policies in general in Algeria.

Highlighted New Research and Reports

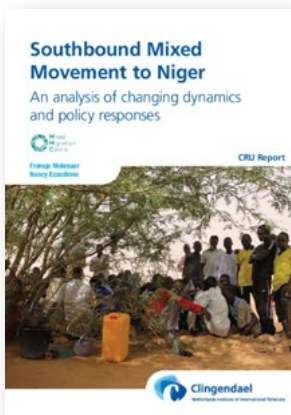


[Migration profiles Senegal 2018](#)

IOM, January 2019

In January 2019 the IOM published a Migration Profile of Senegal for 2018, analyzing migration flows inside and outside Senegal. The Migration Profile is a tool used to gather statistical and institutional information, to better understand migration in Senegal. The report covers international immigration to Senegal, international emigration of Senegalese citizens, mainly to countries of the West African sub-region, and south-north flows towards Europe and North America. It also covers migration towards Central and South Africa, mainly Gabon, Congo and the Republic of South Africa. The report addresses other themes such as return migration, internal migration, the growing proportion of women in the migration flows, the diaspora's contribution to the country's

development, youth employment and human trafficking.



[Southbound Mixed Movement to Niger: an analysis of changing dynamics and policy response](#)

Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International relations, January 2019

The report analyses events in Libya, northern Chad, and north Niger that could impact southbound mixed migration movements. The research evaluates the current population of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Libya and analyses how some of the main dynamics of mixed movement have changed over the course of 2018. These dynamics are disaggregated by nationality of

persons with refugee status in the region, in order to identify their vulnerability and reasons for onward movement across countries, as well as their capacity to do so. The report contends that the number of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Libya is expected to remain stable in the near future – meaning that protection needs are expected to remain high. Future southbound mixed migration movement of these populations may occur if the journey through Libya, or the position of foreigners living and working in Libya, becomes too difficult or dangerous. The report builds on data from UNHCR and 4Mi data collected in Libya by the MMC, as well as information obtained through interviews with more than 100 respondents during research in Niger (July and September 2018) and Chad (January and March 2018).



An “Informal” Turn in the European Union’s Migrant Returns Policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa

Migration Policy Institute (MPI), January 2019

The paper examines the existing frameworks for return and then looks more in detail at Sub-Saharan State returns for main origin countries, including Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa, Guinea, and Cameroon. The paper also highlights that other crucial factors such as reintegration and safeguarding of human-rights standards need to be taken into consideration

while evaluating the effectiveness of return procedures in relation to return rates.

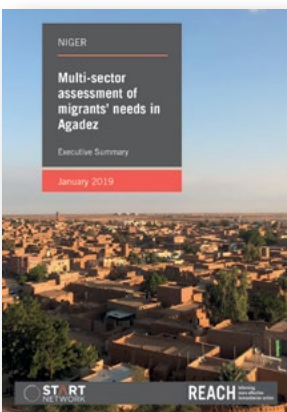


Towards a Borderless Africa? Regional Organizations and Free Movement of Persons in West and North-East Africa

German Development Institute, January 2019

In January 2018, the member states of the AU agreed on the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment. The paper analyzes the ECOWAS (West Africa) and IGAD (North-East Africa) policies regarding free movement and shows that both regional organizations face difficulties with their free movement policies. The ECOWAS region is experiencing delays in the implementation of legislation. In ECOWAS and IGAD, free movement is obstructed by internal capacity issues and growing external influences on intra-African migration management and border control.

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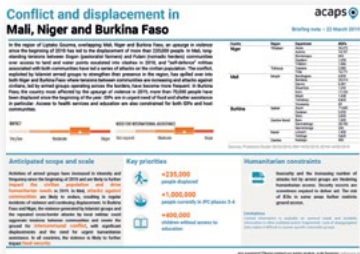
Multi-sector assessment of migrants’ needs in Agadez

REACH, January 2019

The assessment aims to provide an overview of the humanitarian situation and the needs of migrants in Agadez in order to inform humanitarian assistance planning, and to facilitate coordination between the different actors involved. Data was collected through 98 qualitative, individual and in-depth interviews with asylum seekers (mostly Sudanese nationals, residing in the cases de passage and at the humanitarian center), expelled migrants from Algeria, and migrants in-transit living in ghettos. The report outlines the main findings of

the research, including main displacement characteristics among the different groups of refugees and migrants, priority needs (including in terms of access to food, non-food items and shelter); the extent to which these groups have access to economic resources and basic services (such as water, healthcare and

food) in Agadez and difficulties in accessing these; as well as coping mechanisms used to access economic resources and basic services.



[Conflict and displacement in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso Briefing Note](#)

ACAPS 22 March 2019

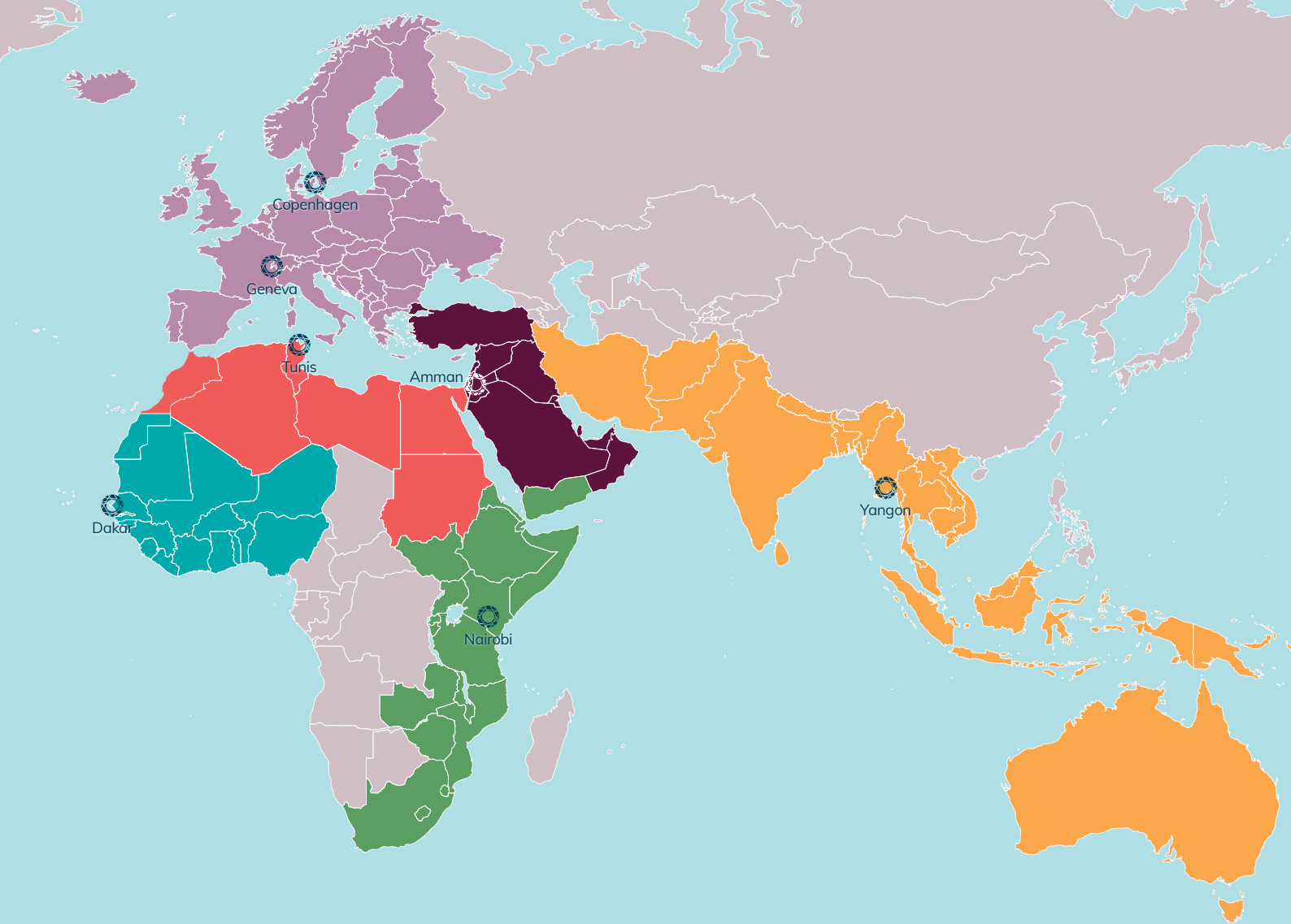
In this Briefing Note, ACAPS analyses the conflict and displacement situation in the region of Liptako Gourma overlapping Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. The Briefing Note provides an overview of the situation and the crisis impact on the region. In particular, ACAPS provides information on conflicts in Mali, increasing violence in Burkina Faso and analyzes drivers of this conflict. It examines possible evolutions of the situation, including the potential for further displacement in the region.



[The Human Conveyor Belt Broken – assessing the collapse of the human-smuggling industry in Libya and the central Sahel](#)

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, March 2019

The report assesses and explains the drop of migrant arrivals to Europe via the Central Mediterranean Route through a political economy analysis of the key changes that took place in Libya, Niger, Chad and Mali during 2017 and 2018.



The MMC is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration. The MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of and governed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and global and regional MMC teams are hosted by the DRC offices in Amman, Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Tunis and Yangon.

For more information visit:

mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

