

Mixed movements in West and Central Africa

A brief annual overview of 2021

This update provides a brief overview of regional **trends** and **programming** by UNHCR and partners in 2021 in relation to mixed movements.

Mixed movements (or mixed flows) refer to situations in which individuals are moving together, in a regular or irregular manner, using the **same** routes and means of transportation, but for **different** reasons.

Monitoring of mixed movements

To inform programming by collecting data on the profiles of persons on the move and strengthen access to protection services *en route* through referrals, UNHCR, together with partners, monitored mixed movements along key routes, relying on a network of local monitors.



Mixed movements routes in West and Central Africa are complex and dynamic © UNHCR



In the context of a partnership between the International Committee for Emergency Aid and Development (*Comité International pour l'Aide d'Urgence et le Développement*, CIAUD) and UNHCR, **6,362 persons on the move** were detected and profiled between June and December 2021 along key routes across five regions in Burkina Faso (Cascades, Centre, Est, Haut Bassins and Sahel). **20%** of these individuals were identified as unaccompanied children, **15%** as asylum-seekers, mainly from Mali (80%) and Niger (16%), and **9%** as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in cross-border movements. A total of **1,483 individuals** were referred to the relevant protection services.

In 2021, **14,108 people on the move** were detected and interviewed along key routes in Chad in the framework of a partnership between the National Red Cross Society and UNHCR. Within these flows, **1,496 persons** were found to move for reasons linked to international protection (10,6%), **538** were refugees (3,8%) and **958** were asylum-seekers (6,8%).

Between February and July 2021, **5,791 persons on the move** were identified and profiled in Mali, mainly in the regions of Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu, under a partnership between CIAUD and UNHCR. Monitors received accounts of violence *en route*, perpetrated either by non-State armed groups or by border authorities.

In the context of a partnership between CIAUD and UNHCR, **1,335** asylum-seekers and **327** refugees on the move were identified in border areas in Niamey between February and July 2021.

Programming in the context of mixed movements

In 2021, UNHCR sought to strengthen the **protection environment** along West and Central African routes, including for unaccompanied children and victims and survivors of trafficking in person, as well as enhance access to **durable solutions** for refugees, stateless persons and IDPs as a meaningful alternative to risky onward movements.

Identification and referral

UNHCR joined forces with key partners to strengthen community-based identification and referral mechanisms along key routes. As an illustration, in **Burkina Faso**, members of the National Association of Road Carriers and of the National Umbrella Organisation for Road Carriers were trained by UNHCR on international protection in the context of mixed movements and on the implementation of the national referral mechanism. In addition, standard operating procedures (SOPs) between the National Commission for Refugees (*Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés*, CONAREF), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR were adopted to facilitate the referral of asylum-seekers and migrants between the three entities. In **Cameroon**, as part of a partnership with GIZ, UNHCR delivered three cross-border trainings in border areas with the Central African Republic, Chad and Gabon on international protection in the context of mixed movements, reaching over 100 border officials and civil society members. In **The Gambia**, UNHCR built the capacities of members of the security forces deployed in border areas on similar topics. In **Nigeria**, SOPs between UNHCR, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs were established to enhance referrals. Training sessions on international protection in the context of mixed movements were also delivered to members of the security forces in Ijebu-Ode and Lagos. In **Senegal**, UNHCR is coordinating with a number of key non-governmental organisations, including Association Tres'Or, Caritas, Centre Africain pour la Prévention et la Résolution des Conflits, Green Village Foundation and Marie Stops International, to increase and improve referrals. In addition, UNHCR organised a

two-day training session on asylum and mixed movements for selected agents of the Senegalese Border Force.

Protection frameworks and systems

UNHCR supported States in the region with the establishment and reinforcement of quality and accessible national protection frameworks and systems. In **Burkina Faso**, UNHCR advocated for the reform of the asylum law in line with relevant standards and supported the adoption in January 2022 of secondary legislation laying down the role, composition and working modalities of the National Commission for Refugees. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, UNHCR provided legal and technical assistance to the authorities with the introduction to Parliament of a draft bill expected to become the first legislative framework regulating asylum in the country. In **Gabon**, UNHCR and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) advised the Ministry of Justice in the context of the reform of the Criminal Code to decriminalise the rescue of and assistance to asylum-seekers and migrants at sea for humanitarian reasons. In **Guinea**, UNHCR supported the Government with the development of secondary legislation facilitating the implementation of the 2018 asylum law.



UNHCR and the national Red Cross in Chad discuss mixed movements with communities © Croix Rouge tchadienne

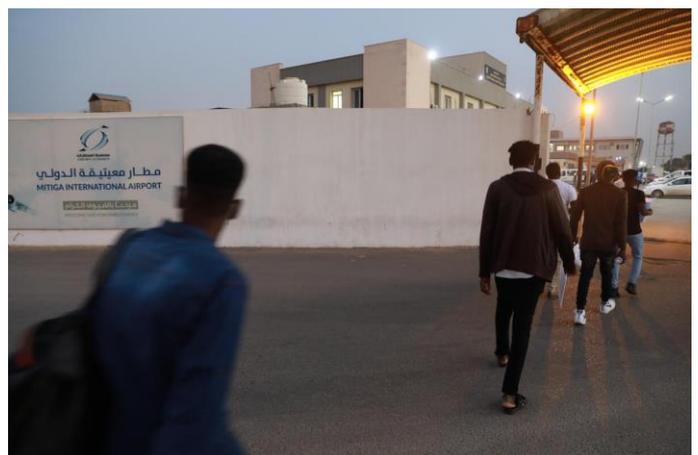
[Communication with communities](#)

UNHCR strengthened two-way communication with persons on the move with a view to disseminating accurate and up-to-date information on protection risks and services available *en route*. As an illustration, information sessions were organised across four regions (Cascades, Est, Hauts Bassins and Sahel) in [Burkina Faso](#) for first-contact agents on child trafficking, gender-based violence and irregular mobility. In partnership with CIAUD, UNHCR held dialogue sessions with the authorities in five regions (Cascades, Centre, Est, Hauts Bassins and Sahel) on the topic of mixed movements. In [Chad](#), traditional leaders in Baga Sola were invited to discuss mixed flows. A film presenting protection risks *en route* was screened during a televised football game and in commercial buses, reaching a total of 2,700 viewers and 42,540 travellers. Programs addressing mixed movements were broadcast on three radio stations, FM Liberté in N'Djamena, FM Alnadjah in Ati and FM La Voix du Ouaddaï in Abéché, receiving the live contributions of 47 listeners. Sensitization efforts were also deployed in schools, markets and bus stations, reaching an estimated 3,611 students across the country and 34,498 people on the move. Under the framework of the [Telling the Real Story initiative](#) in [Nigeria](#), UNHCR reached an estimated 3,000 persons through information sessions, children's books, social events and radio programmes addressing protection risks *en route*, including trafficking in persons.

[Response to specific needs](#)

UNHCR sought to strengthen the identification of persons on the move with specific needs, including children and victims and survivors of trafficking in persons, and their access to tailored services. In [Gabon](#), UNHCR and UNODC supported the reform of the Criminal Code to ensure that *inter alia* refugees are included in anti-trafficking efforts. This assistance is delivered as part of a UN Task Force on Mixed Population Movements set up in September 2020. In February 2021, UNHCR [Mali](#) participated in the first meeting of the National

Committee against Trafficking in Persons and Related Practice (*Comité National de Lutte contre la Traite des Personnes et des Pratiques Assimilées*, CNLTPPA). In Mali still, the members of the Protection Cluster were trained on trafficking in persons and smuggling with a view to enhance referrals in the context of internal displacement. In addition, UNHCR Mali briefed the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, on descent-based slavery and its links to forced displacement. In [Senegal](#), UNHCR and 13 UN entities joined forces under the leadership of the Government to develop a national strategy on youth taking into consideration the issue of mixed movements. At the [regional](#) level, IOM and UNHCR committed through a Joint Agreement signed in February 2021 to operationalize in the region the updated *IOM-UNHCR Framework Document on developing standard operating procedures to facilitate the identification and protection of victims of trafficking* (June 2020), seeking to strengthen cooperation between the two organisations with respect to the identification, referral, protection and assistance of victims and survivors of trafficking. The updated Framework was subsequently introduced to all IOM and UNHCR colleagues in the region during a joint webinar held on 18 February 2021.



On 4 November 2021, 172 asylum-seekers were evacuated from Libya to Niger in the context of the Emergency Transit Mechanism after more than a year of suspension © UNHCR/Mohamed Alalem

Solutions

To provide a meaningful alternative to risky onward movements, UNHCR strengthened access to durable solutions, including local inclusion and complementary pathways to third countries.

In [Burkina Faso](#), 85 refugees, IDPs and host community members at risk of irregular (onward) movements were identified by UNHCR and partners to receive a cash grant in support of their business plans. A survey on onward movement was launched in [the Gambia](#), reaching 765 refugees, to better understand the linkages between access to protection and solutions on the one hand, and onward movements on the other hand. In the context of the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in [Niger](#), six refugees received student visas to France and Italy. In parallel, humanitarian evacuations from Niger to Italy continued.

Coordination

Considering the diversity of profiles within mixed flows, programming in such context requires a

multi-stakeholder approach. In [Burkina Faso](#), the first of the four annual meetings of the Asylum and Migration Working Group was held in March 2021, recommending the development of a 4W matrix, the establishment of a clear framework for capacity-building activities and the adoption of a joint workplan. In addition, an instant messaging group was established between key stakeholders to ensure live information-sharing on mixed movements. In [Gabon](#), UNHCR is joining forces with the Directorate General for Documentation and Immigration (*Direction Générale de la Documentation et de Immigration*, DGDI), UNICEF, UNODC and IOM to implement over 18 months a joint programme under the UN Trust Fund for Human Security entitled "*A Joint Human Security Approach to Strengthen Prevention, Protection and Empowerment in Mixed Migration to Gabon*". In [Guinea](#), UNHCR contributed to the Working Group on Mixed Movements. In [Senegal](#), UNHCR strengthened its partnership with the Border Force, with a focus on capacity-building on international protection and data-sharing on mixed flows.

Useful resources developed to support programming in the context of mixed movements:

- Ensuring coordination and cross-fertilization across Operations and Bureaux, UNHCR's *Updated Risk Mitigation Strategy and Appeal: Routes Towards the Western and Central Mediterranean Sea* (January 2021 - [link](#)) presents key related achievements in 2019 and 2020, implementation challenges and a common set of strategic priorities.
- In its *Mapping of protection services for victims of trafficking and other vulnerable people on the move in the Sahel and East Africa* (June 2021 - [link](#)), UNHCR identified existing services according to location and category.
- UNHCR Burkina Faso's interactive *Dashboard: Monitoring of mixed movements in Burkina Faso* (June-December 2021 - [link](#)) as well as UNHCR Chad's *Dashboard on mixed movements* for January-June 2021 ([link](#)) are examples of the various data which can be collected on the profiles and needs of those on the move to inform programming.
- With its *Research Report: The impact of the Sahel conflict on cross-border movements from Burkina Faso and Mali towards Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana* (October 2021 - [link](#)), the Mixed Migration Center informed UNHCR's response by finding that IDPs in the Sahel moved to Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana in temporary secondary cross-border movements, likely to become more frequent and permanent with the deterioration of the protection environment in the region.

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