

**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, governments are still grappling with the negative health and socio-economic impacts of **COVID-19**. Despite the rising number of cases, most states are gradually lifting the preventive measures initially adopted in order to mitigate the social tension and economic slowdown they triggered. Supply chain challenges, rising food prices and loss of income threaten to leave millions without food across Africa. Levels of acute malnutrition, stunting and anemia are expected to rise with forcibly displaced population being in particularly vulnerable. In this context, WFP and UNHCR have issued a [joint statement](#) calling for urgent support from donors and urging governments to ensure that refugees and other displaced populations are included in social safety nets and COVID-19 response plans to ensure their access food and emergency cash assistance. In **Cameroon**, WFP was forced to reduce its assistance to refugees from the Central African Republic by 50% in May and June due to funding gaps and, based on current funding levels, will have to stop cash assistance entirely from August. Cuts in rations are also expected for Nigerian refugees in the country.

▪ In the **Sahel**, the conflict continues to escalate whilst social and political tensions are rising. In **Mali**, thousands of people took to the streets in recent weeks, sparking clashes with police. With general elections scheduled in **Burkina Faso** in November 2020 and **Niger** in December 2020, it is feared that further political instability could undermine the regional fight against Islamist militants in the Sahel. To prevent an escalation of the situation, heads of State from five countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) met with the government and the opposition in the country's capital city Bamako on 23 July followed by a virtual summit on 27 July during which proposals were made to unlock the political stalemate. In this tensed political context, the Operation Tukuba conducted by combined European and Sahelian forces has started in **Mali**, in support of the French forces of the Operation Barkhane. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, the Council of Ministers adopted on 13 July a decree creating a "Northern Operational Zone" following persistent insecurity at its border with Mali and Burkina Faso. A direct response to the attack on the post of the Ivorian army in the village of Kafolo on 11 June 2020, the creation of this zone will lead to a reinforcement of the military presence to prevent the infiltration of armed groups into the country and address the growing insecurity on its northern borders. In this context, UNHCR and its partners are supporting **Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo** and **Benin** in their contingency planning for potential influx in the coming months from the conflict in the **Sahel**.

▪ In north-eastern **Nigeria**, Jihadist groups executed five aid workers in Borno State on 23 July 2020. They had been abducted while delivering food and medical supplies to remote areas between Monguno and Maiduguri amid surging coronavirus cases in the region. Following this gruesome killing, the security situation remains extremely precarious in the whole of northeast Nigeria where armed groups continue to carry out attacks on security forces and civilian populations and kidnappings.

- The **Lake Chad Basin** and the **Sahel** are also seeing [growing numbers of fatal incidents due to landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices](#). While it appears that the intended targets of numerous anti-government and non-state armed groups are the security forces, an increasing number of civilians are indiscriminately killed and maimed. Often living in the most conflict-affected areas, refugees and IDPs are particularly exposed to this risk. In the most recent incident in a refugee camp in eastern **Chad**, on June 24, four refugee children aged from 9 to 12 were killed and three others seriously injured when they picked up an unexploded device and tried to open it. Meanwhile, in north-eastern **Nigeria**, some 230 people were killed by IEDs and more than 300 injured in 2019. More than 15 incidents have been reported so far in 2020. In **Burkina Faso**, on 6 June, a vehicle carrying two refugees hit an IED near Mentao refugee camp. Both were evacuated to Djibo, where they received treatment for their injuries. In **Niger**, five incidents have killed at least five refugees and displaced people while injuring many others since the start of the year. In **Mali**, the civilian population accounts for almost half of the victims of landmines and improvised device explosions in the entire country. At least 42 civilians were killed in 82 incidents between January and May this year, mainly in the Mopti, Gao and Kidal regions. In addition to the high death toll, injuries and their after-effects, including psychological damages, the presence of explosive devices hinders access to pastures, fields, farms, firewood as well as community infrastructure. They also affect the delivery of humanitarian aid and development activities. Mines also pose additional hazard for refugees and IDPs fleeing violence and persecution and hinders their right to return to their homes. While continuing to support the injured and the families of the victims, UNHCR calls for stronger efforts to mitigate the risks posed by landmines in the **Sahel** and **Lake Chad Basin** region and stresses the importance of broad and comprehensive assistance for all victims, in line with the UN Policy on Mine Victim Assistance.
- In the **Central African Republic**, the Government is examining the possibility for Central African refugees in neighboring countries to vote in the upcoming presidential election scheduled in late 2020. An electoral bill allowing refugee participation has been validated on 23 July by the Council of Minister and will be presented to Parliament in the coming weeks. With over 600,000 refugees representing over 10% of the CAR population, UNHCR has long been advocating for an inclusive electoral process that would take their vote into account and give them the opportunity to participate in the social and political life of their country. Beyond this advocacy role, UNHCR reiterated its commitment to facilitate the participation of refugees in the elections, including through supporting the negotiation of tripartite agreements between CAR and the major asylum countries on voting modalities for refugees.

### Population movements

- **Mixed movements.** On 28 July, UNHCR and the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) at the Danish Refugee Council released a new report titled '[On this journey, no one cares if you live or die](#)' which focuses on the mixed population flows between West and East Africa and Africa's Mediterranean coast in which thousands of refugees and migrants are dying, while many are suffering extreme human rights abuses. Based on data collected by MMC and additional sources, the report suggests that a minimum of 1,750 people died on these journeys in 2018 and 2019 while attempting to cross the Sahara Desert. This represents an average of 72 deaths per month, making it one of the deadliest routes for refugees and migrants in the world. While most reports and data are still coming in for 2020, at least 70 refugees and migrants are known to have died in 2020 already, including at least 30 people that were killed at the hands of traffickers in Mizdah in late May. Other hotspots for fatalities included Sabha, Kufra, and Qatrun in southern Libya, the smuggling hub of Bani Walid south-east of Tripoli and several places along the West African section of the route including Bamako and Agadez. These deaths are in addition to the thousands who have died or gone missing in recent years while attempting desperate journeys across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe via North Africa. Overall, Owing to its geographical situation linking **Niger, which lies at the intersection of** the Sahara Desert with the Sahel, and West with Central Africa, has become a major hub for mixed movements northwards to Libya, Algeria and the Mediterranean while at the same time receiving an increasing number of people fleeing Libya or being deported from Algeria. In response to this complex

humanitarian and security situation, UNHCR works with the Government of Niger to provide protection for the asylum-seekers and refugees who fail to reach Europe and seek durable solutions for them, such as resettlement, local integration or voluntary return to the country of origin if the security conditions allow. Complementary legal pathways, such as family reunification, study visa or humanitarian evacuations are also examined, although the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a suspension of all voluntary return and travel to third countries. As of 30 June 2020, 1,064 people, mainly Sudanese nationals, have been identified as in need of international protection, and registered by UNHCR in Agadez. Over 2% are unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), some have reportedly been the victim of exploitation, torture and human trafficking, after escaping war in Sudan (22% have specific needs). The most vulnerable are hosted in three guesthouses in Agadez while the majority is hosted in a Humanitarian Centre on the outskirts of the city. With the growing insecurity in the region and the dire human rights situation in Libya, the number of people in need of international protection arriving in Agadez is to increase.

- Despite the restrictions imposed across the region since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, cross-border movements are continuing throughout West and Central Africa. In eastern **Chad**, refugees are still arriving from the neighboring region of West Darfur in **Sudan** where inter-communal tensions have escalated since the end of 2019. On 25 July, more than 60 people were reported killed and nearly 60 others wounded during an attack on the village of Misterei in Beida locality, near the Chadian border, around 50km south of Geneina, the capital of West Darfur province. As a result of the violence, over 2,500 people fled to neighbouring Chad. Most of those who fled had only just returned from Eastern Chad, after 16,000 had fled similar violence in December last year. Refugees were allowed to seek protection in Chad, despite the border being closed due to COVID-19. In coordination with its partners, UNHCR is scaling up its operations in Chad and West Darfur State by increasing emergency assistance to affected populations, ensuring registration of refugees in order to respond adequately to their needs. With the conflict in West Darfur showing no sign of abating, it is expected that this displacement crisis will continue as well as the humanitarian needs of all affected populations.

### Key Activities

- The **COVID-19** pandemic is having a severe economic impact on the region, especially on forcibly displaced populations who are often employed in the informal sector with little job security and social safety net. In this context, UNHCR is pursuing its strategy of boosting refugees' livelihood while allowing them to participate in the COVID response through paid production of soap, masks and bleach. In **Burkina Faso**, 8 refugees in Dori were supported to produce 35,000 masks for IDPs, refugees and host populations which was completed in June 2020. In July, ten female refugees started training in soap production which will start once the certification process is completed. In **Cameroon**, 54 tailors based in the East and Adamawa regions have produced over 90,000 masks, generating a combined income of over 13,500,000 XAF. In **Mali**, UNHCR is supporting 222 women from refugee, IDP and host communities to produce soaps and masks in collaboration with UN Women. In **Niger**, UNHCR supports refugees in the production of soap and masks in Niamey and the key refugee hosting regions. The project consists in providing cash for work for a total number of 937 refugees, IDPs and host community members, who will be able to produce a targeted total amount of 165 000 liters of bleach, 102 000 laundry soaps, 82 500 liters of liquid soap and 265 000 masks. So far, over 50% of the of targeted persons of concern have been trained on production of masks, soap and bleach or marketing.
- In **Ghana**, the first virtual Refugee Status Determination adjudication was carried out by the Ghana Refugee Board leading to 81 approved cases in Ghana during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was a build-up on the pilot phase of the virtual RSD interview documentation reported on two months ago. UNHCR supported the process with its virtual platform and technical assistance to ensure a smooth running of this new way of RSD adjudication.
- As part of its effort to promote a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing the needs of refugees and IDPs, UNHCR has entered into a tripartite agreement with the **African Development Bank** and the **G5 Sahel** to

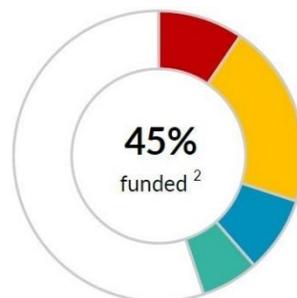
support the COVID-19 response across the five countries of the Sahel region. Funded through the framework of the African Development Bank's COVID-19 response facility, the [USD20 million project](#) will allow the Governments of **Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania** and **Niger** to strengthen their national health response to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and limit its social and economic impact in a region already facing a dire humanitarian crisis. Implemented with the support of UNHCR, the project will prioritize activities in areas most impacted by conflict and violence, with high a concentration of forcibly displaced people and limited presence of government institutions. In line with the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, this partnership serves as a model for other financial and development entities to explore and engage in addressing the massive needs created by forcible displacement during the pandemic.

- In the **Central African Republic**, UNHCR and the Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés undertook a joint assessment mission from 22 to 26 July 2020 in the village Toko-Kota where over 3,000 refugees have settled since May 2020. The humanitarian situation is deteriorating rapidly in the hosting areas where health facilities, drinking water, food and schools are lacking.
- Since the beginning of the rainy season, heavy rainfalls and floods have hit several hosting areas, especially in the Sahel and in Nigeria. In **Niger**, UNHCR's access has consequently been limited in Maradi and Tahoua and Tillabery regions which are also the most impacted by violence. In **Nigeria**, the main challenge is the difficulty to implement preventive measures in overcrowded IDP sites where recent fire outbreaks and heavy rainfalls hindered UNHCR's decongestion efforts. In **Burkina Faso**, the Centre Nord region has seen important rainfalls in the past weeks causing flooding in several IDP sites. In response, UNHCR and its partners are supporting the families affected with shelter materials and core relief items. In the Centre Nord region, over 5,000 IDP families will benefit from such assistance. UNHCR also advocates for prompt relocation to non-flood prone areas. On 27 July, a joint assessment of the five sites identified for the construction of additional shelters was conducted by UNHCR, its partners and the authorities. The rainy season often sees the number of malaria cases peak. In order to mitigate this risk, UNHCR is planning for the distribution of 10,000 mosquito nets for IDPs in the Centre Nord.

## Funding Update

**\$665.0 million**

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



## WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

as of 4 August 2020

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

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