

West & Central Africa

27 May 2020

The West and Central Africa region has seen a **22% percent increase** in new confirmed COVID-19 cases **in the last week** going from 32,401 contaminations on 19 May to a total of 39,585 on 26 May 2020.

While the increase rate slows down at regional level, we are observing a **second wave of contaminations** in some countries following the easing preventive measures and movement restrictions last week.

In the region, **Cameroon** and **Nigeria** saw the sharpest increase in confirmed cases with respectively more than 1,900 (+54%) and over 2000 (+30%) new infections to COVID-19 in the past week.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

10,000,000 total PoCs
5,600,000 IDPs
1,300,000 Refugees
1,400,000 Returnees
1,700,000 Stateless

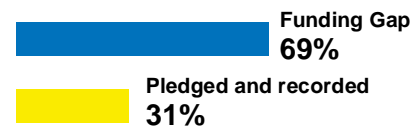
COVID-19 CASES*

39,585 total confirmed cases
24,640 still active
15,503 recovered
929 deaths

*source: WHO as of 26 May 2020.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

for COVID-19 Response Globally
US\$745 MILLION



Awareness raising session on COVID-19 and sensitization on basic social distancing and hygiene measures conducted by refugees in N-Djamena (Chad) to curb the spread of the virus in their communities. ©UNHCR Chad / Simplice Kpandji

Operational Context

- **Continuous increase of confirmed cases.** Since the first case of COVID-19 was declared in Nigeria on 28 February 2020, the pandemic has progressed steadily throughout West and Central Africa where it has killed 929 people. As of 26 May 2020, WHO statistics show 39,585 confirmed cases in the 21 countries covered by the Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa with 24,640 still active and 15,503 recoveries. To date, Nigeria (8,344), Ghana (7,117), Cameroon (5,436), Guinea (3,358) and Senegal (3,161) have been the most affected. In terms of active cases, Nigeria (5,710) has the highest number, followed by Ghana (4,766), Cameroon (3,265) and Gabon (1,631). Guinea and Senegal join Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Liberia, Mali and Niger with more recovered cases than actives.
- **Preventive measures and restrictions on movement.** To mitigate the socio-economic impact of these measures, the majority of states relaxed restriction measures last week. In **Cote d'Ivoire**, the President of the Republic has authorized the effective start of classes in public and private primary schools throughout the national territory, from Monday 18 May 2020, except for the Regional Directorates of Abidjan, Dabou, Aboisso and the Departmental Directorate of Grand-Bassam. The curfew has been lifted. As the movement restrictions are lifted and business are reopening, we are observing the second wave of contaminations. In the region, **Cameroon** and **Nigeria** saw the sharpest increase in confirmed cases with respectively more than 1,900 (+54%) and over 2000 (+30%) new infections to COVID-19 only in the past week.
- **Specific protection risks and challenges for forcibly displaced populations.** Refugees and IDPs are often residing in overcrowded and precarious conditions rendering impossible social distancing or basic preventive measures such as hand washing which exposes them to heightened risks of contamination as COVID-19 cases. Although only three cases of infection were reported among UNHCR's persons of concern in Cameroon in Nigeria so far, forcibly displaced populations are also at heightened risk of stigmatization in situations of pandemic. In addition to these specific challenges, forcible displaced populations are also facing the risk of food insecurity in the region, particularly in the Sahel. There are also great concerns regarding gender-based violence which is on the rise since the beginning of the COVID crisis as a direct result of the preventive measures enforced and the economic strain these restrictions have put on many households. The significant disruption in the livelihoods of many forcibly displaced population is also increasing the risk of resorting to negative coping mechanisms, including child labour which UNHCR is monitoring closely.

Key findings of the CARE rapid gender analyses in Africa.

The NGO CARE has released two Rapid Gender Analyses for COVID-19 in [East, Central and Southern Africa](#) and in [West Africa](#). Both studies share the key finding that women are excluded from information sharing on COVID-19 and from key high-level decision-making processes at national and regional level, across West and Central Africa. Despite this, the analysis also reveals how coronavirus is creating opportunities to disrupt deeply entrenched gender inequalities. Immediate impacts at the time of this research center around reduced income and access to basic needs due to government lockdowns, changing gender roles in households, and increased gender-based violence. The COVID-19 pandemic in West and Central Africa is currently exacerbating socio-economic issues, with women bearing the largest burden of caring for their families while also seeking to lead communities in prevention and adaptation.

UNHCR Response

UNHCR Operations are taking steps to ensure continuity of assistance and basic protection services despite movement restrictions through teleworking and remote protection and assistance. UNHCR operations are also stepping up their engagement and advocacy with Governments, the UN country teams and other Inter-Agency platforms to contribute to a coordinated response to the COVID-19 crisis and to ensure that persons of concern are included in all relevant response plans.



Strengthen and support primary and secondary health care and selected WASH services

- UNHCR Operations are increasing their direct support to national health systems to strengthen their infection prevention and healthcare responses, including through the provision of medical equipment and supplies and training of health personnel. Operations are also reinforcing the WASH systems and services in the main refugee and IDP hosting areas, including by distributing soap and increasing access to water to allow for the implementation of basic preventive hygiene measures such as frequent handwashing.
- In [Burkina Faso](#), UNHCR's partner AIRD conducted an evaluation of the service of infectious diseases in the Regional Hospital in Dori for a possible refurbishment. This service serves as an isolation and treatment centre for confirmed cases in the Region of the Sahel. In Dori, in the Sahel Region, the production of masks by refugees and members of the host community is on-going. Last week some 6,500 masks were delivered to the partner VFS. So far, 9,500 masks were produced as part of this project which will see the production of a total of 35,000 masks to be distributed to IDPs and refugees in Dori. UNHCR is also strengthening WASH systems in the major IDP hosting areas, to facilitate the respect of COVID-19 preventive measures, including handwashing. To date, UNHCR and its partners distributed hand washing devices,

balls of soaps, containers of liquid soaps, and masks. In addition, UNHCR provided in-kind donations, composed of medicine, pharmaceutical supplies and information posters on COVID-19, in the eight regions for a total amount of USD 960,000. More support has been committed and will be disbursed soon. UNHCR is also strengthening WASH systems in the areas hosting IDPs, to facilitate the respect of COVID-19 preventive measures, including handwashing. To date, UNHCR and its partners distributed hand washing devices, balls of soaps, containers of liquid soaps, and masks. In addition, UNHCR provided in-kind donations, composed of medicine, pharmaceutical supplies and information posters on COVID-19, in the eight regions for a total amount of USD 960,000. More support has been committed and will be disbursed soon.

- In **CAR**, in Bouar, from 18 and 21 May, UNHCR distributed 50 hand washing kits consisting of tap buckets, metal racks, soap baskets, 5L cans of bleach and cartons of soap to local administrations. UNHCR also distributed 2,250 soaps to 90 returnee households in the area. This brings to 15,920 soaps distributed to repatriated households and residents in the sub-prefectures of Bouar only. In Berberati, 27,676 pieces of soap were distributed to over 4,500 IDP and host populations and 71 handwashing kits were installed in strategic points, local administration and health facilities.
- In **Niger**, UNHCR continues the production of hygiene products in several refugee and IDP sites such as the ETM transit centre in Hamdallaye, Niamey, Maradi, Agadez, Abala and Ouallam. Currently, 667 PoCs have been trained becoming active producers of liquid soap, bleach and moringa soap. Their production continues to be distributed among the vulnerable population including refugees, IDPs and local communities, but also to public hospitals and healthcare centres in every region. UNHCR is also launching a project to produce washable masks in Niamey, Maradi and Agadez in the upcoming weeks to support the long-term sanitary measures put in place by Niger Government. Sensitization efforts are also ongoing to inform displaced populations on COVID-19 and explain basic preventive measures.



Strengthen risk communication and community engagement, and critical protection case management, including protection monitoring and registration

- UNHCR Operations are working to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on persons of concern by increasing communication with communities and introducing innovative approaches to address access limitations including social distancing in protection activities, remote case management via telephone, preventive measure in registration processes, while continuing advocacy to maintain avenues for asylum seekers to access international protection and safeguarding the principle of non-refoulement. To ensure adequate assistance to survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), consultation methods are being adapted to allow for remote assistance including through online/phone consultations and by integrating cash assistance interventions for women at risk and SGBV survivors into assistance.

- In **CAR**, in Birao, UNHCR joined the Central African Red Cross in its effort of sensitization on COVID. A total of 6138 persons were informed about basic prevention and barrier measures to prevent the propagation of the virus. In the Lobaye, over 500 people participated in awareness-raising activities during the week of 24 May 2020.
- In **Ghana**, UNHCR is working with the Ghana Refugee Board to ensure the continuation of refugee status determinations while enforcing social distancing through virtual interviews. This innovative process allows the Eligibility Officer to interact with the Asylum Seeker from separate rooms while observing all the COVID-19 safety protocols to ensure the safety of both the interviewer and persons going through the RSD interview. The virtual RSD interview will ensure the avoidance of undue delay in granting Refugee status to persons in need of International Protection.



An Asylum Seeker going through the RSD interview in Ghana. ©UNHCR Ghana / Patience Folley

- In **Guinea Bissau**, UNHCR in collaboration with UNICEF and UNDP, as well as in coordination with the UNCT, continues to help the Red Cross in the awareness-raising activities against COVID-19 in Bissau and in the Cacheu Region.



Ramp up cash assistance, reinforce shelters, and provide core relief items in congested urban and camps settings

- In many parts of the region, refugees and IDPs are residing in heavily overcrowded camps and sites exposing them to heightened risks of contamination as COVID-19 cases may soon affect most of the most of major hosting areas. To address this issue, UNHCR Operations are implementing targeted shelter interventions and distributing core relief items while decongesting the most overcrowded sites to allow for the implementation of the most basic prevention measures. UNHCR Operations is also increasing their focus on strengthening community-based protection mechanism and

enhancing the capacity and self-reliance of refugee and IDP communities including through the ramping up of cash assistance.

- In **Liberia**, UNHCR finalized the distribution of food support to urban refugees reaching 98% of the households for a total of 180 families assisted. Although this distribution was carried out directly to ensure the assistance would reach refugees in a timely manner, UNHCR continues to advocate for the inclusion of the urban refugees in the government food distribution programme and to be considered for future distributions. In PTP and Bahn Settlement, UNHCR continues the distribution of sanitary material and hygiene kits as well as agricultural tools and seeds for livelihoods activities.
- In **Togo**, as part of UNHCR COVID response, 854 refugee households received CBI assistance via mobile transfers to help them buy food and protection kits for a total amount of 35,104,850 CFA francs (58,548 USD). Over the next 3 months, UNHCR is planning to support a total of 1,465 refugee and asylum-seeker households as well as 152 chronic disease patients suffering from pathologies known as comorbidity at Covid-19 through CBI interventions for an overall amount of 40,516,000 FCFA (67,572 USD).



Support education systems

- While schools are gradually reopening in **Benin** and **Cote d'Ivoire**, UNHCR continues to support governments to implement education strategies for continued learning for all children and make schools safe, healthy, and inclusive environments. To ensure the continuity of learning in a protective environment and to prepare for the safe reopening of schools, UNHCR is working with Ministries of Education and education partners to support students access to distance education programmes, enhance health training for teachers, support community awareness-raising activities on COVID-19 while upgrading water and sanitation facilities in schools.
- In **Burkina Faso**, UNHCR has ordered 3,200 solar-powered radio sets to be distributed to refugee children to ensure they can have access to the distance learning programmes broadcasted through national and community radios.
- In **Mali**, 5,500 solar-powered radios are ready to be deployed to support children's distance learning in central and northern Mali. In these low resource/low connectivity areas, where very few households have access to electricity, TV or internet, radio education is one of the few ways children have to continue learning. This intervention will ensure learning and protection to 11,000 refugee, ID and host community children affected by Covid-19 school closures.
- In **Ghana**, the Global Partnership for Education confirmed a 15M grant to support continued learning, recovery and resilience in education. The grant, coordinated by the WB, will fund remote learning through radio and TV, back-to-school campaigns and remedial support, as well as teacher training to provide psychosocial support to students, parents and communities. Refugee children and youth and schools that host them are included in this project.

- In **Senegal**, a group of former DAFI scholarship holders provided support to 25 vulnerable refugee households (some 100 individuals) as part of the response against COVID-19. A selection committee composed of UNHCR, the African Office for Development and Cooperation (OFADEC) and the Refugee Committees (CRRS and AFERDAS) selected 25 households among vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers while respecting the AGD and vulnerability criteria. The official donation ceremony took place on 21 May, with the participation of UNHCR's Representative for the Senegal Multi-Country Office.

Country Highlights

GHANA – DIRECT SUPPORT TO GHANA'S NATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM

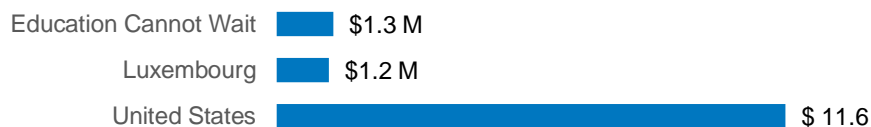
- In **Ghana**, the fast changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic is having severe impact on national health systems. To support the Government's response to this health emergency, UNHCR Ghana has made a donation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and hygiene products including surgical masks, examination gloves, hand sanitizers with automatic dispensers, thermometer guns, disposable bedsheets, disinfectants, veronica buckets, disposable hand towels etc to some selected health facilities in the Greater Accra Region. Earlier, the Agency had made similar donations to Ghana Health Service facilities in all the Districts hosting refugee camps in Ghana as well as the health facilities in the various refugee camps.



At the Achimota Hospital, Acting Medical Superintendent, Dr. Salamatu Attah Nantogma receiving the items from UNHCR being supported by colleague from Ghana Refugee Board. ©UNHCR Ghana/Patience Folley

Financial Requirements

US\$745 million requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally through December 2020. Total funding received by UNHCR against its COVID-19 appeal: **US\$230 million**. Earmarked contributions for the Coronavirus Emergency Situation in **West and Central Africa** amount to some **US\$ 14.1 million**.



Special thanks to the following donors providing:

EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COVID-19 APPEAL | USD

United States of America 64 million | **Germany** 38 million | **European Union** 31.8 million | **United Kingdom** 24.8 million | **Japan** 23.9 million | **Denmark** 14.6 million | **CERF** 6.9 million | **Canada** 6.4 million | **Private Donors** 3.7 million | **Ireland** 3.3 million | **Sony Corporation** 3 million | **Sweden** 3 million | **Luxembourg** 2.7 million | **Finland** 2.4 million | **Education Cannot Wait** 1.8 million | **Norway** 1.5 million | **Qatar Charity** 1.5 million | **Australia** 0.8 million | **Monaco** 0.2 million | **Estonia** 0.1 million | **Iceland** 0.1 million | **Liechtenstein** 0.1 million | **Portugal** 0.1 million | **Slovakia** 0.05 million | **Spain** 0.03

OTHER SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

United States of America 197.3 million | **Canada** 45.2 million | **Japan** 18.5 million | **Norway** 16.8 million | **Switzerland** 12.8 million | **Sweden** 7.3 million | **United Kingdom** 7.1 million | **Denmark** 5 million | **Netherlands** 4.1 million | **Republic of Korea** 3.2 million | **Private donors** **Australia** 3 million | **Finland** 2.2 million

UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Sweden 76.4 million | **Norway** 41.4 million | **Netherlands** 36.1 million | **Denmark** 34.6 million | **United Kingdom** 31.7 million | **Private donors** **Spain** 26.6 million | **Germany** 25.9 million | **Switzerland** 16.4 million | **Private donors** **Republic of Korea** 13.9 million

Notwithstanding UNHCR's COVID-19 appeal, the continuation of regular programmes in West and Central Africa remains critical. Many of these activities will also help people of concern to cope with COVID-19 and its subsequent protection and economic impact, even if not included in the prioritized appeal.

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