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.

17 September 2020

In West and Central Africa, the **increase rate in new COVID-19 cases is slowing down** while the **number of active cases is declining** for the past two months, going from 48,443 on 20 July to 23,195 as of 17 September 2020.

In **Cote d'Ivoire**, UNHCR obtained the opening of humanitarian corridor to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of 63 Ivorian refugees from Guinea-Conakry which constitute the **first return of Ivorian refugees** since the pandemic started.

Heavy rainfalls and floods continue to affect several hosting areas, especially in the Sahel where UNHCR is stepping up its **emergency interventions** along with the implementation of its **COVID-19 response**.

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	**210,815** confirmed cases **23,195** still active **184,364** recovered **3,256** deaths **source: WHO as of 17 September 2020.*	for COVID-19 Response Globally **US$745 MILLION** Funding Gap **40%** Funding received **60%**

All over West and Central Africa, children are starting to back school. In Mali, classes resumed on 14 September after nearly six months of school closure. ©UNHCR Mali

Operational Context

- **Slower increase in new cases and decrease in active cases in West and Central Africa**. As of 17 September 2020, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in West and Central Africa (WCAR) is at 210,815 after a 13 percent increase during the past month which represents a downward trend in the number of new case compared to the earlier phase of the pandemic. The number of active cases in the region has been on a steady decline for the past two months, going from 48,443 on 20 July 2020 to 27,163 as of 17 September 2020. As of 17 September 2020, in terms of active cases, **Nigeria** (7,641) has the highest number, followed by **Senegal** (3,513), **CAR** (2,890), **Gambia** (1,482) and **Cameroon** (1,051). (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	2,280	40	1,942	298
Burkina Faso	1,748	56	1,162	530
Cape Verde	4,978	47	4,430	501
Cameroon	20,303	415	18,837	1,051
CAR	4,782	62	1,830	2,890
Chad	1,090	81	960	49
Cote d'Ivoire	19,132	120	18,289	723
Equatoral Guinea	5,000	83	4,496	421
Gabon	8,678	53	7,827	798
Gambia	3,440	107	1,851	1,482
Ghana	44,655	294	44,797	564
Guinea	10,154	63	9,612	479
Guinea Bissau	2,275	39	1,327	909
Liberia	1,332	82	1,214	36
Mali	2,966	128	2,311	527
Niger	1,182	69	1,104	9
Nigeria	56,604	1,091	47,872	7,641
Sao Tome	907	15	871	21
Senegal	14,568	299	10,756	3,513
Sierra Leone	2,133	72	1,646	415
Togo	1,608	40	1,230	338
Total (WCA)	**210,815**	**3,256**	**184,364**	**23,195**

- **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. In **Burkina Faso**, the government declared on September 09, 2020 a state of natural disaster throughout the national territory after the heavy rains of early September. UNHCR continues to help families who have been affected by the rains and winds by supporting the construction of shelters and distributing shelter kits. From September 8 to 13, UNHCR, through its partner African Initiative for Relief and Development (AIRD), built 301 shelters in different sites in the Sahel region: Dori (87), Djibo (90), Gorom-Gorom (113) and Bani (11). UNHCR plans to build a total of 5,000 shelters to benefit displaced families who lived in flood-prone areas, fields or who are homeless. In **Guinea Bissau**, the Government of Guinea-Bissau postponed the beginning of the school year from 14 September to 5 October, due to torrential rains and because the conditions for the prevention of COVID-19 in educational establishments are not yet met. In **Liberia**, the heavy rains have damaged many roads, significantly restricting movements of staff and impacting the delivery of assistance. These difficult conditions have also caused a hike in commodities prices. In **Niger**, the latest assessment of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management reports 71 dead, 90 injured and 350,915 victims. According to initial estimates, about 9,000 IDPs and refugees have been impacted and are now in need of emergency shelters following the damage caused by bad weather, mainly in the regions of Tillabéri and Maradi. Six UNHCR sites suffered damage due to bad weather: Ayorou, Abala, Ouallam (Tillabéri), Intikane (Tahoua), Agadez and Hamdallaye (ETM). Since July, four sites have experienced periods of inaccessibility due to of the rising waters: Hamdallaye, Abala (September), Ouallam (August) and Telemces (July).

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.

The recent rains are causing severe floods the city of Niamey and all over Niger. Since the beginning of the rainy season, the floods around the country are reported to have caused 71 dead, 90 injured and affected over 350,000 including over 9,000 IDPs and refugees. ©UNHCR Niger

Operational Highlights

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

- **First facilitated returns to Cote d'Ivoire since the beginning of the pandemic**. In **Cote d'Ivoire**, UNHCR proceeded on Thursday, September 10 with the repatriation of a convoy of 63 Ivorian refugees from Guinea-Conakry who are now in quarantine for 14 days in line with the measures instated by the government to mitigate the risk against Covid-19. This repatriation is the first since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 and has been possible despite the fact the borders are still closed thanks to the creation by Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea Conakry of a humanitarian corridor with the support of UNHCR and its partners who organized the process which include COVID-19 tests at the border.

- **Sustained risk communication and community engagement**. As part of its regional strategy for communication with communities, UNHCR continues to engage with more local radios to broadcast information messages more broadly. The Sahel region is a

priority at the moment. UNHCR and its partners continue to engage communities remotely when movement restrictions limit access to populations, but most countries relaxing their preventive measures in-person community engagement activities are increasing. To avoid any risk of contagion, UNHCR and its partners are stepping their efforts to disseminate operational tools to and guidance to help plan safe in-person community meetings. In **Cameroon**, UNHCR sustains its sensitization efforts and multiplies information campaigns on prevention measures have been stepped all around the country. Since early August, 7,029 households in the Kadey, Bomba and Ngoko divisions, East region, benefited from home-visit sensitization, and an additional 2,213 sessions were also organised for the community, reaching a total 22,771 people. In Touboro, North region, 7,577 refugees and members of the host community received took part in sessions. In Douala, Littoral region, 36 households (157 refugees and asylum seekers) were sensitized on prevention measures within the community. In North West Region, 800 households took part in awareness sessions focused on COVID and protection and SGBV organized in three sites in Bali. In **Guinea Bissau**, in partnership with UNICEF and UNDP, UNHCR is carrying a large-scale awareness-raising campaign which has already reached an estimated 75,000 Guinea Bissau citizens including refugees in more than 95 villages and cities across the country. With the increasing number of COVID-19 cases, the awareness-raising continued over to October. In **Niger,** regular sensibilization sessions on prevention measures are conducted toward refugees. In Maradi, 2,113 men and 5,956 women took part in such sessions on hygiene, water distribution, social cohesion and pacific coexistence among PoCs and hosting communities. 180 women also took part in sessions on SGBV risks and prenatal consultation. In Niamey, 8 sensitization sessions were led by COOPI for POC (ETM and non-ETM) on health and prevention measures. In Agadez, 12 sensitization sessions for 126 PoCs (among them 36 women refugees and 12 hosting local women) were conducted by APBE and MEDU on prevention measures, social distancing, orientation about possible new cases referral, personal and environmental hygiene. In Ouallam, several sensitization sessions touching 93 PoCs have been conducted in order to enhance preventive measures about WASH and common spaces.

- **Strengthening GBV prevention as part of the COVID-19 response**. An existing network of 110 community focal points are supporting social workers who provide remote GBV case management in **Cameroon**. A Protection/GBV free toll hotline is the main communication tool linking the community focal points with the social workers, to ensure safe disclosure and referral of the survivor. This line is also used to provide information on COVID-19. Targeted campaigns on Instagram, Facebook, and rural radios in **Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ivory Coast** helped disseminate information on GBV services and PSEA complaints mechanisms within internally displaced, stateless and refugee communities.

- **Virtual registration process to ensure business continuity**. In **Ghana**, UNHCR continues to support the Ghana Refugee Board to continue with RSD interviews via a virtual RSD procedure to ensure the core Protection business of Refugee Status Determination does not suffer in the face of covid-19. This allows the Eligibility Officer to interact with the Asylum Seeker in separate virtual rooms for the RSD interview. This measure ensures compliance with COVID-19 protocols while still ensuring Asylum Seekers enjoy international protection by getting the opportunity to be interviewed. The Ghana Refugee Board has adjudicated a number of RSD cases using the virtual platform. This has reduced the number of cases pending and has allowed Board members and eligibility officers to continue with their role amidst of COVID-19. To reduce the risks associated with transportation and face to face meetings in the context of Covid-19 and beyond, UNHCR Ghana has set up a direct helpline for refugees and asylum seekers to provide prompt responses to queries, referral services and counselling services as part of measures to enhance our engagement with persons of concern.

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 **CAR**, UNHCR office in Bouar supported the local authorities by providing 40 hand washing kits, 1980 pieces of soap and 1020 liters of fuel to ensure travel as part of the sensitization against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNHCR also continues to set up isolation unit in key health centers across the country. A total of 314 RHUs have been be made available to WHO and the Ministry of Health to that effect since the beginning of the pandemic. In **Cameroon**, UNHCR continued sensitization campaigns on precautionary measures for refugees and the local population in Timangolo, Lolo and Mbile sites in the East region. 795 people at Mblie (144 men, 156 women, 210 boys and 285 girls) were reached. Lutheran World Federation distributed 61 Protection kits to women (from refugee and local communities) involved in the production of ecological charcoal in Batouri, East region. These kits comprise 16 bars of soap, bucket and face masks to ensure they carry out their activities in line with basic hygiene and prevention measures. This follow-up an initial distribution of 15 kits, out of a planned target of 100 women. In September and October, UNHCR plans the distribution of 40,000 non-reusable masks to three partner health facilities in Gado, East region and Ngam and Borgop, Adamawa region as well as to three quarantine centers in these refugee-hosting sites. The distribution also targets other health facilities under Meiganga In **Niger**, face masks and hygiene products (antiseptic soap and bleach) are regularly provided to refugees and IDPs, especially inside the ETM and Humanitarian centres and the guesthouses in Niamey.

Government and implementing partners continue to provide health, mental health and psychosocial activities to support forcibly displacement persons cope with the additional burden and stress from the pandemic.

Distribution of 192 barrels to store drinkable water in refugee and internally displaced communities in the Sahel region of Burkina Faso. ©UNHCR Burkina Faso

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

- **Cash-based intervention and provision of core relief items as part of the COVID-19 response**. In **Cameroon,** a total of 1,238 families of urban refugees in Yaounde and Douala have benefitted from cash assistance to mitigate the impact the pandemic had on their livelihoods. UNHCR continues to assess the vulnerabilities and economic situations of urban refugees to identify those in the most urgent need of assistance. In **Cote d'Ivoire**, UNHCR and its governmental partner DAARA continues the monetary intervention operation towards refugees and asylum seekers to address the socio-economic impact of coronavirus. To date, 635 refugees and asylum seekers have benefited from COVID-19 assistance in Abidjan only since the beginning of the pandemic. In Gambia, UNHCR supported the **Gambia** Food and Nutrition Association to provide cash assistance for three months (May, June and July 2020) to a total of 115 vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers residing in both rural and urban areas.

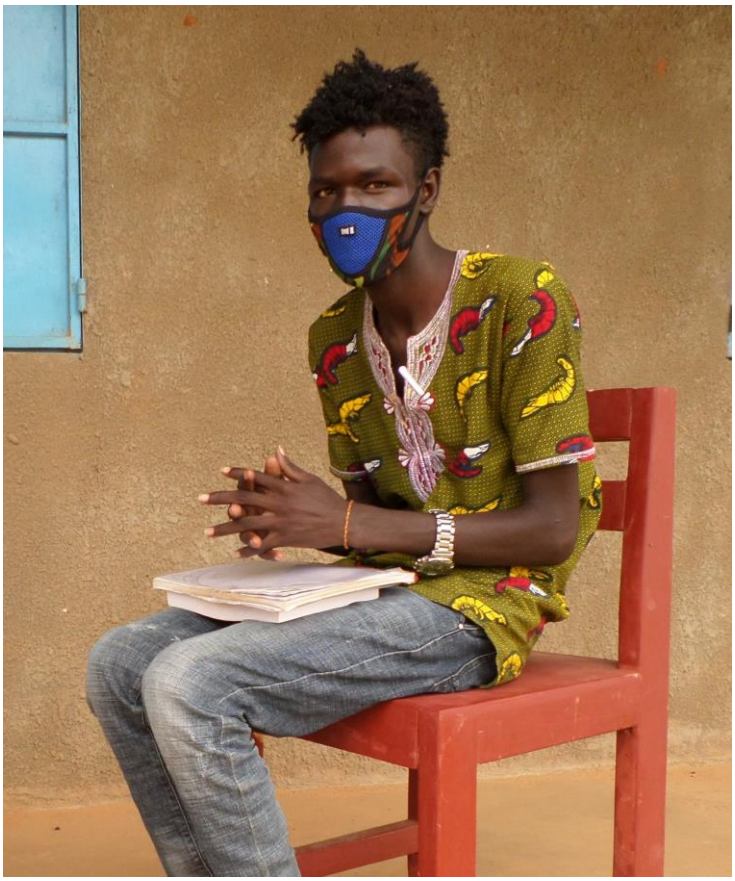
This support has helped the beneficiaries to meeting some of the pressing basic needs such as payment of house rent (for urban based refugees) feeding, and health expenses, as most of them rely on doing petty business activities that have been greatly affected by the COVID-19. In **Senegal**, As part of the response to COVID-19, a group of young refugee professionals, former DAFI scholarship holders in partnership with UNHCR, the UNV program, UNWOMEN, and OFADEC, made a donation of food (rice, sugar, oil) and hygiene kits (soaps, bleach, hydroalcoholic gel, masks) at the amount of FCFA 720,000 to help 25 households of refugees and vulnerable asylum seekers (107 individuals). Selected families were in majority single women with children.

- **Shelter interventions and NFI distributions to help decongest overcrowded settlements**. In **CAR**, UNHCR is working re-designing the most crowded IDP sites to reduce the risk of contagion in these settings. As part of this decongestion effort, UNHCR and partners provided cash assistance, food and NFI kits to 1,725 households from two IDP sites in Bambari (representing a total of 6,122 individuals) to support their return back to their villages of origin. This support will be complemented by income-generating activities to support the successful socio-economic reintegration of these IDPs in their areas of return.

- **Livelihoods intervention to strengthen self-reliance**. In **Ghana**, livelihood activities are continuing to mitigate the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 on refugees. Ten refugees from Egyeikrom along local farmers were taken through a 3-day training in pig production facilitated by UNHCR Partner, ADRA. Another 8 refugees have been enrolled in a poultry farming project sponsored by the Czech Republic Embassy and the Michael Kunke Foundation in collaboration with the Lemon Beach Resort at Elmina. This self-reliance called 'Farm with Wings' aims for the construction of a poultry farm and a butchery. In **Niger**, UNHCR and its partners continue the implementation of a local production of hygiene products, such as antiseptic soap, bleach and masks. The production has started in April in several hosting areas in Niger (Abala, Ouallam, Agadez, Hamdallaye, Niamey, Maradi) and has been implemented until June, in order to respond to the first emergency needs. During the first production period 5793 liters of bleach, 37732 antiseptic soaps, 8641 liters of liquid soap and 3500 masks were produced Refugees and IDPs received a first training to learn the technique of production, the raw materials and all the equipment to start their own production, always guided by a partners' coordinator. UNHCR provided them with a daily Cash for Work in order to enhance their independence and start a process of possible durable solution and pacific coexistence with the local community. Similar activities involving the production of masks and soap are ongoing in **Burkina Faso** and **Cameroon**, Beyond the positive results in terms of emergency response, this activity was an excellent temporary replacement for many psychosocial activities who had to be put in stand-by due to the forced social distancing required by the COVID-19 situation. The activity helped many vulnerable and traumatized PoC to cope with the situation and to develop hope and resilience in their current situation.

Support education systems

- **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.



Ahmat Ali Abderaman is a 23 year-old refugee from Sudan. He is among the 10 best Baccalaureate candidates in Tchad this year with outstanding honors. ©UNHCR Tchad

- In **Chad**, out of the 1,744 refugee students enrolled in the final year of lower secondary, 1,353 returned to classes, a loss of 22%. For the last year of upper secondary, 1,069 Baccalaureate candidates returned to class out of the 1,420 who were registered in March, a loss of 25%. In this context, UNHCR supported the organization of end-of year exams by creating, in collaboration with the Chadian government, a

Baccalaureate examination center in a refugee camp (Farchana camp, Ouaddai province) to allow Chadian and refugee candidates to take their exams while respecting physical distancing measures. A total of 1,209 refugees (57% of girls) sat for the national Baccalaureate and 1,866 for the Brevet (exam marking the end of lower secondary school).

- In **Ghana**, UNHCR has organized the distribution of school kits to refugee children and host community students who are in final year in Ampain and Krisan camps to help them preparing for their Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) in September. UNHCR is also planning to distribute cash grants to over 1,500 refugee children enrolled in basic education to help them procure school uniforms as classes are set to restart. In **Nigeria**, 451 school desks provided by UNHCR were distributed to 2 primary schools and 1 secondary school, to be used by refugee and host community children, allowing for physical distancing measures in the classroom. In **Niger**, UNHCR and its partners have rehabilitated classrooms in the Tahoua and Tillabery regions, distributing school kits to primary and secondary refugee students, along with teaching aid kits for teachers who were forced to move after the attack on the Intikane camp and the destruction of the school. UNHCR and its implementing partner, NRC, is also organizing catch-up classes in the Maradi region for over 2,600 children, including 1,200 Nigerian refugees. UNHCR also supported 100 Nigerian refugees enrolled in distance secondary programme to keep up with the Nigerian curriculum and prepare for Nigeria exams.

- In the countries where a complete return to school is not yet possible for health or security reasons, UNHCR continues to support distance learning through various initiatives including the distribution of solar-powered radio sets, accompanied by school kits, to help refugee children follow school programmes broadcasted through national and community radios. So far, 456 sets were distributed in **Burkina Faso** (out of 3,190 planned), 1,320 in **Mali** (out of 5,500), and 1,143 in **Cameroon** (out of 2,643). In the low connectivity areas where most refugees and IDPs live, very few households have access to electricity, TV or internet. In these contexts, radio education is one of the few ways children have to receive information and access learning content. This intervention is estimated to have enabled 15,000 refugee, IDP and host community children affected by Covid-19 to continue learning despite school closure and endemic violence.

- In **Liberia**, Rising on Air is an official contributor to the Ministry of Education and the Liberia National Radio Program that has been aired during the pandemic whilst schools were closed. It offers a 20-week programme of free downloadable audio courses with teachers and caregivers offering guidance via phone to maximize the radio experience. Through a new partnership with Rising On Air, UNHCR has started to provide additional support to refugee children in grades 6-9 and 12 who have returned to school and printable materials for 'take home' learning packages for grades 1 to 5 not due to return to classes until the New Year due to the pandemic.

Financial Requirements

US$745 million requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally. **US$448.6 million:** received by UNHCR against its **global COVID-19 appeal**. **USD US$34.8 million:** received for **COVID-19 activities in West and Central Africa**

Special thanks to the following donors for:

CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNHCR'S COVID-19 RESPONSE IN WEST &CENTRAL AFRICA| USD
United States of America 16.4 million **| African Development Bank** 14.4 million **| Education Cannot Wait** 1.3 million **| Unilever (UK)** 0.9 million **| United Kingdom** 0.6 million **| Fondazione Prosolidar-Onlus** 0.3 million | **Intesa Sanpaolo** 0.2 million | **Nando Peretti Foundation** 0.3 million | **UN COVID-19 MDTF** 0.2 million | **Tencent and Tencent Foundation** 0.16 million | **Monaco** 0.15 million | Holy See | Private donors Nigeria

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UNHCR'S GLOBAL COVID-19 APPEAL* | USD
United States of America 186.3 million **| Germany** 62.7 million **| European Union** 47 million **| United Kingdom** 26.9 million **| Africa Development Bank** 18.3 million **| Denmark** 14.6 million **| UN Foundation** 10 million **| | CERF** 6.9 million | **Canada** 6.4 million **| Education Cannot Wait** 5.5 million **| Unilever (UK)** 5.5 million | **Qatar Charity** 5.3 million **| Spain** 3.5 million | **France 3.4 million** | **Ireland** 3.3 million | **Sweden** 3 million | **Sony Corporation** 3 million **| Austria** 2.5 million | **Finland** 2.4 million **| Latter Day Saints Charities** 2 million | **UNO – Fluechlighshilfe** 2.5 million | **Private donors UK** 1.7 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 **| 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
** above USD 0.5 million*

OTHER SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD
United States of America 616.4 million | **Canada** 45.9 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** 17.9 million | **Switzerland** 16.4 million | **France** 14 million | **Private donors Italy** 12.4 million | **Italy** 10.6 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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