

# West & Central Africa

*21 Countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.*

22 July 2020

The West and Central Africa region has seen a **41% percent increase** in confirmed COVID-19 cases in the past three weeks with a total of **141,891 contamination** as of 20 July compared to 100,549 on 29 June 2020.

UNHCR is supporting the **reopening of schools** in the region through cleaning and **disinfection** of classes, provision of protective equipment, reinforced **sensitization** of teachers and students.

The **rainy season** started across the region creating additional **challenges** to access, provide assistance to persons of concern and **implement basic preventive measures** against COVID-19 in hosting areas.

<p><b>POPULATION OF CONCERN</b></p> <p><b>10,000,000</b> total PoCs  <b>5,600,000</b> IDPs  <b>1,300,000</b> Refugees  <b>1,400,000</b> Returnees  <b>1,700,000</b> Stateless</p>	<p><b>COVID-19 CASES*</b></p> <p><b>141,891</b> confirmed cases  <b>48,443</b> still active  <b>91,102</b> recovered  <b>2,346</b> deaths</p> <p><small>*Source: WHO as of 20 June 2020</small></p>	<p><b>FUNDING REQUIREMENTS</b> for COVID-19 Response Globally  <b>US\$745 MILLION</b></p> <p><b>Funding Gap 68%</b>  <b>Pledged and recorded 32%</b></p>
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*In the Mopti region of #Mali Flag of Mali, children's smiles testify to the importance of education in their lives. The radios and school kits distributed by UNHCR Mali will allow them to continue to learn and develop their potential. ©UNHCR Mali*

## Operational Context

- **Continuous increase of confirmed cases.** The West and Central Africa region has seen a 41% percent increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases in the past three weeks with a total of 141,891 contamination as of 20 July compared to 100,549 on 29 June 2020. **Nigeria** (37,225) remains with the highest number of confirmed cases, followed by **Ghana** (28,989), **Cameroon** (16,157) and **Cote d'Ivoire** (14,312). In terms of active cases, **Nigeria** (21,091) has the highest number, followed by **Cote d'Ivoire** (5,561), **Ghana** (3,505) and **CAR** (3,093). The exact number of COVID-19 cases in the region remains uncertain, particularly given the low levels of testing in the region. Death tolls are also unreliable as they may exclude people who did not die in a hospital, or who died before they could be tested.
- **Confirmed cases among persons of concern.** So far, 16 persons of concern to UNHCR were tested positive (four refugees in Cameroon, one refugee in Ghana and one refugee in Guinea and seven IDPs in Central African Republic and seven IDPs in Mali). Two of the refugees, living out of camp, died in Cameroon.
- **Impact of COVID-19 in West and Central Africa.** In West and Central Africa, the COVID-19 has put already fragile national health systems and economies under increased pressure, adding to pre-existing challenges linked to conflict and political tensions in several parts of the region. Refugees and IDPs are particularly affected by this pandemic. Often residing in overcrowded and precarious conditions rendering impossible social distancing or basic preventive measures such as handwashing they are exposed to heightened risks of contamination. Governments have adopted measures to curb the spread of the virus including closing borders, imposing travel bans, prohibiting mass gatherings, shutting down schools, and closing markets. These restrictions had a dire impact on local economies and increased the risk of food insecurity in the region, particularly in the Sahel. With their livelihoods severely disrupted, many displaced family's resort to negative coping mechanisms, including child labour. 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. In an effort to mitigate the negative socio-economic impact of the pandemic, many countries in the region are have started to relax restrictions despite the risk of a second wave of contamination.

In this uncertain and challenging context, the COVID-19 pandemic is now accelerating in West and Africa, moving from the main urban centers into the remote rural areas where it will be more challenging to contain the spread of the virus.



*In Burkina Faso, RHUs were built to provide sturdier homes to IDP families affected by the heavy rainfalls and the floods in Wendou in the Sahel Region. ©UNHCR / S. Tchagbele*

## UNHCR Response

- To address the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR Operations across the region have also taken steps to ensure **continuity of assistance** and basic protection services. UNHCR Operations worked towards mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on persons of concern by introducing **innovative approaches** to address the practical challenges created by the pandemic. Protection activities and processes were adjusted to allow for social distancing through **remote case management** via telephone, preventive measure in registration processes. UNHCR stepped up its engagement and advocacy with Governments to advocate to maintain avenues for asylum seekers to access international protection and safeguarding the principle of non-refoulement. UNHCR Operations have also increased 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. UNHCR has also **enhanced communication with communities** through the launch of a Regional COVID-

19 Information Platform in partnership with IOM to provide persons of concern and host communities with relevant, accessible, simplified, easy-to-understand information on COVID-19 and prevention measures to be adopted. UNHCR operations also implemented **targeted shelter interventions** and distributing core relief items to help decongest the most overcrowded sites and allow for the implementation of the most basic prevention measures. They also increased 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**. UNHCR also coordinated with the UN country teams, Inter-Agency platforms and key donor countries 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. As restrictions on movement are being lifted across the region, schools are progressively reopening for students in examination years. UNHCR is supporting the authorities and other UN agencies, such as UNICEF, in their efforts to **ensure a smooth return to school** by contributing to sensitization and capacity-building activities for teachers, students on safety measures against COVID-19. UNHCR is also providing them with personal protective equipment and assists in the cleaning and fumigation of school premises. UNHCR is also supporting the improvement of ICT infrastructure to facilitate distant learning methods by providing increased connectivity, expanding radio broadcast coverage, establishing Wi-Fi hotspots, and providing laptops to teachers. Finally, with the rainy season starting in the region, UNHCR operations are also strengthening their preparedness and emergency response mechanisms to **mitigate the potential impacts**, including among others reduced access due to impracticable roads and the high-risk floods in some hosting areas.

## Operational Highlights

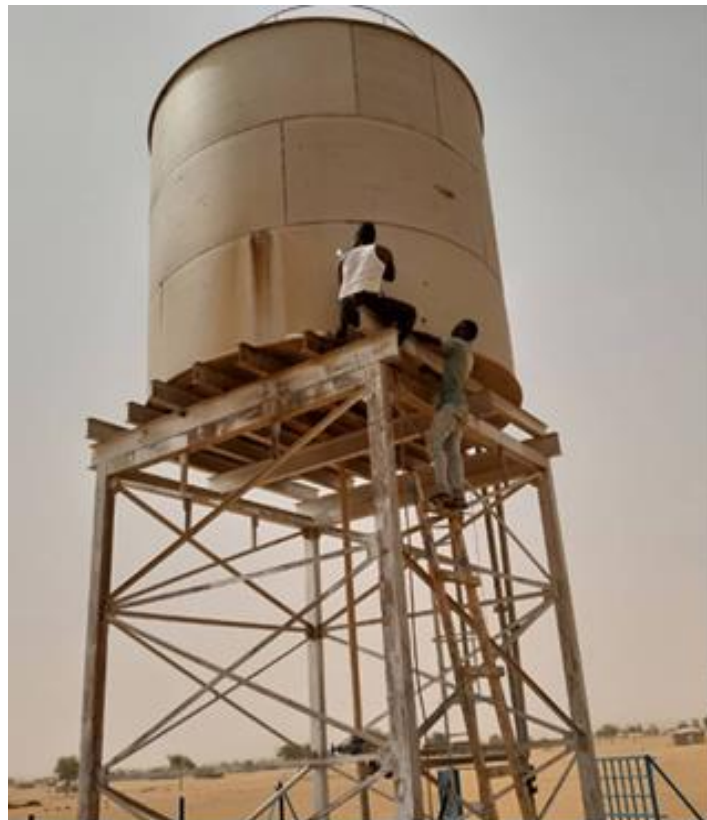


Strengthen risk communication and community engagement, and critical protection case management, including protection monitoring and registration

- **Communication with communities.** In **Burkina Faso**, more than 500 members of the community-based protection committees were trained on COVID 19 prevention measure since the beginning of the pandemic and are now sensitizing their community members. UNHCR pursues its sensitization

effort on COVID-19 with broadcasting of key messages through 37 community radios across the country, including in local languages. Questionnaires to assess the knowledge of IDPs and host communities on the COVID-19 were completed by 850 families. The results of these surveys will help assess information needs and gaps and will inform the elaboration of the radio programmes.

- **Virtual Refugee Status Determination (RSD).** In **Ghana**, UNHCR has introduced innovative approaches to ensure continuity of basic protection services, starting with RSD and registration. In July, the first virtual RSD adjudications were carried out by the Ghana Refugee Board and a total of 81 cases were approved for the granting of status in Ghana during the COVID-19 pandemic. This virtual adjudication builds on the virtual RSD interview documentation initiated at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic three months ago. Once again, the UNHCR Ghana operation supported the process with its virtual platform and technical assistance to ensure a successful and smooth piloting of this new way of running RSD adjudication.



*Reparation and improvement of water distribution network in Eknewane near Tahoua is underway. © UNHCR Niger*



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

- **Strengthen water supply and sanitation and hygiene systems.** In **Burkina Faso**, UNHCR and its partners have distributed 4,009 hand washing devices, over 225,000 bars of soaps, 9,000 containers of liquid soaps, and over 37,000 masks to date. UNHCR also organized water trucking in the Sahel region to provide potable water to 6,000 IDPs and host community members through two water points. In **Cameroon**, in the Minawao camp in the Far North region, 56 latrines have been set up and are operational out of the 150 mobile latrines planned in the camp. In **Mali**, UNHCR rehabilitated three wells in three sites IDP sites and is planning to build 10 photovoltaic potable water pumping system before the end of the year. UNHCR has also installed a total of 203 hand washing devices and distributed 872 cartons of soap, 64 bottles of bleach, 524 hydroalcoholic gels, 67 liquid soaps, 2364 face masks for 819 persons of concern. In **Niger**, as part of UNHCR's effort to expand water access in hosting areas, the water distribution system in Eknewane in the Tahoua region has been entirely rehabilitated and improved in June 2020.
- **Support the national health response to COVID-19.** In **Burkina Faso**, UNHCR also provided in-kind donations, composed of three ambulances one of which is medicalized, medicine, pharmaceutical supplies and information posters on COVID-19, to regional authorities for a total amount of USD 1,388,723 USD. In **Mali**, UNHCR is supporting three government-led COVID-19 regional response plans in Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao (covering Menaka). So far, UNHCR donated a total of 130 tents to the Ministry of Solidarity to enable the isolation of suspected cases. UNHCR also donated 1350 Health equipment/material to government health structures (out of 1750 planned). In July only, UNHCR donated 50 hygienist blouses and trousers, 90 hospital beds, 8 stretchers, 50 mattresses and 10 thermometers to regional authorities in Menaka and 90 hospital beds, 90 mattresses, 100 blouses, 10 stretchers and 8,100 masks to regional authorities in Gao region. In **Niger**, UNHCR has finalized the Niamey Isolation centre which is currently fully functional with a capacity to receive 100 COVID-19 positive cases in 50 of UNHCR's RHUs. In Tahoua, UNHCR donated 40 Refugee Housing Units (RHU) to set up a new isolation center where COVID-19 patients will also be treated. In addition,

UNHCR trains health staff and community health workers around the whole country and distributes medicines and medical supplies across the country.



Part of the medical equipment donated by UNHCR to the Malian authorities in the Gao region to support their response to COVID-19. © UNHCR Mali



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

- **Assessment of the socio-economic impact of the pandemic.** To assess the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on populations including the forcibly displaced and their hosts, UNHCR is engaging in various studies with key partners. In **Niger**, UNHCR is recruiting an expert consultant to conduct a joint study with ILO on the subject. In **CAR**, building on a Covid-19 impact evaluation exercise conducted by UNDP, UNHCR launched a study using the same methodology but focused on refugees. The data is being cleaned, preliminary results to be shared shortly. In **Mali**, UNHCR is finalizing its value chain study which aims at identifying livelihoods opportunities in the COVID-19 context.
- **Building self-reliance and contributing to the COVID-19 response.** UNHCR is also pursuing its strategy to empower refugees to become front liners and COVID-19 prevention actors, by transforming their livelihood (soap, mask and bleach production through cash for work). 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 complete. In **Cameroon**, a total of 89,967 masks have been made so far by young refugees and Cameroonians trained in sewing. The 54 tailors based in the localities of Gado, Garoua-Boulai, Meiganga, Ngam, Djohong, Borgop and Ngaoui generated a combined income of over 13,500,000XAF. Another 140 refugees from Borgop, Djohong, Ngam, Meiganga, Gado and Garoua-Boulai were also trained in soap-making and have started production. 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 PoCs, who will be able to produce a targeted total amount of 165.000 litres of bleach, 102.000 laundry soaps, 82.500 litres of liquid soap and 265.000 masks. So far, over 50% of the of targeted PoCs have been trained on production of masks, soap and bleach or marketing and the manufacturing is ongoing.

- **Shelter and Core Relief Items.** In **Burkina Faso**, UNHCR pursues its efforts to mitigate the impact of the rainy season, which has brought some exceptionally strong winds and heavy rainfalls this year. Almost 70,000 internally displaced persons are currently residing in flood prone areas in Centre-Nord and the Sahel regions. Between March and June 2020, UNHCR has further supported 31,017 households with shelter materials. In **CAR**, UNHCR and its partners installed Refugee Housing Units (RHU) at the University Hospital of Bambari to serve as a place for the isolation of suspected COVID-19 cases. Another four RHUs were installed in Berberati and two within



*Installation of RHUs by UNHCR's partner AIRD at the University Hospital of Bambari.  
©UNHCR CAR*



the hospital of Baboua which covers the Baboua-Abba health district. These RHUs will be used as a place for the isolation of suspected cases of COVID-19. In addition to its shelter interventions, UNHCR distributes NFI kits to refugees and IDPs across the country to improve their living conditions and help decongest the most overcrowded sites to reduce the risk of contamination to COVID-19. In July only, 499 households of 3,794 people in the MINUSCA and Lazare sites were assisted with these NFI kits consisting of mats, tarpaulins, kitchen sets, jerry cans and blankets.

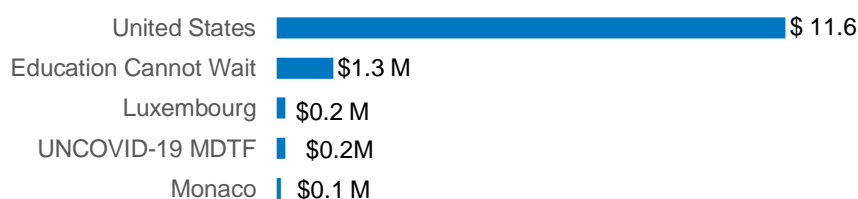


### Support education systems

- Supporting the progressive reopening of schools across the region.** In **CAR**, where the government reopened classes on 15 July 2020, UNHCR has been providing hygiene kits to Mongoumba's administrative and local authorities to combat covid-19 in schools. The kits consisted of 84 buckets, 300 masks, 3,360 pieces of soap and 80 bottles of chlorine, which will be distributed to various settlements in Mongoumba. In **Mali**, is sustaining its effort to ensure distance learning and support the return to school for forcibly displaced children. So far, UNHCR has implemented several distance learning activities and WASH activities in schools including broadcasting school lessons on national TV, distribution of 5,500 solar-powered radios for school-going age children started in Central and Northern regions. UNHCR also installed 405 handwashing kits to 135 schools in Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu as children are coming back to school and preparing for second cycle of basic exams. In Segou region, UNHCR distributed 69 solar radios and 60 school stationary kits to 138 children and is planning to distribute another 2,500 to refugee and IDP children in Gao as part of the Education Cannot Wait project.

## 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\$237.5 million**. The following donors have provided earmarked contributions for the Coronavirus Emergency Situation in **West and Central Africa**:



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** 32.8 million | **United Kingdom** 24.8 million | **Japan** 23.9 million | **UN Foundation** 10 million | **Denmark** 14.6 million | **CERF** 6.9 million | **Canada** 6.4 million | **Private Donors** 6.3 million | **Ireland** 3.3 million | **Sony Corporation** 3 million | **Sweden** 3 million | **Finland** 2.4 million | **Education Cannot Wait** 1.8 million | **Norway** 1.5 million | **Qatar Charity** 1.5 million | **Australia** 0.8 million | **Italy** 0.5 million | **Badr Jafar** 0.5 million | **UN COVID-19 MDTF** 0.4 million | **Ahmed Abdelkodous Ehsan** 0.4 million | **Monaco** 0.2 million | **Jersey** 0.2 million | **Estonia** 0.1 million | **Iceland** 0.1 million | **Liechtenstein** 0.1 million | **Portugal** 0.1 million | **UPS** 0.1 million | **Unilever** 0.1 million | **WFP** 0.1 million | **Russian Federation** 0.1 million | **Slovakia** 0.05 million | **Spain** 0.03

**OTHER SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS** | USD

**United States of America** 210.1 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 | **Luxembourg** 2.7 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.

**CONTACTS**

**Regional Bureau for West & Central Africa**

**Romain Desclous**, Senior Communication Officer: [desclous@unhcr.org](mailto:desclous@unhcr.org), Tel: +221 78 639 6385

**Antoine Sfeir**, Regional Reporting Officer: [sfeira@unhcr.org](mailto:sfeira@unhcr.org), Tel: +221 77 332 58 57

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