

REGIONAL UPDATE

Mixed movements in West and Central Africa

July - September 2022



Communication with communities on the move in Chad. © Croix Rouge Tchad

West and Central Africa is a region of origin, transit and destination of **mixed movements**, in which persons are moving together for **different** reasons, but using the **same** routes and facing similar protection risks.

In this context, UNHCR seeks to reinforce **access** to protection along the routes for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people on the move, as well as enhance pathways to **solutions** for these populations as a meaningful alternative to risky onward movements.

This **update** provides a brief overview of key mixed movements trends identified in West and Central Africa and response by UNHCR and partners to protection risks associated to mixed flows.

Trends

Key trends are identified by UNHCR and partners, primarily through registration, protection monitoring and communication with communities activities.

1. Detection of refugees and asylum-seekers along mixed movements routes, including in secondary movements. Community-based monitors deployed along West and Central African routes detected close to 4,500 refugees and asylum-seekers in mixed movements. In **Burkina Faso**, 414 persons fleeing conflict and persecution, mainly from Mali and Niger, including 80 women and 250 children, were identified in the Cascades, Est, Hauts-Bassins, Sud-Ouest and Sahel regions. In **Chad**, 70 refugees and 51 asylum-seekers were detected across the country by Red Cross volunteers. In **Mali**, the presence of 884 persons fleeing conflict and persecution was reported, primarily from Burkina Faso. In **Niger**, 3,152 persons of concern to UNHCR were identified, including refugees from Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Mali. In July alone, **UNHCR's Standardized Biometric System (BIMS)** detected 1,698 refugees and asylum-seekers initially registered in Chad in onward movement in another country.



Registration of new Burkinabe asylum-seekers in Benin © UNHCR

2. Spillover of the Sahel situation to coastal countries causing displacement via mixed movements corridors. With the further deterioration of the **Sahel situation**, a total




of 8,500 Burkina Faso nationals are estimated to have arrived in Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Ghana and Togo to seek protection. These movements use long-standing migration corridors, including to Cote d'Ivoire where the Burkinabe diaspora was estimated to reach **more than 2 million in the 1990s**. This trend is confirmed by registration data in North Africa and Europe, reporting an increase in asylum applications by Burkinabe.

3. Onward movements of IDPs using mixed movements routes. Due to the deterioration of the protection environment, internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Sahel are increasingly forced to move onward across borders to seek safety and livelihood opportunities. In **Burkina Faso**, where the authorities reported a total of 1,719,332 IDPs as of 30 September 2022, 5,499 IDPs, including 19% of women, were identified in cross-border onward movements by community-based monitors deployed in the Cascades, Est, Hauts-Bassins, Sud-Ouest and Sahel regions, a 111% increase compared to the **previous reporting period**. A vast majority of these movements headed to other West African countries, with Cote d'Ivoire as the top destination (56%), followed by Mali (9%) and Niger (7%).

4. Mixed sea movements along the Northwest African maritime route. The Senegalese **authorities** reported the arrest of 143 persons preparing to embark in Dakar towards the Spanish Canary Islands. The group included 57 non-Senegalese whose nationality was not disclosed.

5. Multiple forms of trafficking in persons from, within and to the region. West and Central Africa remains a region of origin, transit and destination of trafficking in persons, impacting children and adults, women and men. In the South of Nigeria, including in Cross River State, **where more than 50,000 Cameroonian refugees are currently displaced**, **agents** are identified as the primary perpetrators of trafficking in persons, targeting key places of socialization including hair salons, marketplaces, restaurants, and bars. These agents use various tactics, including posing as agents for international football clubs scouting for young players. For such cases, young boys report being exploited through forced labour in destination countries. Another approach is to recruit young boys and girls during the farming season for labour exploitation. In Cross River State, most of the reported trafficking cases or attempted cases were carried out by known residents of either the host communities or refugee settlements.

Response

 746 persons on the move referred to local protection services	 415 first contact entry officials and community members along key routes trained and sensitized on the right to seek asylum including in the context of mixed movements	 Communication with more than 16,200 individuals on protection risks associated to mixed flows and alternatives to risky onward movements
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Data and analysis

In **Burkina Faso**, where over 1.7 million persons are internally displaced, UNHCR contributed in August to the validation workshop of a government-led National Population Report (*Rapport National 2022 sur l'état de la Population au Burkina Faso*) focusing on the challenges and prospects associated to internal movements. In **Gabon**, UNHCR co-organised two inter-agency field missions in July and September, bringing together the National Commission for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). With a view to better understanding local mixed movement trends, including existing community-based support systems, the missions focused on Oyem and Port Gentil, two strategic border and coastal locations, and reached a total of 56 key informants. As an **upper-middle-income country with a**



Training of trainers within the National Police Department in Niger © UNHCR

strong economic growth, Gabon is a destination of mixed movements, including from neighbouring Cameroon. In **Niger**, where more than 700,000 persons are displaced, UNHCR and partners facilitated missions to 6 border

points in the Dosso, Tahoua and Tillabéri regions to assess access to territory and asylum in a context of mixed movements. In response to the spillover of the Sahel situation to **Togo**, an inter-agency monitoring mission was organised in the North of the country to better understand movement dynamics in the area.

Identification and referral

Reaching more than 30 border agents and local leaders based in the North, the National Commission for Refugees in **Benin** organised a training on access to territory and asylum in a context of mixed movements (July). In **Chad**, the readmission to their camps of two refugees identified in Abeche *en route* northward was facilitated. In **Gabon**, UNHCR and GIZ coordinated a cross-border training on protection in the context of mixed flows, reaching a total of 30 border agents from Gabon and the Republic of the Congo (July). A one-day consultation of civil society from both sides of the border preceded the session to assess the main protection risks affecting border communities. To conclude the discussion, also attended by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Border Unit, recommendations were jointly identified, highlighting the need to adopt a regional code of conduct for border agents and improve border infrastructures to facilitate identification and referrals. In Oyem and Port Gentil, the National Commission for Refugees, IOM, UNHCR and UNODC jointly trained 39 first contact entry officials between July and September, including border agents and representatives of the Ministry of Justice, with a view to improving screening and referrals. Demonstrating the positive impact of the initiative, 10 referrals of potential asylum-seekers to the National Commission for Refugees were since reported from border areas. Under the lead of the authorities, a protective-sensitive entry questionnaire and associated Standard Operating Procedures are under development and expected to be endorsed in November to support and facilitate screening and referrals by border agents. In **Mali**, a country of origin of mixed movements, including to Europe, where over 480,000 persons are currently displaced, 660 persons identified in the context of the monitoring of mixed flows were screened and referred to the relevant services, including 520 to the National Commission for Refugees. In **Niger**, 74 persons identified in Agadez, a crossroad of mixed movements in the region, were referred to health facilities and a total of 417 psychosocial consultations were provided by COOPI. As part of ongoing efforts to mainstream protection in the training curriculum of the National Police Department, 20 police officers were trained by UNHCR to become trainers. In Tillabéri and in Tera, capacity-building sessions were organised on protection in the context of mixed movements, targeting more than 40 participants, including mayors and members of the gendarmerie. In the context of

the monitoring of mixed flows, 19 monitors deployed along key routes and 27 key informants in Maradi, Tahoua and Tillabéri were trained to improve reporting and referrals.

World Day against Trafficking



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July 30 marked **World Day Against Trafficking in Persons**. In Borno State, where more than 1,600,000 persons are displaced, the North-East Anti-Trafficking Taskforce came together to raise awareness on the various forms of trafficking in persons, with a focus on the use of technology to profile, lure, recruit, control, and transport victims, through public talks in bus stations, parks and secondary schools and a town hall meeting involving relevant government services, NGOs and civil society organisations. The Task Force also met with the Ministry of Justice and the Shehu of Borno to seek their support and strengthen referrals to the Task Force.

In Cross River and Edo State, the CARITAS Nigeria Anti Human Trafficking Team held two stakeholders' engagement forums, bringing together more than 150 representatives from State entities and civil society, including refugees and religious leaders, to raise awareness on trafficking in persons.

In Yobe State, where more than 150,000 persons are internally displaced and 350,000 have returned from exile in Niger, the Task Force led by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) organised similar outreach activities, targeting IDPs and host community members. On 30 August, a press conference was held at the NAPTIP office, on the occasion of which the Yobe State zonal commander provided an overview of local trafficking trends and State response to mitigate the risks and promote victims' rights. Bringing together the Secretary General of the State, law enforcement agencies, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Security matters, the International Federation of Women Lawyers and traditional leaders among other actors, a Town Hall meeting followed to provide an opportunity to identify joint recommendations.

Following a [high-level humanitarian mission to Niamey, Niger](#) focusing on mixed movements through Niger, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission published a statement calling, *inter alia*, for the identification and referral of persons on the move in need of protection.

Communication with communities

In [Chad](#), the national Red Cross Society reached more than 15,000 individuals on the move and from host communities to discuss protection risks *en route* and alternatives to risky onward movements. Held in urban hubs such as N'Djamena and Abeche but also in bus stations and along key routes, this outreach used various medias, including public talks and the screening of locally produced movies. Similarly in [The Gambia](#), a country of origin of mixed movements hosting over 5,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, the Gambia Food and Nutrition Association (GAFNA) continues to communicate with refugees using in person visits and WhatsApp, allowing for feedback and dialogue. In [Mali](#), 132 public talks were organised on similar issues in the Gao, Kayes, Menaka, Mopti, Segou and Timbuktu regions, bringing together community leaders, local NGOs and people on the move. In [Niger](#), in the context of the *Cure Salée* festival of the Nomads held in In-Gall (22-24 September), community leaders were invited by the Sultan of the Air, UNHCR and NGO Action Pour le Bien-Être (APBE) to discuss peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities. In [Nigeria](#), 18 Anti-Human Trafficking Clubs bringing together volunteer students were established in August and September across 18 schools in Cross River and Edo States. Over 1,200 community members, including school students, were reached by community-based dialogue on trafficking in persons with a view to improve awareness but also community detection and referrals. In addition, the CARITAS Anti-Human Trafficking Team in Ogoja organised advocacy visits to relevant stakeholders in Cross River State including the Chairman of the Ikom Local Government Authority, the Ministry of Education, the local chapter of the Network Against Child Trafficking, Abuse and Labor (NACTAL) and six civil society and community-based organisations working in communities hosting refugees.

Response to specific needs

In Edo and Cross River States in [Nigeria](#), community watch groups were launched, with the support of CARITAS Nigeria, covering a total of 23 communities. Members regularly come together to share information on trends and seek guidance, including from CARITAS Nigeria, on case management.



Public talks on trafficking in persons in the Abuja Mai-Mala informal IDP settlement (Yobe State) © UNHCR

Solutions

In [Niger](#), 179 persons, including 60 women and 21 children, were evacuated from Libya to Niger on 29 September as part of the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM). Since 2017, more than 3,000 vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers have been evacuated via the ETM from detention in Libya, where they had arrived within mixed movements. On 30 June 2022, the process to formally end refugee status for [Ivorian refugees](#) came into effect, acknowledging the end of an era of displacement for hundreds of thousands of Ivorian refugees. Countries hosting Ivorian refugees were encouraged to facilitate their voluntary repatriation or facilitate acquisition of permanent residency and naturalization. To date, over [300,000 have opted for voluntary repatriation to Cote d'Ivoire since 2011](#). Facilitated voluntary repatriation is a durable solution to displacement offering an alternative to irregular onward movements for protracted refugees.

Coordination



Celebration of World Migrant and Refugee Day in Senegal © UNHCR

In [Burkina Faso](#), UNHCR hosted in July the fourth session of the Working Group on Mixed movements this year, bringing together more than 10 organisations, including relevant government structures and civil society actors. A joint advocacy note to the authorities is currently under development, with the objective to promote

coordination and an evidence-based approach to mixed flows. In [Senegal](#), UNHCR celebrated *World Migrant and Refugee Day* held on 22 September. Coordinated by Caritas, the event was an opportunity to promote dialogue between refugees, migrants, relevant State services, civil society organisations, international organisations and

religious authorities. With the participation of close to 60 stakeholders, key recommendations were identified, including the need to establish a one-stop shop for asylum-seekers.

UNHCR Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa

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In case of questions, please contact: ecollan@unhcr.org

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