West and Central Africa Operational Update

July - September 2022

Highlights

People continue to flee to northern Togo and Ghana due to insecurity and political instability in **Burkina Faso** and the **Central Sahel**.

More than **3.4 million** refugees, internally displaced people and their hosts have been affected by **devastating floods** across **Burkina Faso**, **Cameroon**, **Chad**, **Mali**, **Niger** and **Nigeria**.

By the end of the 2021/2022 academic year, a total of **216,785 refugees were enrolled** in pre-school through secondary education across the region.

In the district of Kousseri (Far North Cameroon), families of internally displaced people and host communities use a dugout canoe to transport the ruins of their house, destroyed by the exceptionally strong floods which started in August across West and Central Africa. 21 October 2022. © UNHCR / Moise Amedje Peladai

Between July and September 2022:

29,700 civil status and identity documents distributed in **Burkina Faso** between April and September as part of the #iBelong campaign against statelessness

29,000+ Cameroonian refugees in **Nigeria** received cash to cover their food needs for three months through digital transfers

5,108 former refugees returned to **Cote d'Ivoire** with UNHCR's support

1,524 households provided with core relief items (CRIs) in **Mali** (Timbuktu, Bandiagara and Gao region)

700+ Cameroonian refugee and internally displaced children in **Nigeria** were issued birth certificates

110 scholarship places have been secured for refugees in **Chad** to pursue higher education in 2022-2023

People forced to flee in West and Central Africa

UNHCR is mandated to assist and protect **12.8 million people** in West and Central Africa, including:

1.6 million refugees and asylum-seekers

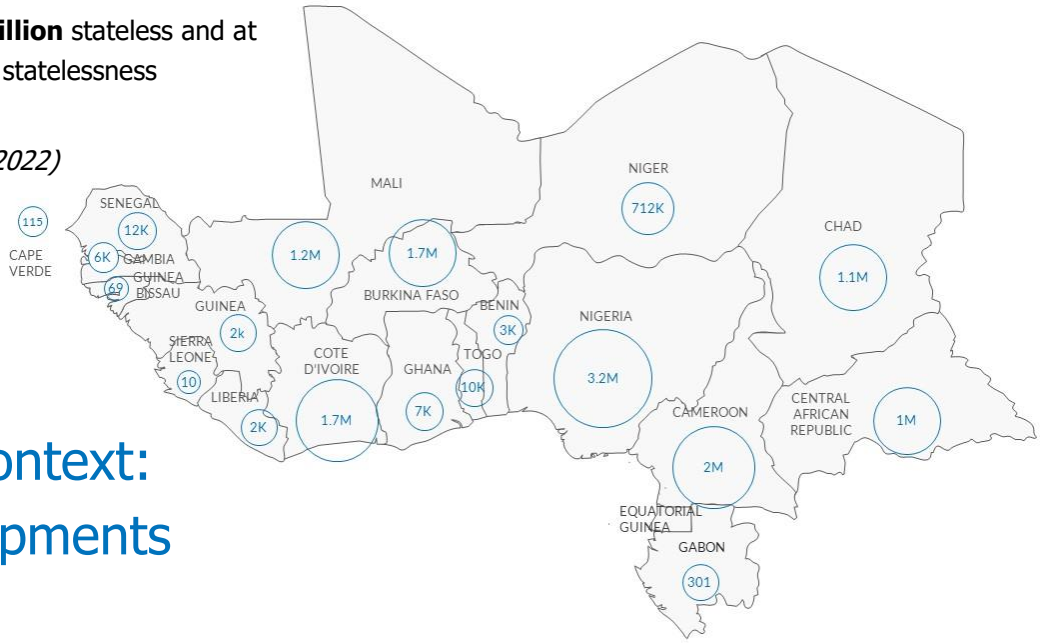
1.8 million refugee and IDP returnees

7.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs)

0.1 million others of concern

1.6 million stateless and at risk of statelessness

(as of 30 September 2022)



Regional context: Key developments

- **Devastating floods across West and Central Africa**: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria have been facing incredibly destructive floods since August, impacting **more than 3.4 million internally displaced people** and their hosts. Hundreds of lives have been lost. The floods have hit already vulnerable refugee and IDP communities, exacerbating protection risks by destroying shelter and infrastructure, and endangering livelihoods as cattle were killed and fields submerged. They have also displaced 1.3 million people in Nigeria, 90,000 people in Chad, and 13,000 people in the Diffa region of Niger. UNHCR and partners responded by providing **immediate shelter and essential aid** to those affected, including by identifying two sites to shelter disaster survivors in Chad, and delivering 14,900 tarpaulin sheets and 550 kits with basic household items to families in Nigeria.

- **Preventing statelessness:** During the reporting period, **Liberia** amended its Nationality Law by removing gender discriminatory provisions preventing children from acquiring nationality from their mothers. Granting equal rights to women and men to confer nationality to their offspring addresses one of the primary causes for statelessness among children. Additionally, **Nigeria** launched its National Action Plan to Eradicate Statelessness and established a national Steering Committee to oversee its implementation; in **Mali**, the president signed a decree regulating and providing guidance on procedures to access nationality; in **Chad**,

UNHCR and its government partner, the Agence Nationale des Titres Sécurisés, facilitated the organization of 15 mobile courts in the southern region of the country and facilitated access to civil documentation, and in particular to birth registration of refugee children; as well as issued for the first time national identity cards to 2, 300 IDPs at risk of statelessness in the Lake Chad region; in **Benin**, thanks to UNHCR's partner Amnesty International Benin and the National Agency for the Identification of Persons, over 9,000 birth certificates were distributed to children who were previously undocumented and at risk of statelessness; and in **Burkina Faso** over 23,000 civil status and identity documents were delivered to 12,748 internally displaced persons and 10,431 members of the host community in Boucle du Mouhoun, North, Hauts Bassins, South-West and East regions contributing to statelessness prevention and reduction efforts. More information on the on the recent achievement related to Statelessness in the West and Central Africa region can be found in The Campaign to End Statelessness July – September 2022 Update.

- **Addressing internal displacement:** A draft legislation toward the domestication of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention) is currently under revision by the governments of **Cameroon, Chad** and **Mali**. Moreover, in July 2022, UNHCR supported the Economic Community of West African States (|ECOWAS) multi-stakeholder workshop held in Ghana, which led to the adoption of a common roadmap for the ratification and domestication of the Kampala Convention across the region.

- **Education:** On 8 September, on the eve of the international day to protect education under attack, UNHCR and partners warned that **fifty-seven million children**, adolescents and youth, **are out of school in the West and Central Africa region**. This represents 24.1 per cent of the 236 million out of school worldwide. Over 12,400 schools closed in the region by the end of the 2021-22 school year, preventing children and adolescents to pursue their education.

Operational highlights

Burkina Faso

- **Protection monitoring Project 21**: Through inter-agency protection monitoring Project 21, 803 families, 46% of which are headed by single women, were interviewed in 148 communes from 1 July to 31 August. The main protection issues identified during the monitoring exercise included violations of physical and psychological integrity, violations of the rights to life, freedom and security, property rights, and the right to life, as well as gender-based violence. Additionally, UNHCR has assisted 1,139 vulnerable people through cash-based interventions (CBI) and referrals to relevant services such as psychosocial support.
- **Civil documentation**: From April to September 2022, UNHCR facilitated the distribution of 29,700 civil status and identity documents to the most vulnerable groups, including women and children, as part of the global #iBelong campaign to end statelessness by 2024. In addition, 120 actors were trained on the issuance of birth certificates. These documents are critical for vulnerable populations to exercise their rights and access essential social services.
- **Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**: UNHCR and its partners continued to implement prevention, case management, response and risk mitigation activities. GBV mobile teams are operational in eight regions and a total of 22 community-led safe spaces have been constructed or refurbished since 2020 to offer women and girls information about available services and on issues relating to women's rights, health in safety and confidentiality. UNHCR continued to build the capacities of its partners to prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based violence.
- **Shelter and core relief items (CRIs)**: During the reporting period, from 1 July to 25 September, 2,011 emergency shelters, 651 semi durable shelter and 19 long-term/permanent shelters have been distributed to 17,963 vulnerable IDPs and host community members. In addition, 15,049 people were assisted with 2,245 core relief items, provided in kind or through cash-based interventions (CBI). These interventions aim at improving the living conditions, the physical safety, and the dignity of IDP as well as host communities.

Cameroon Multi-Country Office (Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe)

- **Refugees in Cameroon become Master's students in France**: Six refugee students (two women and four men) were awarded scholarships to pursue their master's studies in French universities for the 2022-2023 academic year. The scholarships were awarded in partnership with the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie* as part of UNHCR's Complementary Education Pathways activities.
- **Sports for refugee inclusion**: On 31 August, in Bertoua, a football match for young people including refugees and host community members, aged between 14 and 20 years, was organised at Yadema public school as part of a social cohesion project implemented by UNHCR and the US embassy. This initiative, led by Olympic champion Staci Wilson and American football player Lisa Berg, aims at promoting sport as a means for inclusion.

Young refugees and locals playing football with Olympic champion Staci Wilson in Bertoua, Cameroon. © UNHCR / Valerie Penee Ada

- **Support to IDP-hosting areas**: In the West region, UNHCR has stepped up its support to local authorities in IDP-hosting areas by donating essential ICT equipment to the Governor Office, the Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the BUNEC (Bureau National de l'Etat Civil). In parallel, a cash-based intervention programme targeting 580 IDPs was also launched.

Central African Republic

- **Protection monitoring:** UNHCR protection monitoring teams recorded an increase in protection incidents compared to the first half of the year. 7,526 households and 703 community leaders and key informants were consulted across the country by protection teams in the framework of a 2022 perception survey. 55 per cent of the households surveyed had a female head of household and 20 per cent of the community leaders and key informants were women.
- **Community participation:** In the framework of the participatory assessment regularly conducted by UNHCR to ensure accountability to affected people and community participation in programming, 59 focus groups with IDPs and refugees were carried out in 10 offices across the country, involving 318 women and 313 men between the ages of 17 and 24 and 25 and 55.
- **Voluntary returns:** As of August 2022, UNHCR facilitated the return of 1,326 families, comprising of 4,549 individuals, who voluntarily repatriated from the DRC, Congo, Cameroon, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria. The former refugees reached several return areas within the Central African Republic via air and boat (Bangui and Mongoumba) and road (Berberati and Beloko).
- **Core relief items:** UNHCR and its partners have provided household goods and emergency shelter kits to 21,786 people, including 13,390 displaced people living in sites and a further 8,392 returnees, displaced people living with host families, refugees and some of the most vulnerable members of the host populations.

Chad

- **Education**: Summer catch-up classes were provided to a total of 575 newly arrived refugees from Cameroon (44% girls), with the support of the Jesuit Refugee Service and the Ministry of

A group of Sudanese refugee mothers study for the 2022 Chadian Baccalaureate with their babies in front of the nursery at the high school in Djabal. © UNHCR / JRS / Irene Galera

Education, to prepare them for the start the 2022/2023 academic year. Thanks to UNHCR's advocacy a record number of scholarships to access tertiary education will be available this year (90 new DAFI scholarships, 9 new French Embassy scholarships, 3 new UNIV'R scholarships, and 1 new Connected Higher Education scholarship).

- **Refugee protection framework**: A series of workshops aiming at raising awareness on the Asylum Law were conducted in N'Djamena and in the southern region of Chad. They were organized by UNHCR in partnership with the National Commission for the Reintegration of Refugees and Returnees (CNARR) and the Inclusive development programme in host areas (DIZA) project, and targeted local authorities, security and defence forces, representatives of urban refugee communities, banking institutions, economic and mobile operators, the National Office for the Promotion of Employment (ONAPE) and micro-credit institutions.
- **Cash-based interventions (CBI)**: UNHCR disbursed nearly XAF 1,825 million (close to USD 280,000) to support 3,943 refugees' livelihoods activities, basic needs and education-related activities. This includes 1,457 refugees in Farchana, Iriba and Bagasola camps who received support for agricultural and economic activities; 400 vulnerable who received cash for food; 1,958 urban refugees in N'Djamena who received cash to pay enrolment fees and buy uniforms and school supplies.

Cote d'Ivoire

- **Voluntary repatriations**: As of 8 September, UNHCR and partners had facilitated the voluntary return of 20,451 former Ivorian refugees this year, including 5,108 during the reporting period. Since March 2021, the first voluntary repatriation convoy from Mali arrived in Côte d'Ivoire on August 4. The 183 former Ivorian refugees, comprised of 92 women and 91 men, had registered to return home voluntarily prior to the implementation of the cessation clause, but were unable to do so until the border reopened on July 3, following the relaxation of ECOWAS sanctions on Mali.

UNHCR's convoy is ready for the voluntary return of 320 former Ivoirian refugees from Mali to Côte d'Ivoire. August 2022 © M. Diallo / UNHCR

- **Housing, land and property rights of refugee returnees:** Protection monitoring activities revealed 282 cases of land disputes involving returnees, which were referred to the regional rights commission and DAARA (La Direction d'Aide et d'Assistance des Réfugiés et Apatrides). In Toulepleu and Blolequin departments, the local authorities (prefets) have put in place a mechanism for the resolution of the disputes to facilitate sustainable return and peaceful coexistence.

Ghana

- **Legal Protection**: UNHCR contributed to the review of the 2022 draft Refugee Commission Bill, which will update the law in line with international standards and repeal the 1992 Refugee law.
- **Education**: UNHCR, UN-Habitat, UNFPA and the IamtheCode Foundation have initiated a programme targeting 25,000 young people in informal settlements to equip them with skills in digital coding and knowledge in reproductive health. The programme is being rolled out at the Egyeikrom D/A Primary School, at the Egyeikrom Refugee Camp and other schools in the Greater Accra Region.
- **Health**: A health sensitization session was held for refugees and asylum-seekers living at Krisan Camp aiming to raise awareness on prevention, early detection and treatment of reproductive health-related issues. Participants were also informed about the UNHCR policy on health assistance.
- **Arrivals from Burkina Faso**: The National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO) informed UNHCR of the arrival of approximately 2,000 people from Burkina Faso in the Upper East region in July. In late July, a UNHCR team and the Ghana Refugee Board (GRB) conducted an initial assessment mission, during which immediate needs for food, shelter, core relief items, livelihoods, and health were identified.

Liberia

- **Participative review of the regional model statelessness law**: on 21 September, UNHCR hosted a virtual consultation with civil society organizations and stateless persons to review the draft regional model statelessness law, which is meant to help west and central African states develop their own domestic statelessness laws.
- **Education**: According to the Ministry of Education, 1,238 students are enrolled at schools linked to the refugee settlements for the current school year, out of which 874 were former refugees. UNHCR carries out daily registration activities in those schools, and distributed education material (early childhood development and recreational kits, exercise books, pens, pencils) donated by UNICEF to 2,898 students in 9 schools across Nimba and Grand Gedeh countries.
- **Livelihood and farming support**: UNHCR, the Liberia Refugee Repatriation Resettlement Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture distributed farming inputs (seeds and tools) to 45 former refugees (29 men and 16 women) in the PTP refugee settlement, and to 10 Liberian farmers in Grand Gedeh County, in the framework of a UNHCR-UNDP partnership.

Mali

- **Documentation for Mauritanian refugees**: As part of the local integration of Mauritanian refugees in a protracted situation, UNHCR facilitated 161 applications for their naturalization, including for 85 children under 18. The naturalization will allow these individuals to enjoy all the rights associated with Malian citizenship and to be protected from the risk of statelessness.
- **Registration of Burkinabe refugees**: Between July and August, UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees (CNCR) registered 3,578 refugees from Burkina Faso and Niger in the Menaka and Mopti regions. This first step allowed registered refugees to access essential assistance and protection.
- **Shelter and core relief items:** During the reporting period, UNHCR provided core relief items (CRIs) to 1,124 households, including 375 IDPs families in Segou, 719 refugee families in Gossi

(Timbuktu), and 30 families in the host communities in the city of Timbuktu. Moreover, UNHCR provided 180 CRIs to 150 refugee and 30 host community households in the region of Gao. In partnership with UNDP and IOM, UNHCR provided 220 CRIs to relocate victims of floods in Bandiagara. In Menaka, UNHCR and MINUSMA erected 308 family tents for internally displaced persons in four different sites.

Niger

- **Verification of refugees' biometric data**: The Government of Niger, with the support of UNHCR, is conducting a physical and biometric verification exercise of refugees and asylum-seekers to validate their presence in Niger and to update their personal data and protection needs. This exercise began in June in Diffa and, as of 30 September, a total of 61,826 people have been verified. The exercise is ongoing and the next locations to be covered will be Maradi and Tahoua.
- **Greening for Niger's national holiday**: Since 1975, the national holiday commemorating the proclamation of Niger's independence (3 August 1960) has been dubbed the "Festival of the Tree," and it serves as an opportunity to advocate for increased greening, desertification prevention, and climate change mitigation. On this occasion, refugees and host community members from the three "villages of opportunity" in the Maradi region have planted 125 fruit trees in Chadakori, 125 in Garin Kaka and 30 in Dan Dadji Makaou.

A tree being planted at Sayam Foram camp in the Diffa region. © UNHCR

- **Training on protection and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse**: On 8-9 August, UNHCR organized a training session on the code of conduct and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) in Niamey for 32 staff from partner NGOs and local authorities. The objective of the training was to strengthen the protection environment and reinforce the prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse. On 10 August, a total of 40 refugee and asylum-seekers living at the Hamdallaye site and in the guest houses in Niamey were also trained on PSEA. From 10 to 11 August, UNHCR also organized a Protection training session for twenty monitors operating at various border posts in the regions of Tahoua, Maradi, Dosso, Tillabéry, Niamey, Zinder, and Diffa. The main areas of discussions were UNHCR's mandate, the legal framework for asylum in Niger, the principle of non-refoulement, and the non-criminalization of irregular entry of asylum-seekers into the territory of a state, and the monitoring and reporting of cross-border movements.

Nigeria

- **Registration and verification underway**: On 15 August, UNHCR commenced a comprehensive registration and verification of Cameroonian refugees, together with government and NGO partners, including the National Commission for Refugee, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons Nigeria. The verification exercise also includes the registration and biometric verification of new arrivals, a socio-economic profiling component that will enable UNHCR to improve its protection and assistance response, and the issuance of refugee ID cards to individuals above 14 years old. As of 27 September 2022, UNHCR has verified some

11,800 individuals representing 3,151 households and over 5,000 refugees above 14 years received refugee ID cards. The exercise will continue through the end of 2022.

- **Cameroonian refugees receive birth certificates**: Supported by UNHCR and partners, the National Population Commission issued birth certificates to over 700 Cameroonian refugee and internally displaced children.
- **Access to education for refugees in Nigeria**: UNHCR paid school fees for over 2,000 Cameroonian refugee students in primary and secondary schools for the third-term academic session in Benue and Cross River States. Five refugees, including two females (four Cameroonians and one Syrian refugee), gained admission under the UNICORE master's degree scholarship programme into various universities in Italy. UNHCR supported successful candidates with their travel and visa arrangements. The ProFuturo Foundation, in collaboration with UNHCR, also trained some 100 teachers, trainers/coaches, Ministry of Education officials, partners, and headteachers from five primary schools on digital education and educational innovation, to promote access to a high-quality and well-rounded education for refugee and host community pupils in Benue and Cross River States.
- **Cash for food and medical support for refugees in Nigeria**: Over 29,000 Cameroonian refugees received three months' value of money for food assistance provided through digital transfers using their UNHCR-facilitated ATM cards and cash-in-hand. Over 6,000 refugee and host community children under 5 benefited from malnutrition detection checks, and more than 150 malnourished cases requiring assistance received supplementary food.

Cameroonian refugees receive cash for food provided by UNHCR, to enable them to purchase the food of their choice in Adagom refugee settlement, Cross River State. 05/07/2022. © UNHCR / Lucy Agiende

- **Agricultural livelihood activities supported**: As part of a joint UNHCR-FAO livelihood project, some 350 refugee households and 278 host community households received seedlings, including groundnuts and maize, as well as fertilizers to cultivate their farms in Taraba State.

Senegal Multi-Country Office (Benin, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo)

- **Education in Benin**: During the reporting period, 152 refugee pupils (representing 69,72% of all refugee students) received school assistance: uniform, registration, and examination fees allowing them to learn in better conditions.
- **Protection in Senegal**: Between July and September, 587 birth certificates were issued by mobile courts in the Valley region. The acquisition of these documents has facilitated access to schooling for refugee children, as well as naturalization applications. In addition, 24 vulnerable refugee families were able to benefit from subsistence and housing assistance between July and August 2022. 69 referrals were made for psychosocial assistance, food kit, training and support in income-generating activities, health support and housing support.

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- **Arrival from Burkina Faso:** In July, the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) registered a group of 556 Burkinabe who arrived in the Commune of Tanguieta in Northern **Benin** in June. **In Togo**, over 4,000 Burkinabe arrived during the reporting period. In response, UNHCR and the National Coordination of Assistance to Refugees (CNAR) carried out a joint protection monitoring mission to the Northern Savanes region (Dapaong) of Togo, where access to food, shelter, core relief items and education were identified as immediate need. The field visit was followed by a workshop during which a contingency plan to tackle an increase of arrivals was developed together with government partners, UN agencies and NGOs. The National Agency of Civilian Protection (ANPC) also recorded over 5,000 internal displaced persons in the Savanes region following attacks and incursion of NSAG in the area."

Liaison with Regional Institutions

UNHCR officially started collaborating with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its institutions in 2001. Ever since, UNHCR has expanded the scope of its regional institutional collaboration with the Community Court of Justice and the Community Parliament.

- On 15 July, UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice (ECCJ). This introduces new areas of cooperation, including the possibility for UNHCR to intervene as *amicus curiae* in the Court's proceedings, or to provide expert opinions to the ECCJ on refugee law and statelessness law.
- From 25 to 29 July, the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice (ECCJ) participated in the fourth edition of the annual Statelessness & Nationality course for French-speaking practitioners, jointly organized by UNHCR and the Catholic University of Central Africa. Thirty trainees from more than twenty countries received teachings on the Court's human rights mandate and procedures.
- On 22 and 23 August, UNHCR and the ECOWAS Parliament held a regional workshop in Banjul to discuss the role of the Community Parliament in achieving protection and durable solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless persons in West Africa. It was agreed that the Parliament should consider adopting a resolution recommending for the elaboration of harmonized standards on asylum and the protection of stateless persons in West Africa.

The opening ceremony of the annual Statelessness and Nationality course for French-speaking practitioners on 25 July 2022 in Cameroon. © UNHCR / Helen Ngoh

- On 1st August, UNHCR Regional Bureau Director and the President of the Commission, Economic Community of Central Africa States (ECCAS) signed an MoU establishing the framework for collaboration between both institutions. Under this agreement and with support

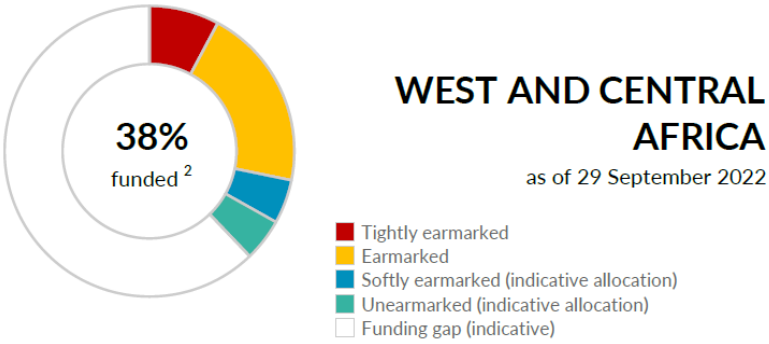
from UNHCR, ECCAS Commission will avail its convening powers, normative powers and decision-making powers to advance Protection and Solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the 11 countries composing the community. The partnership will help advancing the Global Compact on Refugees and UNHCR`s global Campaign against statelessness in Central Africa.

Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in West and Central Africa

- UNHCR and the ECOWAS Commission have been working together to develop a 4-year action plan for the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugee pledges made by States of the Community. In late August, ECOWAS Parliament Member met in Banjul to discuss the draft plan and tackle concrete ways to support its operationalization based on their mandates related to legislation, oversight and representation of their electorate.

Financial Requirements

UNHCR's financial requirements for the West and Central Africa region in 2022 total **USD 884.1 million**. As of 29 September, **38 per cent** of needs have been funded. UNHCR is grateful to donors who have supported operations in West and Central Africa in 2022, including:



United States of America 180.8 million | **France** 8.9 million | **Italy** 7.4 million | **Education Cannot Wait** 7.4 million | **CERF** 7.1 million | **USA for UNHCR** 6.1 million | **Canada** 4.8 million | **Denmark** 4.4 million | **Japan** 4.3 million | **Belgium** 4 million | **Germany** 4 million | **Country-based Pooled Funds** 3.6 million | **Hanesbrands Inc.** 3.6 million | **Sweden** 3.5 million | **Finland** 3.4 million | **The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives** 2.9 million | **African Development Bank Group** 2.4 million | **Qatar** 2.2 million | **European Union** 2 million | **United Kingdom** 2 million | **Switzerland** 1 million

Flexible financial support greatly facilitates UNHCR being able to kick-start an emergency response, bolster forgotten or under-resourced crises, and enable the fullest possible implementation of programmes. They enable UNHCR to plan and manage its resources efficiently and effectively, contributing to the collective success in every life that is transformed and saved. UNHCR is grateful to the donors that have provided unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions in 2022, including:

OTHER SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

United States of America 29.3 million | **Private donors** USA 14.2 million | **Japan** 13.8 million | **Private donors Germany** 9.6 million | **Canada** 7.8 million | **Private donors Australia** 7.4 million | **Private donors Denmark** 2.1 million

UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions.

Sweden 99.3 million | **Norway** 72.5 million | **Private donors Spain** 51 million | **Private donors Japan** 40.9 million | **United Kingdom** 40.1 million | **Netherlands** 37.2 million | **Denmark** 35.6 million | **Germany** 27 million | **Private donors USA** 26.2 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 25.6 million | **Japan** 21.7 million | **France** 18.5 million | **Switzerland** 18.4 million | **Private donors Italy** 14.5 million | **Belgium** 11.9 million | **Ireland** 11.8 million | **Private donors Canada** 11.2 million | **Private donors Sweden** 10.4 million | **Italy** 10 million

UNHCR Global Appeal for 2023 can be found here.

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