

# Mixed movements in West and Central Africa

February – April 2020

This regional update covers the period from **February to April 2020** and provides an overview of regional **trends** in the field of mixed movements as well as **programming** by UNHCR and partners to enhance the protection of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people on the move in such context. Mixed flows refer to situations where a number of persons are travelling together, generally in an irregular manner, using the **same** routes and means of transportation, but for **different** reasons.

## KEY DATA

Despite border closure due to COVID-19, 72 persons **on the move** were identified in Mali within outgoing mixed flows and 32 in incoming flows (April 2020).

While 472 persons with **intentions to seek asylum** were identified within mixed movements in Niger, beyond the Agadez region, as well as 52 individuals at risk of statelessness and 9 unaccompanied and separated children (February-April 2020), 3,311 individuals, including 142 refugees and 53 asylum-seekers, were recorded in mixed flows in Chad (April 2020).

208 **unaccompanied or separated children**, mainly originating from Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, were identified along mixed movements routes in Mali by UNHCR and partners AMSS et CIAUD-Canada (February-March 2020).

1,682 Nigerien **talibes children** forcibly returned from Nigeria were registered at Niger border points (March 2020).

The **arrest** of approximately 20 Burkina Faso nationals was reported in Ghana as they were trying to enter the territory through an unofficial entry point (March 2020).

128 persons were **evacuated from Libya** to Niger in the framework of the Emergency Evacuation Transit Mechanism established to facilitate the access to protection and solutions of the most vulnerable refugees detained in Libya (12 March 2020).



Mixed movements in West and Central Africa © UNHCR

## PRESS REVIEW

Mixed Migration Center, **Hot returns and the cold shoulder: New developments in deterrence along the Western Mediterranean Route**, 16 April 2020

News 23, **Over 250 rescued in Niger desert, put in quarantine**, 2 April 2020

Reuters, **East Libya has expelled 1,400 refugees and migrants this year**, 28 April 2020

Al Jazeera, **Survivors of Nigeria's baby factories share their stories**, 3 May 2020

## Impact of COVID-19 on mixed movements and protection

- Temporary local cross-border movements usually recorded in the South of **Chad** have been impacted by COVID-19-related measures, such as quarantine. Smugglers and traffickers have to adapt to this new context, including by using alternative and isolated routes. The cost of transportation has increased, including for refugees. In line with State instructions, the national Red Cross society, a UNHCR partner, has suspended its protection activities targeting persons of concern to UNHCR in mixed movements from March 20.
- In **Ghana**, following border closure due to the pandemic, 191 persons have reportedly been intercepted and returned to their countries of origin by the immigration authorities.
- In **Guinea**, despite border closure and a state of emergency declared to contain the spread of the virus, the authorities continue to register asylum applications, conduct interviews determine whether a person seeking international protection is considered a refugee and renew refugee certificates.
- In **Mali**, UNHCR and partner, CIAUD-Canada, continue their protection monitoring of official and unofficial entry points as well as transit locations. Despite border closure due to COVID-19, mixed flows continue to enter and exit the country.
- In **Niger**, protection monitoring activities have been impacted by the pandemic and the closure of key transit points such as bus stations. UNHCR's partner, CIAUD-Canada, has been compelled to extend its coverage to alternative routes.
- If access to territory and asylum in **Nigeria** is impacted by official border closure with Cameroon, Niger and Chad, no incident of *refoulement* has been confirmed. Amid the pandemic, border monitoring is maintained by UNHCR's partners through volunteers spread across different villages along the border.
- In **Senegal**, after a three-week suspension, the National Eligibility Commission, responsible for determining refugee status, resumed its activities in March by establishing appropriate protocols to prevent the spread of the virus.

## Activities

### ACCESS TO TERRITORY AND ASYLUM

- In **Algeria**, the UNHCR protection hotline remains open during the pandemic.
- Following reports of arrests conducted at the border by the authorities in **Ghana**, including of Burkina Faso nationals, UNHCR is advocating for access to territory and asylum for those in need of international protection.
- UNHCR **Mali** facilitated information sessions on access to territory and asylum as well as preventive actions against COVID-19 in border stations in the Timbuktu and Mopti regions. 119 persons, including 83 men and 36 women, participated.
- In Agadez, a major crossroads of mixed movements in **Niger**, refugee status determination procedures, through which the Government determine whether a person seeking international protection is considered a refugee, continue despite COVID-19, while implementing preventive actions.
- In **Nigeria**, UNHCR has produced official letters to the Federal Government and State Government to highlight the need to respect access to territory and asylum for those in need of international protection amid the pandemic.
- To ensure access to territory and asylum while protecting public health, nurses were deployed in North-East **Nigeria** at the Damasak, Banki and Ngalaborder border-crossing points to measure the temperature of people entering the country. Isolation centres are under construction to reinforce existing screening measures.

- Along with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the World Health Organization (WHO), UNHCR contributed to the development in **Senegal** of an action plan to support the authorities with controls and epidemiological surveillance in border areas. As part of the implementation, UNHCR plans on building the capacities of border officials on access to territory and asylum for refugees and asylum-seekers.



*Meeting between WHO, IOM and UNHCR in Dakar, Senegal, in the context of a joint initiative to provide support to the authorities with controls and epidemiological surveillance in border areas, in Senegal. The news story by Quest-TV is [available online](#).*

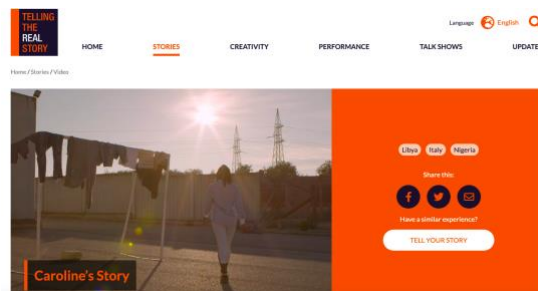
## IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL MECHANISMS

- In **Burkina Faso**, 326 people on the move in mixed flows, including 69 women and 74 children, were screened by UNHCR and partner, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), from January to February 2020, in the nine counselling centres set up in the Sahel, Hauts Bassins and Cascades regions. Most common countries of nationality included Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. 52 of these people were referred to one of the three regional transit centres.
- Under the umbrella of the collaboration between UNHCR, the national Red Cross society and the National Commission in charge of the Reception and Reintegration of Refugees and Returnees (*Commission Nationale pour l'Accueil et la Réinsertion des Réfugiés et des Rapatriés*, CNARR) in **Chad**, 3,311 persons, including 142 refugees and 53 asylum-seekers, were identified at the main entry and exit points of mixed flows by Red Cross volunteers, amounting to 4,747 the total number of individuals in movement recorded since the beginning of the year. Referrals to CNARR, ICRC, IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF and other relevant protection and assistance services were conducted.
- In **Mali**, 583 people were identified within mixed movements from February to April 2020 in Bamako, Segou, Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao, Menaka and Kidal, as part of the protection monitoring of borders and the identification mechanism for people of concern to UNHCR in mixed flows managed by UNHCR's partners AMSS and CIAUD-Canada. Most common countries of origin included Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire. Among them, 208 unaccompanied and separated children were referred to NGOs GARDL and ASPODLCE.
- As part of the National Referral Mechanism in **Mali**, the thematic group on assistance of separated and unaccompanied children held discussions on February 6 in Bamako with the objective to ensure the respect of the fundamental rights of people on the move and develop an effective operating procedure for their referral to protection services. The issue of separated and unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children was highlighted by UNHCR and considered with its specificities.
- In **Niger**, beyond the Agadez region, 472 people expressing intentions to seek asylum have been identified and oriented to relevant services by UNHCR and partner, CIAUD-Canada. 52 people at risk of statelessness and 9 separated children were also referred.
- 45 new asylum applications were registered between February and April 2020 in Agadez, **Niger**, including 12 unaccompanied minors and 23 victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Most of these applicants were expelled from Algeria and referred by IOM. Most common countries of nationality included Sudan, Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Mali.
- Through border monitoring in collaboration with the National Immigration Service, UNHCR **Nigeria** pursue the identification and registration of persons of concern entering in mixed flows at entry points in Damasak, Ngala, Pulka and Banki in Borno State despite official border closure. 211 asylum-seekers from Cameroon, Chad and Niger, including children, were identified at border crossings in Nigeria and referred to the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally displaced persons.

## TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

- UNHCR **Algeria** took part in February 2020 in a national workshop on trafficking in persons organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Algiers in the presence of members of the national committee to combat trafficking, representatives of the police and gendarmerie, public prosecutors and judges from different provinces. UNHCR highlighted the importance of including a referral mechanism to the asylum procedure in the normative framework against trafficking and in relevant action plans.

- The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Task Force in Borno State, in [Nigeria](#), co-led by Heartland Alliance International, IOM and UNHCR with the support of the Protection Sector North-East and the Global Protection Cluster Anti-Trafficking Task Team conducted a three-day workshop to develop a joint strategy including prevention, response, access to justice and legal assistance to victims. The draft has been shared for inputs before validation.
- Communication with communities material developed by UNHCR in the context of the [Telling the Real Story project](#) was shared with co-leads of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Task Force in Borno State, in [Nigeria](#), to ensure that persons of concern to UNHCR are taken into account in the strategy and activities of the task force.
- UNHCR [Nigeria](#) met with the new Edo Zonal Commander of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) on February 24 with a view to discuss existing collaboration and introduce the UNHCR [Telling the Real Story project](#).
- In Benin City, in [Nigeria](#), UNHCR held a meeting with various stakeholders, including federal and State Government officials, representatives of religious groups and NGOs working on trafficking, to discuss trafficking in persons and share material collected in the framework of the [Telling the Real Story project](#).
- In March, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Uromi Justice Development and Peace Caritas Initiative, facilitated three roundtable sessions in [Nigeria](#) on human trafficking in the presence of parents, caregivers, traditional leaders, religious leaders and school personnel with a view to improve protection prevention as well as case reporting. Testimonies collected in the context of the [Telling the Real Story project](#) were screened.
- In Edo State, in [Nigeria](#), testimonies collected through the [Telling the Real Story UNHCR project](#) were shared with 5,193 students and followed by a debate in February 2020. In the Edo South Local Government, UNHCR was joined by The Salvation Army, Securing the Creative Goldmine in Youths Initiative and [UNHCR High Profile Supporter, Judith Audu](#).
- UNHCR [Nigeria](#) provided support to the Edo State Task Force against Human Trafficking and an outreach event targeting school students on February 25, in Benin City. 1,000 copies of the 2019 Edo State Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Law, simplified by the [Girls' Power Initiative](#), were produced for the occasion and testimonies collected through the [Telling the Real Story project](#) were screened.



*Caroline is a young woman from Nigeria who fled a fight in her village and fell victim to trafficking. Her story may be found on the online platform of the UNHCR project [Telling the Real Story \(TRS\)](#). TRS aims to communicate with communities, including persons on the move, about the dangers of onward irregular movement, including trafficking.*

## COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES

- In [Burkina Faso](#), focus groups were organised by UNHCR between January and February 2020 for 1,644 people, including 391 women and 499 children, in order to discuss risks associated with irregular movements and the rights of people on the move, including the right to seek asylum. Additional information sessions on these same topics were conducted for 892 people, including 166 women and 435 children.
- UNHCR and the national Red Cross society carried out several information sessions in [Chad](#) for 276 students in N'Djamena and Guereda as well as for 779 refugees and host community members in Goz-Beida, Moudeina, Adde, Abeche, Biltine, Abougoudam and Kaba-Roangar on risks associated with irregular movements and the rights of people on the move, such as the right to seek asylum. Access to information in the context of mixed flows was enhanced in bus stations in N'Djamena and Abeche, including via the dissemination of a short informative film in six buses along the N'Djamena-South road (Bongor, Moundou, Doba, Sarh), impacting 444 persons daily and 26,640 individuals in total for the period of February to March. Following the interceptions of vehicles transporting persons on the move towards Libya, a radio program was facilitated by Red Cross volunteers on this phenomenon, reaching an estimated 50,000 persons.
- Within the framework of the partnership between UNHCR [Mali](#) and the ministry in charge of Malians abroad, 2,000 leaflets and 500 posters were produced in order to disseminate information on the rights of people on the move, including the right to seek asylum, as well as risks attached to irregular movements.
- From February to April 2020, 107 information sessions, including two focus groups in the Gao region, were organised in [Mali](#) by UNHCR for 1,734 people on the move, including 1,187 men and 547 women, concerning the rights of people on the move, such as the right to seek asylum, and risks attached to irregular movements. COVID-19 prevention measures were also discussed.

## COORDINATION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- As a member of the UN Network on Migration in [Guinea Bissau](#), UNHCR is contributing to the development of a national plan of action stemming from the 2018 [Global Compact for Migration](#).
- The UN Network on Migration was officially launched in [Mali](#) on February 13 in the presence of IOM, the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the minister in charge of Malians abroad. UNHCR had initially taken part in the expert committee composed of the office of the Resident Coordinator, the International Labor Organisation (ILO), IOM, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNODC, and responsible for developing the Network's terms of reference in Mali.
- UNHCR [Mali](#) and IOM pursue the joint development of standard operating procedures with a view to facilitate referrals of individual cases between the two organizations.



Preventive actions against COVID-19 captured in Niger by CIAUD-Canada, UNHCR's protection monitoring partner, at the police checkpoint in Maine Soroa, on the border with Nigeria.

© CIAUD-Canada

- UNHCR [Niger](#) is strengthening its collaboration with the Department in charge of Civil Status, Migration and Refugees (*Direction Générale de l'État Civil, des Migrations et des Réfugiés*, DGEC-MR) and the Department in charge of Child Protection (*Direction Générale de la Protection de l'Enfance*, DGPE) in order to improve the management of cases identified within mixed movements. A capacity building session was scheduled but delayed due to COVID-19.

## DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEES

- As part of the support provided by UNHCR to income-generating activities for refugees and asylum-seekers in [Mali](#), UNHCR's partner, STOP-SAHÉL, has identified several beneficiaries in the regions of Mopti and Ségou, including 12 associations and 100 individuals, while Sahel21-TSF has selected 5 people with specific needs in Gao, including 3 men and 2 women, all returnees from Algeria and Libya.
- With a view to enhance youth self-reliance among asylum-seekers and refugees in [Mali](#), kits for small businesses and breeding were provided to seven groups in the Timbuktu region.
- To ensure access to livelihoods outside of camp and camp-like settings as well as in neighbouring countries for internally displaced people (IDP) in Borno State, in [Nigeria](#), and protect them against risks such as exploitation and trafficking, UNHCR and the Nigeria Bar Association supported the provision of *certificates of indigenes* to 10,243 IDP and returnees. Such document is a tool in enabling freedom of movement, especially in the absence of other identity documents. This effort is conducted in parallel to continuous advocacy in favour of the inclusion of IDP and returnees in national identity management systems.
- 480 refugee and host community students in [Chad](#) have received partial scholarships since the end of 2017, providing them with an opportunity to access secondary education in the country.

## Forthcoming

- Launch in **Burkina Faso** of six new counselling points in Falangountou in the Sahel region, in Bobo, Dande and Bama in the Hauts Bassins region and in Mangodara and Niankorodougou in the Cascades region.

- In **Ghana**, joint capacity-building with the Ghana Refugee Board for immigration and police officers, as well as district assembly officials stationed along key border points with Togo, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso regarding international protection.

- Signature in **Guinea** of a Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and IOM for the referral of asylum-seekers and other persons of concern to UNHCR.

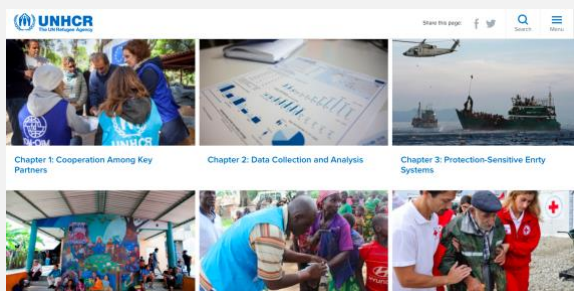
- Facilitation in **Mali** of information sessions, via radio and television broadcasts, on risks associated with irregular movements and the rights of people on the move in collaboration with the ministry in charge of Malians abroad.

- Mainstreaming of tools developed in the context of the *Telling the Real*

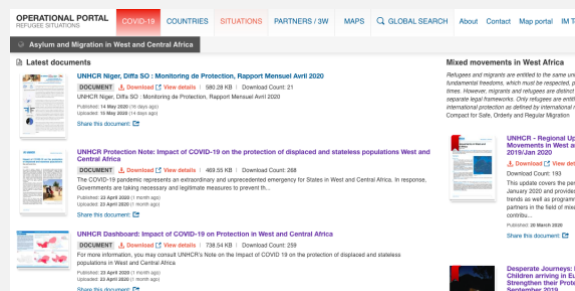
*Story project* into protection programming and implementation throughout **Nigeria**, including in camps and settlements for internally displaced people.

- Finalisation in **Chad** of an assessment, including recommendations, on support initiatives to income-generating activities targeting youth in refugee camps.

Find out more about mixed movements:



UNHCR 10-Point Plan in action on Mixed movements and Refugee Protection



UNHCR Operational Portal – Asylum & Migration in West and Central Africa

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