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.

01 October 2020

While the downward trend in the number of new coronavirus cases continues across West and Central Africa, the **number of active cases keeps declining since late July**, going from 48,443 on 20 July to 21,329 as of 28 September 2020.

UNHCR continues to support Governments of the region in their COVID-19 response while scaling up its shelter interventions to **address the damages caused by the recent floods** and ensure the deteriorated living conditions do not increase the risk of contamination.

POPULATION OF CONCERN	COVID-19 CASES*	FUNDING REQUIREMENTS
10,000,000 total PoCs **5,600,000** IDPs **1,300,000** Refugees **1,400,000** Returnees **1,700,000** Stateless	**216,806** confirmed cases **21,329** still active **192,158** recovered **3,319** deaths **source: WHO as of 28 September 2020.*	for COVID-19 Response Globally **US$745 MILLION** Funding gap **32%** Funding Received **68%**

UNHCR is rolling out its 'Masks for Refugees by Refugees' initiative in Ampain Camp in collaboration with the fashion designer and prominent influencer Oheneba Nana Yaw Boamah. ©UNHCR/Ghana

Operational Context

- **Downward trend in number of new cases and decrease in active cases in West and Central Africa.** The number confirmed COVID-19 cases in West and Central Africa (WCAR) is at 216,806 as of 28 September 2020 which confirms the downward trend in the number of new cases in the region. The number of active cases in the region continues its steady decline which started at the end of July, going from 48,443 on 20 July 2020 to 21,329 as of 28 September 2020. As of 28 September 2020, **Nigeria** (58,324) remains with the highest number of confirmed cases, followed by **Ghana** (46,387), **Cameroon** (20,735), **Cote d'Ivoire** (19,629) and **Senegal** (14,909). In terms of active cases, **Nigeria** (7,422) has the highest number, followed by **CAR** (2,904), **Senegal** (2,488), **Gambia** (1,297) and **Cameroon** (877). (N.B. The exact number of COVID-19 cases in the region remains uncertain, considering the comparatively low testing in the region. Death tolls may exclude people who did not die in hospital, or before they could be tested).

- **COVID-19 Cases in West and Central Africa by Country:**

Countries	Confirmed	Deaths	Recovered	Active
Benin	2,267	40	1,942	285
Burkina Faso	1,707	56	1,135	516
Cape Verde	4,813	44	4,119	650
Cameroon	20,167	415	18,837	915
CAR	4,749	62	1,825	2,862
Chad	1,084	80	938	66
Cote d'Ivoire	19,013	120	18,112	781
Equatoral Guinea	4,996	83	4,490	423
Gabon	8,643	53	7,706	884
Gambia	3,405	103	1,723	1,579
Ghana	45,434	286	44,342	806
Guinea	10,045	63	9,292	690
Guinea Bissau	2,275	39	1,327	909
Liberia	1,319	82	1,210	27
Mali	2,924	128	2,285	511
Niger	1,180	69	1,104	7
Nigeria	56,256	1,082	44,152	11,022
Sao Tome	906	15	870	21
Senegal	14,280	297	10,520	3,463
Sierra Leone	2,109	72	1,636	405
Togo	1,572	37	1,190	345
Total (WCA)	**216,806**	**3,319**	**192,158**	**21,329**

- **Heavy rains and floods in West and Central Africa**. UNHCR Operations are facing various operational challenges including, among others the heavy rains that have caused severe floods in several parts of West and Central Africa in the past few weeks. The pre-existing shelter needs in the region have been compounded by the effects of these extreme natural events, particularly in the Sahel where over 700,000 people have been affected by the recent floods. Across the region, infrastructure including medical facilities have been badly damaged, impacting national responses to COVID-19 and other illnesses such as malaria and measles. With water sources contaminated and latrines flooded, fears are rising that cholera could spread. Crops have been destroyed in the floods, increasing food shortages and the vulnerabilities of farmers and their families whose livelihoods depend on harvests. UNHCR is scaling up its shelter interventions to reinforce existing settlements, build new ones in safer areas, and to relocate affected displaced families.

- **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. 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. The congestion in camps and reception centres remains a matter of high concern in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.

- **Statelessness and COVID-19 in West and Central Africa.** The suspension of birth registration in some countries has raised the risk of statelessness for newborns there, particularly those of minority groups. In West and Central Africa, the trend is somewhat positive in terms of the number of countries that have declared civil registration services essential and moved towards innovative ways to ensure birth registration can continue and the validity of nationality documentation can be renewed or the timeline for renewal extended. Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, for example, have resumed issuance of civil documentation.

UNHCR Response

- UNHCR operations across **West and Central Africa** continue to implement different modalities to ensure the continuity of critical activities and deliverance of basic assistance, in line with the "stay and deliver" principle. UNHCR continues to support governments in the development, fine tuning and implementation of their COVID-19 response plans while directly implementing activities to support forcibly displaced populations. These include support to core protection activities and risk communication with communities, provision of critical health and WASH assistance, targeted shelter, NFI and cash interventions and support to education systems which continue to be heavily impacted by the pandemic.

Operational Highlights

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

Key achievement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- ✓ **3,5 million** displaced persons who had access to protection services
- ✓ **65%** of targeted areas where GBV services are maintained or expanded in response to COVID-19

- UNHCR Operations continue to work 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 and remote case management.

- In **Ghana**, UNHCR has organized trainings for border officials in the Western and Bono Regions to strengthen their knowledge on international, regional and national legal instruments for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers and how to apply this normative framework in the context of COVID-19 restrictions. The aim of these trainings is to ensure that access to asylum and the principle of non-refoulement continue to be upheld despite the pandemic.

- In **Guinea**, UNHCR and its partners are continuing to carry out several awareness-raising activities on the modes of transmission and preventive measures related to COVID-19. In September, educational talks took place in Kouankan and Macenta for a total of 27 people including 6 women. A door-to-door awareness session in Kouankan village was carried out for 38 participants, including 8 wome. In addition, 57 people ncluding 33 women from the ex-Kouankan 1 camp from zone 5 and 7, as well as 40 people including 32 women in the Kouankan 2 camp were also sensitised.

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

Key achievement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- ✓ **445,233** persons received essential healthcare services
- ✓ **3 million** medical masks ordered

- 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 continues to support the Government in its prevention efforts through the distribution of protective and hygiene equipments. A donation of additional equipment, including 240 plastic bins, 1,008 masks, and 3,500 gloves, was made to the Hauts-Bassins' Regional Health Directorate on 24 September. In the North, UNHCR's partner Plan International distributed 73 hand washing devices were distributed, while INTERSOS carried out eight awareness-raising sessions on COVID-19 for IDPs and host populations.

- In **Liberia**, UNHCR donated medical supplies/medicines to the Maryland County Health Team as part of its regular support to the health facilities situated in counties with high refugee populations such as Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Maryland where refugees are accessing those clinics for medical care.

- In **Northeast Nigeria**, the absence of a dedicated isolation centre for new arrivals represents a significant risk of contamination in an area where people arrive daily despite the fact that borders with Cameroon, Niger and Chad are officially closed. Over 40 percent of camps are congested in the region and the poor living and hygiene conditions are exacerbated by the heavy rains and flood of the recent weeks. To address the situation, UNHCR/GISCOR border monitoring team are operating in the Damasak, Banki, Ngala and Pulka entry points to raise awareness, undertake temperature screening, collect health related data and refer suspected cases to the existing health facilities. In the past two weeks, total of 24 border monitoring visits, 90 monitoring missions, 11 visits to detention centers in 13 locations for protection, human rights and detention monitoring activities were conducted. In addition, 37 COVID-19 protection sensitization and awareness-raising sessions in camps and local communities across operational locations. UNHCR also distributed 1,000 NFI kits to new arrivals and has constructed 250 emergency shelters at the Damasak Government

Secondary School and distributed distributed 2,000 dignity kits to SGBV survivors In Monguno. In **Southeast Nigeria**, UNHCR continues to raise awareness on COVID-19 while improving access to WASH services for refugees and host communities. As of end of September 2020, UNHCR constructed five solar boreholes and 15 two-compartment pour flush latrines in schools and host communities in Ogoja and Ikyogen. The construction/rehabilitation/upgrade of boreholes, hand pumps and pour flush latrines in schools and primary health centres in Obanlikwu, Boki, Ikom, Etung, Ogoja, Akampka, Calabar LGAs in CRS and Kwande LGA in Benue is ongoing and further improve provide improved access to WASH facilities in refugee host communities.

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

Key achievement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

✓ **72,883** individuals in households most vulnerable to/affected by COVID-19 received livelihood support

- UNHCR is scaling up its shelter interventions to address the damages caused by the recent floods and ensure poor living conditions do not increase the risk of contamination to COVID-19.

- In **Burkina Faso**, in the past two weeks only, UNHCR started the relocation of IDPs families from flood-prone areas in the Sahel to the Dori Stadium. So far, UNHCR and its partners constructed 222 shelters and 70 relocated families received core relief items (CRIs) including mats, blankets, mosquito nets and kitchen sets. The WASH facilities are being improved, with latrines and the water distribution system under construction on the site. IDP households to occupy the site have been identified. In the Centre-North, 12 Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) were installed in the locality of Konkoundi to free up classrooms which have been occupied by IDPs and to allow the school to open next week. The construction of shelters in the region is on-going. In addition, 93 shelters were completed, 1,057 shelter kits and 767 trapaulins were distributed in different communes. UNHCR is conducting an assessment of the living conditions in IDPs sites in the regions of the Cascades and Hauts-Bassins to inform its interventions in these areas.

- In **Southeast Nigeria**, UNHCR continues to improve the living conditions in Ikyogen settlement in Benue through shelter intervention. In the past two weeks, 30 shelters were completed, four emergency shelters were repaired and an additional 121 shelters under construction.

Construction of 222 shelters at the municipal stadium in Djibo in the Sahel region. ©UNHCR/Burkina Faso

- Throughout the region, UNHCR continues to support refugee families whose livelihoods were most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In **Guinea**, UNHCR has initiated a cash distribution in urban and rural areas. So far 423 households received their allowances so far out of the 466 targeted in Conakry as well as 824 households out of the 958 targetted in the Nzérékoré area. In **Sierra Leone**, UNHCR's partner NaCSA provided income support cash grants to 62 households out of the 82 targeted. In **Liberia**, 123 refugee households benefited from cash grants in Maryland in September 2020 only.

- UNHCR is also working to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19 on displaced populations through livelihoods activities and cash-based interventions. In **Ghana**, UNHCR collaborates with Oheneba Nana Yaw Boamah, a fashion designer and prominent influencer to promote the 'Masks for Refugees by Refugees' initiative. Focused on Ampain Camp, the project aims at training and supporting refugee tailors and seamstresses to produce a total of 35,000 masks to be distributed to the refugee population in Ghana and some members of the host communities. In addition to helping all refugees to have masks as a protective measure against covid-19, the initiative is also an income generating opportunity for the selected refugees and their families as UNHCR is supplying the needed materials and paying for every mask sewn.

Implementation of the UNHCR's 'Masks for Refugees by Refugees' initiative in Ampain Camp in collaboration with the fashion designer Oheneba Nana Yaw Boamah. ©UNHCR/Ghana

Support education systems

Key achievement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

✓ **34,868** children and youth supported with distance/home-based learning

- **Supporting the progressive reopening of schools across West and Central Africa.** Across the **West and Central Africa** region, UNHCR is supporting the authorities and other UN agencies, such as UNICEF, in their efforts to progressively reopen schools including through the provision of personal protective equipment and by supporting the rehabilitation and cleaning of school environment. Despite these efforts, many children have not been able to go back to school yet and in the countries where students have returned to class, the statistics are already showing the negative effects of COVID-19 on the schooling of refugee children.

- In **Gambia,** UNHCR's local partner, GAFNA, is supporting six secondary schools located in refugee hosting areas to prepare for their reopening which is scheduled for mid-October. The support consists in equipping them with hand washing buckets, fumigating classrooms and other school spaces, providing training to teachers on COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures to reduce the risk of contamination in school.

Financial Requirements

US$745 million requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally.

US$454.2 million: received by UNHCR against its **global COVID-19 appeal**.

USD US$34.2 million: received for **COVID-19 activities in West and Central Africa**

Special thanks to the following donors for:

EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COVID-19 APPEAL | USD

United States of America 186.3 million **| Germany** 62.7 million **| European Union** 46.3 million **| United Kingdom** 25.3 million **| African Development Bank Group** 23.9 million **| Denmark** 14.6 **| UN Foundation** 10 million **| CERF** 6.9 million | **Canada** 6.4 million | **Unilever (UK)** 5.9 million |**Education Cannot Wait** 4.7 million **| Qatar Charity** 3.5 million **| Spain** 3.5 million | **France** 3.4 million | **Ireland** 3.3 million | **Sweden** 3 million | **Sony Corporation** 2.9 million **| Austria** 2.5 million | **Finland** 2.3 million **| UNO – Fluechlighshilfe** 1.7 million | **Private donors UK** 1.7 million | **Latter Day Saints Charities** 1.6 million | **Norway** 1.5 million | **Australia for UNHCR** 1.4 million **| USA for UNHCR** 1 million **| Espana con Acnur** 0.9 million **| Australia** 0.9 million **| Japan for UNHCR 0.9 million | Sawiris Foundation for Social Development** 0.9 million **| Switzerland** 0.8 million **| Country Based Pooled Funds** 0.5 million **| Badr Jafar** 0.5 million **| Private donors Canada** 0.5 million | and other donors

OTHER SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

United States of America 679.8 million | **Canada** 47 million | **Norway** 16.8 million | **Switzerland** 12.8 million | **Sweden** 8.1 million | **France** 7.6 million | **Private donors Australia** 7.1 million | **United Kingdom** 6.9 million | **Denmark** 5 million | **Netherlands** 4.1 million | **Private donors Thailand** 3.5 million | **Republic of Korea** 3.2 million | **Luxembourg** 2.6 million | **Finland** 2.2 million

UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Sweden 76.4 million | **Private donors Spain** 52.9 million | **Norway** 41.4 million | **Netherlands** 36.1 million | **Denmark** 34.6 million | **United Kingdom** 31.7 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 27.2 million | **Germany** 25.9 million | **Private donors Japan** 21 million | **Switzerland** 16.4 million | **France** 14 million | **Private donors Italy** 12.4 million | **Italy** 10.6 million | **Private donors Sweden** 10.5 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, Tel: +221 78 639 6385

Antoine Sfeir, Regional Reporting Officer: sfeira@unhcr.org, Tel: +221 77 332 58 57

Twitter: @UNHCRWestAfrica – Facebook: UNHCR West & Central Africa