

# West and Central Africa

February 2022

With **12 million people of concern** (PoC) to UNHCR, **West and Central Africa hosts 11% of PoCs worldwide**. Over 60% of them are **internally displaced persons (IDPs)**.

In **2021, one million additional people** became of concern to UNHCR in West and Central Africa (WCA). **More than half of them are children**.

Since 2015, **forced displacement in WCA has more than tripled** (174% increase in number of IDPs, 235% for refugees). This trend is likely to continue due to **instability** in parts of the region.

## KEY INDICATORS | POPULATION OF CONCERN



**1.6 million**

refugees and asylum-seekers in West and Central Africa as of 31 January 2022.



**7.4 million**

internally displaced people (IDPs) in West and Central Africa as of 31 January 2022.



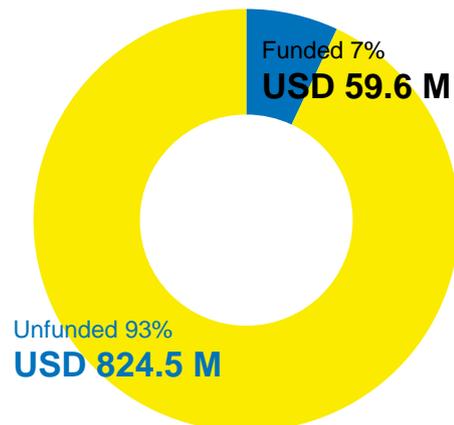
**1 million**

stateless or of undetermined nationality as of 31 May 2021.

## FUNDING (AS OF 28 FEBRUARY 2022)

**USD 884.1 M**

requested for West and Central Africa



**Burkina Faso.**  
Internally displaced people near Naaba Bolle house in Burkina Faso.

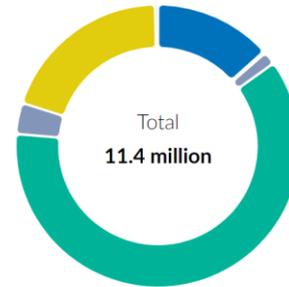
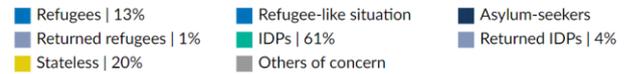
© UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau

The Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa covers the following 21 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

# Population of concern in West and Central Africa

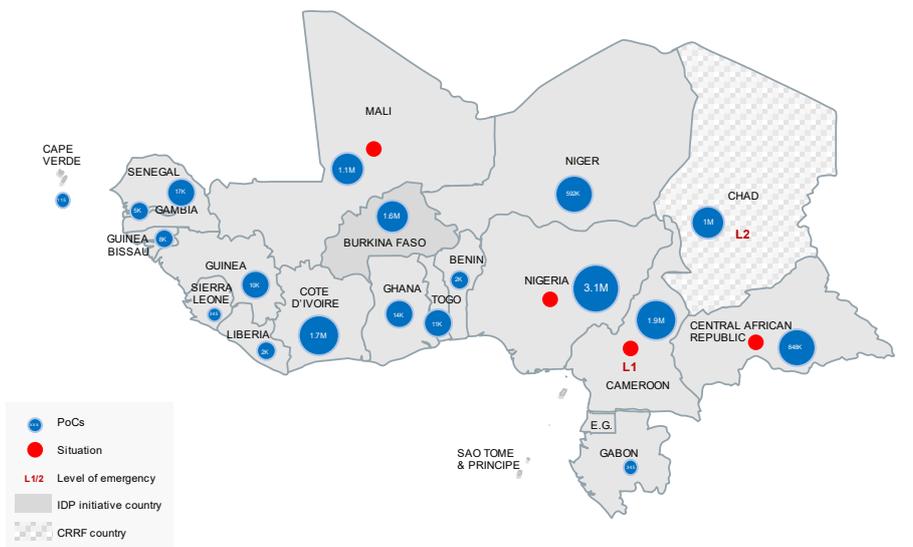
- In 2022, the West and Central Africa region is projected to host **11% of the population of concern to UNHCR worldwide**. Notably, the region hosts a **high proportion of internally displaced people (IDPs), and of people without a nationality (stateless, of undetermined nationality or at risk of statelessness)**.
- In West and Central Africa, **50% of refugees live in around 50 camps**, spread across 10 countries.

2022 planning figures  
West and Central Africa



RBWCA – Persons of concern and Level of emergency

AS of 31 December 2021



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

## Sahel Situation\*

- Refugees: 1 million
- IDPs: 3 million
- Other people of concern: 569,000

## Central African Republic Situation\*

- Refugees: 622,000
- IDPs: 580,000
- Other people of concern: 250,000

## Far North Cameroon emergency

- Refugees and hosts in Chad: 60,000
- IDPs and hosts in Cameroon: 40,000

\* 2022 planning figures:

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/situations>

CRRF country = [Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework](#).

## Main Sectors

### Protection

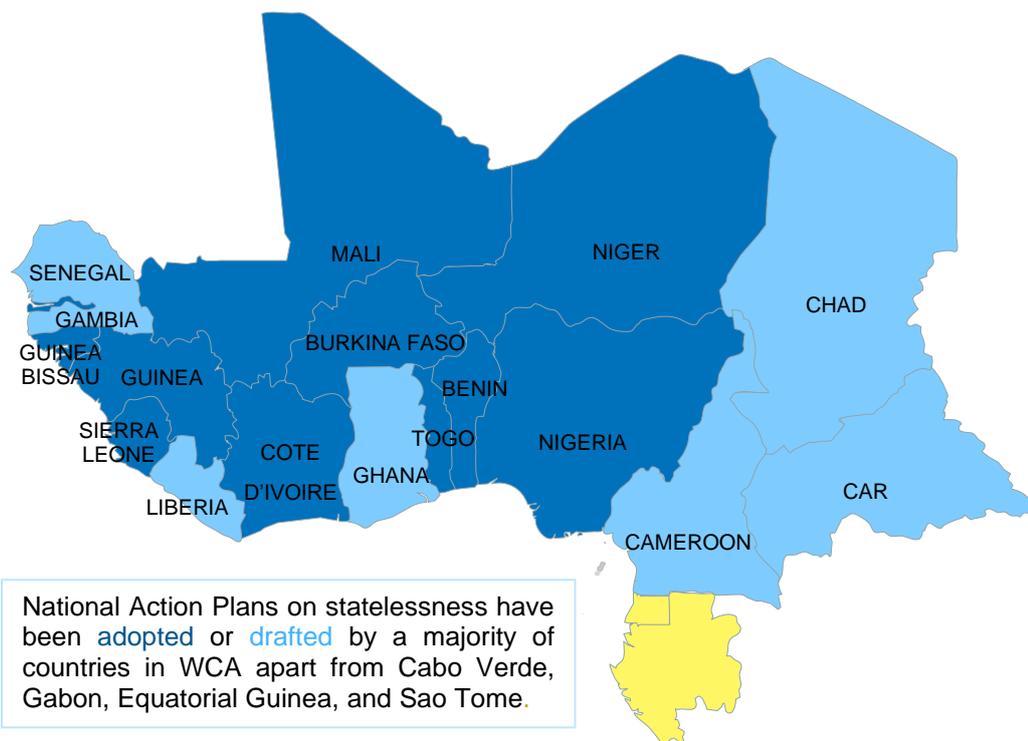
- In a **vast majority of countries** in West and Central Africa, a **specific law to regulate access to asylum and refugee status has been adopted** (in 16 countries), and **refugee status determination procedures are primarily managed by State institutions** (in 17 countries). As such, only a few countries are left without any dedicated legal framework. These are Cabo Verde,

Equatorial Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire where a draft bill is under discussion at technical level, and Sao Tome et Principe.

- While asylum systems in the region continue to demonstrate agility and flexibility, including through the use of **group determination in case of large influx of refugees** and the **piloting of remote interviewing in the context of COVID-19**, they also face a **number of challenges**, such as lengthy procedures, backlogs, non-expert asylum bodies, and a lack of support to asylum-seekers awaiting a decision.
- UNHCR fulfils its mission to strengthen the protection environment in the region by providing technical advice for the development of quality asylum frameworks and individual case processing, as well as capacity-building on a range of issues such as interview techniques.

### Statelessness

- In Côte d'Ivoire, the first legal and institutional framework for statelessness determination procedures were adopted in September 2020, with the first claims for stateless status adjudicated in December 2021. Ten other countries in WCA are working on adopting similar frameworks. To support the process, the Regional Bureau is working on a regional draft Model-Law



on Statelessness Determination Procedures, protection and solutions for stateless persons, together with the ECOWAS and CEMAC commissions. A first draft of this regional framework was reviewed in a regional meeting in Lomé, Togo, on 4 November 2021.

### Gender-based violence (GBV)

- **Female genital mutilation** and **child and forced marriage** are especially prevalent in West and Central Africa, which is home to **17 out of the 27 African countries** where FGM is prevalent, as well as **six of the top 10 countries** with the highest prevalence of **child marriage** in the world.
- In this context, GBV is one of the main protection challenges in the region. In 2021, UNHCR and its partners stepped up their **prevention and mitigation activities** through awareness and community engagement tools such as trainings, sensitization sessions and reinforced protection monitoring. UNHCR assisted over 8,000 GBV survivors with specialized case management services, including referrals in the medical, psychosocial, legal and safety areas, cash-based assistance, dignity kits and other types of material support.

## Education

- With **children making up over half of the refugees and IDPs in West and Central Africa** (54% of refugees and 61% of IDPs are children), education is a priority for UNHCR in all the countries of the region.
- In the WCA region and in line with the GCR, **all refugees in school are included in the national education systems of their host countries** and have access to national exams. However, effective access to education remains a challenge, in particular due to **insecurity**, but also to lack of **documentation** and **financial resources**. During the 2020-2021 school year, more than half of refugee children of primary and secondary school age in the region did not attend school, while just over 1% of the 18- to 24-year-old had access to higher education and vocational training.



*Burkina Faso. Primary school in Kaya welcoming internally displaced children. 20/10/2021. (c) UNHCR / Benjamin Loyseau*

- During the 2020-2021 school year, **UNHCR built or rehabilitated 138 classrooms**, supported 644 schools through water, sanitation and hygiene interventions, **assisted 20,000 children with school kits** and **10,500 children with cash-based interventions**. 2,510 teachers were trained, and 1,129 refugees were awarded higher education scholarships. UNHCR also supported Ministries of Education in the region to enable forcibly displaced children and youth to access education and mitigate the impact of school closures due to persistent insecurity and attacks (over 12,000 schools closed across the region in 2021).

## Durable Solutions

- **Voluntary repatriation remains the most appropriate and accessible durable solution for refugees in West and Central Africa**. This is evidenced by the number of tripartite agreements currently in place for major refugee caseload (Maliens, Nigerians, CAR, Sudanese refugees, etc.).
- The **Updated Roadmap for comprehensive solutions for Ivorian refugees**, which is currently the largest durable solution initiative in the region, was updated in September 2021. It is expected to culminate in the invocation of the cessation clause in June 2022. In 2021, UNHCR assisted with the repatriation of **22,445 Ivorians**.
- Given the existence of several protracted forced displacement situations in West and Central Africa, **local integration** is still being pursued despite significant challenges, as many host countries in the region face pre-existing socio-economic difficulties and vulnerabilities.
- For particularly vulnerable cases, **resettlement** sometimes remains the only solution which can be deemed durable. In 2021, UNHCR **submitted a total of 1,748 individuals for resettlement consideration** from ten countries. The **United States and Canada** are the main resettlement partners for the region, receiving 30% of the total submissions each. In the end, **1,197 refugees departed for resettlement in 2021**, with Sweden, France, Canada and the United States as their main destinations.

## Health

- In line with the GCR, **refugees are generally included in the national health systems of their host countries in West and Central Africa**. UNHCR promotes refugees' integration by supporting and strengthening national health systems, **including refugees into insurance schemes, and covering healthcare costs incurred by refugees**.
- In 2021, in refugee camps and sites in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad and Niger, **92% of all childbirths were attended by a qualified health agent, and 82% of refugee children under the age of 5 were vaccinated against measles**.
- As of 17 February 2022, **over 65,000 refugees and asylum-seekers have been vaccinated against Covid-19 in West and Central Africa**.



*Chad. Medical consultation of a Cameroonian refugee at the health post of Kalambari camp. 14/01/2022. © UNHCR / Aristophane Ngargoune*

## Water and Sanitation (WASH)



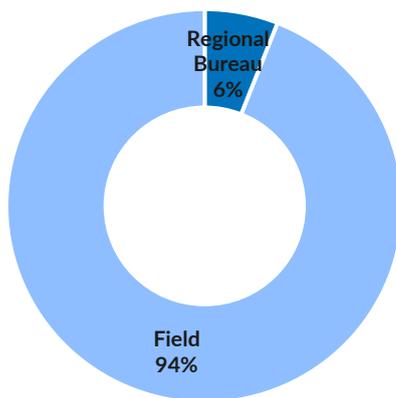
*A borehole in Chad.  
© UNHCR / Pierre-Yves Rochat*

- **Access to water remains a particular challenge** in the West and Central Africa region, especially in the Sahel, where the weather pattern is characterized by long dry season and short rainy seasons.
- WASH data is only available for the 50% of refugees and asylum-seekers living in camps, as others do not need to rely on UNHCR assistance for accessing those services.
- In 2021, UNHCR provided an average population of 711,954 refugees living in 49 camps or sites with an average of 16 liters of water per person per day, which matches UNHCR standards for a post-emergency transition phase (15 to 20L / person / day). For the same population, an average of one toilet for 15 persons is available, which reflects ongoing efforts in providing family toilets. As such, access to WASH services for refugees living in camps in the region are globally adequate, even though local improvements are still required.
- The difficult environmental conditions of the region can also present opportunities: from 2021, UNHCR is piloting a project aimed at solarizing all its pumping facilities in Chad by 2023.

# UNHCR Presence

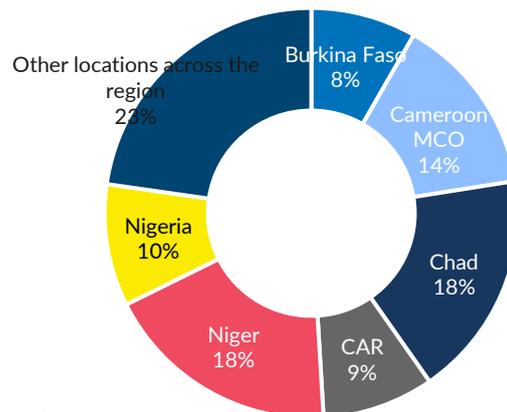
- There are 2,059 UNHCR staff in West and Central Africa, including 1,812 staff members and 247 affiliates. This means the region hosts **11% of UNHCR’s global workforce**.
- In the region, 64% of UNHCR’s staff are nationals, 24% internationals, and 12% affiliates.

**UNHCR Staff in West and Central Africa by location**



Source: UNHCR  
 © UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency

**UNHCR Staff in West and Central Africa by country**

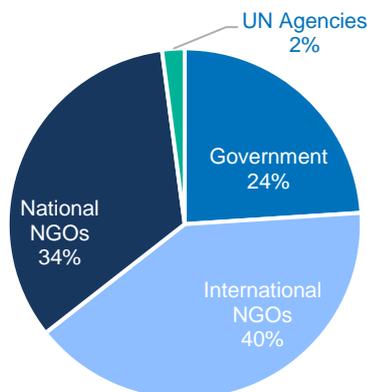


Source: UNHCR  
 © UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency

# Working with Partners

- In West and Central Africa, UNHCR currently collaborates with a total of **146 partners**. These include Governments, international and national NGOs, as well as other UN agencies.

**UNHCR Partners in West and Central Africa**



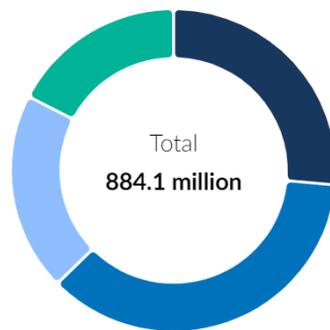
Source: Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa  
 © UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency

# Funding

- In **2022**, the West and Central Africa financial requirements stand at **\$884.1 million**, which represents a 21.9% increase on last year's budget.
- **West and Central Africa makes up for only 9% of UNHCR's total budget**, despite hosting 11% of the world's people of concern.

## 2022 budget of the West and Central Africa region (by impact area)

■ Protect | 26%     
 ■ Assist | 36%     
 ■ Empower | 20%  
■ Solve | 17%



**Protect:** Attaining favourable protection environments  
**Assist:** Realizing rights in safe environments  
**Empower:** Empowering communities and achieving gender equality  
**Solve:** Securing solutions

Source: 2022 budget as approved by the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme at its 72nd session in October 2021.

## CONTACTS | REGIONAL BUREAU FOR WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA

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