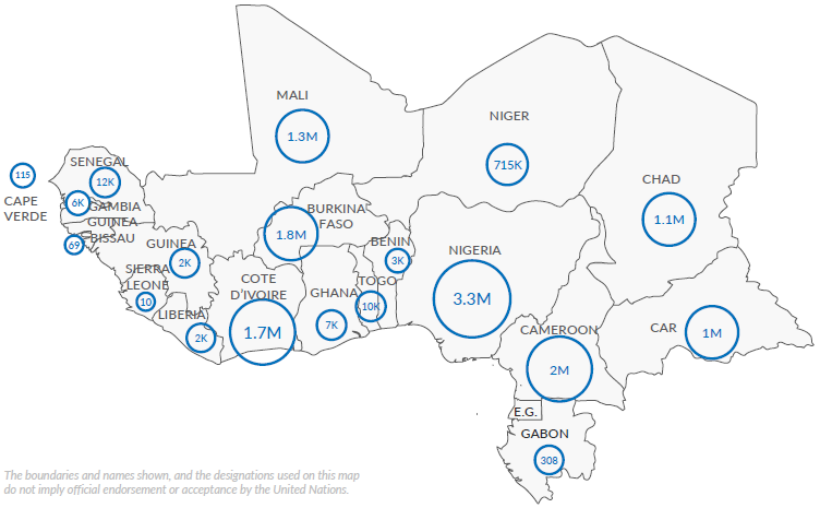
REGIONAL UPDATE

Mixed movements in West and Central Africa

October - December 2022



As of 31 December 2022, 13 million of persons in the region were falling under the mandate of UNHCR, including 1,6 million refugees and asylum-seekers. © UNHCR and governments

People in mixed flows move together for **different reasons**, using the **same routes** and facing **similar protection risks**.

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

This **update** provides a brief overview of key trends in the region as well as response by UNHCR and partners.

REGIONAL TRENDS

Affecting 200,000 new persons across the region, forced displacement continued to increase and fuel mixed movements. A total of 12,000 persons on the move were detected and profiled by community-based monitors, including 4,000 persons fleeing **persecution and insecurity**. Demonstrating the dynamism of movements in the region, a new route from Nigeria to Burkina Faso (Sud-Ouest region) was reported.

Using long-standing mixed movements corridors between the **Sahel** and countries in the Gulf of Guinea, Burkinabe refugees continued to flee insecurity to Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. 4,400 Burkinabe who had already been displaced internally were identified in cross border onward movements, mainly to Cote d'Ivoire, where a long-established Burkinabe diaspora was estimated to represent more than 2 million persons in the 1990s.

KEY FIGURES

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Mixed sea movements continued to be detected along west African shores, with deadly incidents reported by the media *en route* to the Spanish Canaries islands.

Trafficking in persons continued to affect refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities. In Borno and Yobe States, Nigeria, where more than 1.5 million persons are forcibly displaced in relation to the Lake Chad Basin situation, cross border trafficking was reported, including towards Algeria and Mali. Lured by false promises of job opportunities in the extraction of minerals, victims were exploited through forced labour and organ harvesting. Internal trafficking from the North-East to the Middle Belt and the South of the country was also detected, with internally displaced children subjected to domestic servitude.

RESPONSE

Protective frameworks

Robust asylum systems in line with international and regional standards provide asylum-seekers and refugees on the move with alternatives to risky onward movements. In November, Benin adopted a new asylum law, replacing a 1975 ordonnance. The new framework recognizes persons compelled to leave their country due to events seriously disturbing public order as refugees, foresees accelerated refugee status determination procedures (prima facie) in case of influx and requires the motivation of refugee status determination decisions as a way to foster fairness and transparency.

Identification and referral

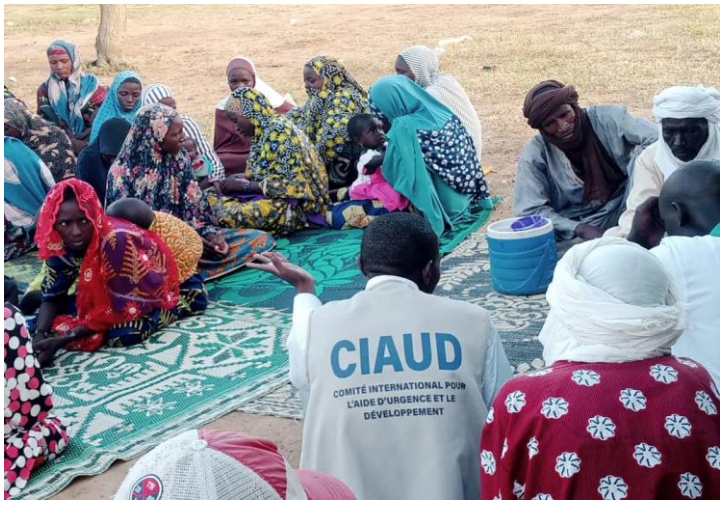
The national asylum authority in Benin facilitated a training for police forces deployed in border entry points. © UNHCR MCO Senegal

Effective and timely identification of people on the move with protection needs is essential to offer alternatives to risky journeys through referrals to protection services. Capacity-building and sharing activities across the region reached over 260 first-contact entry officials, resulting in the referral of 1,800 persons identified along key routes.

In **Benin**, the national asylum authority trained police forces based in Athieme and Hillacondji on the national asylum framework and related protection obligations. Located on the border with Togo, both border entry points are key transit areas between major urban hubs of the region. In **Burkina Faso**, over 1,300 persons on the move were referred to protection services by community-based monitors. In parallel, local authorities, law enforcement and UN partners were invited to a training on international protection in a context of mixed movements. In Bobo-Dioulasso, the capacities of local authorities were reinforced on the protection of refugees and internally displaced people by UNHCR and the Protection Cluster. Increasingly affected by insecurity and forced displacement with the spillover of the Sahel situation, Bobo-Dioulasso is a long-standing transit hub for mixed movements between Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire. In **Chad**, 240 persons on the move were referred to protection services by Red Cross volunteers. In **Gabon**, a training of trainers was facilitated by the Central African Police Chiefs' Committee (CAPCCO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and GIZ, with a focus on protection-sensitive entry measures in a context of mixed flows. A roundtable was also organised by UNHCR and UNODC to finalise and endorse new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and a screening form to be used by immigration services to support the identification and referral of people on the move with protection needs. Along the route connecting Gabon to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees met with local defense and security forces to raise

KEY RESULTS

260 first-contact entry officials were trained on protection in a context of mixed movements, resulting in the referral to local protection services of 1,800 persons on the move. Efforts to communicate with communities on the move and host communities on protection risks en route and alternatives to risky onward movements reached over 32,000 persons



In Niger, UNHCR partners with CIAUD to monitor mixed movements using community-based monitors. © UNHCR Niger

awareness on mixed movements and launch a joint communication platform facilitating information-sharing and guidance dissemination. In Niamey, **Niger**, 180 persons on the move were referred to protection services by community-based monitors. In parallel, UNHCR supported a training on the national asylum framework and related protection obligations, including in a context of mixed flows, for members of the defense and security forces, magistrates and human rights defenders. In the Diffa region bordering Chad and Nigeria and affected by insecurity in the context of the Lake Chad Basin situation, the capacities of local authorities and defense and security forces in N'Guigmi were reinforced on refugee protection. In **Nigeria**, 50 persons at risk of trafficking, including internally displaced persons and refugees, were identified and referred to protection services. In parallel, 300 Anti-Human Trafficking community structures, led by refugee and community leaders as well as government officials, were trained to increase victim referral in Cross River State, where more than 50,000 Cameroonians are forcibly displaced. In Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States, hosting 2 million internally displaced persons, identified victims were offered referral to specialized services, including psychosocial counselling.

Communication with communities

In Chad, community-based Red Cross volunteers reached 30,000 persons on the move and in areas of transit. © Croix Rouge Tchad

By providing access to accurate and up-to-date information on protection risks *en route* and alternatives to risky onward movements, communication with communities allows persons on the move to make informed decisions. Over the reporting period, **c**ommunication activities reached over 32,000 persons.

In **Chad**, community-based Red Cross volunteers reached 30,000 persons on the move and in areas of transit. In Cross River State, **Nigeria**, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking (NAPTIP), the National Commission for Refugees Migrants And Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), UNHCR, Caritas, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Nigerian Red Cross Society facilitated a dialogue with refugees and host communities in Bakoko on gender-based violence, trafficking in persons and referral pathways to protection services. Reaching over 2,000 persons, a similar session was held for secondary school students under the lead of UNHCR, in collaboration with NAPTIP and Caritas. On the occasion of the *16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence*, some 20 Anti-Human Trafficking clubs facilitated public debates in Cross River and Edo States, highlighting the linkages between gender-based violence and trafficking in persons.

In Nigeria, a community dialogue session was facilitated on gender-based violence and trafficking in persons Edo State, a key region of origin of trafficking, including to Europe. © UNHCR Nigeria

Coordination

Considering the diversity of profiles within mixed flows and cross-regional dynamics, coordination with a wide range of stakeholders is essential.

In December, UNHCR **Senegal** participated in the celebration of World Migrant Day in Dakar, in the presence of a hundred of stakeholders. In the context of a regional Learning Program on Trafficking in Persons and Aggravated Smuggling, 20 UNHCR colleagues based across seven operations in West and Central Africa came together in **Dakar** to share knowledge and good practices on the prevention of trafficking and aggravated smuggling as well as on victim identification and case management. The workshop was also an opportunity to strengthen coordination internally between Operations as well as with key partners including UNODC and Save the Children.

In the context of the Euro-African Dialogue on migration, asylum and development (Rabat Process), ministers and high-level representatives of the partner countries and organisations met in Cadiz, **Spain**, for the 6th Ministerial to adopt the Dialogue's new multi-annual action plan, promoting, inter alia, responsibility-sharing and cooperation between States.

In Dakar, UNHCR colleagues based across seven Operations participated in a training workshop on trafficking in persons. © UNHCR MCO Senegal

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