



A REGION ON THE MOVE

MOBILITY TRENDS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

JANUARY — DECEMBER 2021



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The UN Migration Agency



RDH

IOM REGIONAL DATA HUB

West and Central Africa

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FOREWORD

West and Central Africa is at a turning point. As the COVID-19 pandemic's health and socioeconomic impacts continue to beset the region, as humanitarian crises and political volatility across the region threaten to expand and spill over, and as environmental risks present unforeseen challenges for the region, the necessity to develop programmes and policies based on a strong evidence base to address the many tests facing West and Central Africa becomes ever more pressing.

In 2021, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) published an institution-wide Migration Data Strategy (MDS), designed to strengthen the evidence base on migration; develop data capacity of States and regional and continental organizations; and secure greater engagement across the United Nations to link migration data to programmes and policies. IOM is convinced of the vital importance of producing quality, reliable and timely data to promote humane, orderly and legal migration pathways, build peace and security and secure durable development.

The 2021 edition of the *A Region on the Move* report is a follow-up to the widely praised first edition of the report and responds directly to the MDS's vision of enhancing the visibility, availability and accessibility of migration data. Building on the 2020 report, this report contributes to strengthening the evidence base around migration in West and Central Africa. By providing a detailed overview of mobility patterns and trends in West and Central Africa over the course of the year 2021, it aims to enrich understanding of regional mobility and inform governments' and partners' efforts to produce tailored evidence-based migration programmes and policies benefitting people on the move.



Christopher Gascon

IOM West and Central Africa Regional Director
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HIGHLIGHTS

Mobility is a key characteristic of West and Central Africa, embedded in its historical, social, economic, cultural and political fabric. Overwhelmingly intraregional, mobility also involves close links with other regions, spurred by West and Central Africa's strategic location and a rich history of extra regional exchange and trade. Regional migration in the region is triggered by a combination of factors, including socio-economic drivers and seasonal and livelihood factors; persistent insecurity and conflict; climate variability and deteriorating environmental conditions; and public health emergencies. In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact mobility in the region, as the socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, the loosening of mobility restriction measures and the reopening of borders prompted large increases in migration flows, both intraregional and to Europe. Other key mobility trends witnessed in 2021 included the deterioration of several humanitarian crises and the expansion of forced displacement in the region, an increase in migrants deaths and disappearances along migration routes, growing numbers of forced returns from North African countries and an increase in migration linked to the discovery of gold mining sites and growing insecurity throughout the region.

1. COVID-19 IMPACTS ON MOBILITY

Forced displacement and displaced populations

Vaccination of forcibly displaced people faces substantial hurdles, and COVID-19 vaccines are frequently unevenly distributed and displaced people left out of vaccination campaigns. This is rooted in a number of factors: displaced populations are often not included in national vaccination plans, a by-factor of the pre-existing marginalization of displaced people. At the same time, limited supply and the fact that comparatively few vaccine doses reach low-income countries, which host the largest numbers of IDPs. To this should be added, vaccine hesitancy, misinformation, lack of trust in authorities, and pre-existing social ostracism, all of which contribute to low vaccination rates amongst displaced populations.

As a consequence of governments lifting measures implemented by governments to limit the spread of COVID-19 and the resumption of the humanitarian supply chain, access of IDPs to services and assistance significantly improved in 2021. DTM assessments in Nigeria's North East found that only 7 per cent of sites hosting IDPs experienced disruptions in basic services, compared to 56 per cent at the height of the COVID-19 crisis in June 2020. This figure stood at 30 per cent in Nigeria's North West & North Central Zones. Similarly, in Cameroon, basic services were either unavailable or shut down in 25 per cent of locations assessed by DTM, compared to 45 per cent in June 2020.

Migration flows and migrant populations

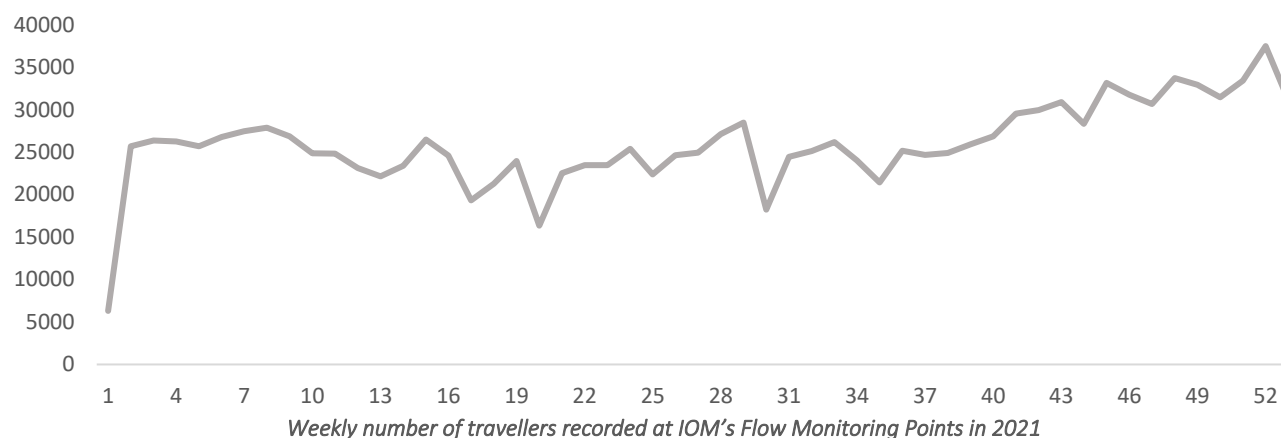


The rate of vaccination of displaced populations in West and Central Africa is staggeringly low

HIGHLIGHTS

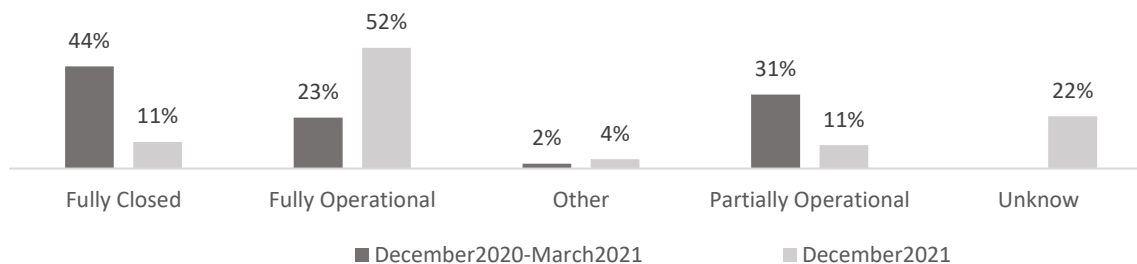
After travel disruptions, restrictions and bans in West and Central Africa, in conjunction with other measures taken by governments to stem the spread of COVID-19, resulted in significant shifts in mobility across the region and significantly curtailed regional migration flows in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had the opposite effect in 2021, prompting a growth in migration flows throughout the region. Analysis of flows recorded at IOM DTM Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs) active throughout the period shows that observed movements increased by 13 per cent between 2020 and 2021, from 1.5 million travellers recorded in 2020 to 1.7 million movements witnessed in 2021.

This growth may be explained by multiple factors: after being unable to travel as a result of border closures and mobility restrictions adopted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and having to delay planned travels, migrants were eager to move, triggering the continued expansion in migration flows observed since COVID-19 restrictions were eased in the second half of 2020. Another reason behind this growth are the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, which have led large numbers of individuals to migrate in search of economic opportunities. The consequences of the COVID-19 crisis on economic, business and livelihood conditions of populations throughout West and Central Africa have pushed large numbers of people into extreme poverty, prompting them to leave and migrate in search of economic and livelihood opportunities.



Governments began easing and lifting mobility restriction measures from July 2020 onwards, most notably easing restrictions in internal travel and reopening airports. As of December 2021, the number of PoEs fully open to traffic had grown to 52 per cent of assessed PoEs, while 10 per cent were partially open. Nevertheless, land borders were still officially closed in a number of countries (including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Congo), and some countries continued to impose restrictions on air travel⁸¹. 12 per cent of assessed PoEs remained closed as of 31 December 2021.

Regional flows grew by 13 per cent between 2020 and 2021 as a result of a post-COVID-19 'boom' in mobility



Operational status of Points of Entry in West and Central Africa in December 2020 and December 2021

The pandemic continued to affect migrants' lives and livelihoods: 63 per cent of migrants interviewed by IOM indicated having faced challenges because of the COVID-19 crisis. The economic fallout of the crisis led to loss of income and the inability to continue income generating activities because of reduced livelihood opportunities and the closure of businesses; the inability to send and receive remittances; restricted access to basic services and goods (as migrants reported not being able to afford food, education fees, or housing). The impact of the COVID-19 crisis is confirmed by a survey conducted by IOM Niger, which found that 99 per cent of surveyed households experienced a negative change in well-being since the advent of the COVID-19 crisis, including a reduction of household food spending and consumption (32%); reduced economic well-being (24%); and limited access to healthcare (16%) and education (12%)

Finally, the COVID-19 crisis could lead to future emigration, as the crisis's economic impact pushes more people into poverty, forcing them to migrate in search of economic and livelihood opportunities.

2. FORCED DISPLACEMENT

The West and Central Africa region was home to 8.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 1.5 million refugees and asylum-seekers as of December 2021, mainly generated by five sub-regional situations:

Lake Chad Basin

As of 31 December 2021, the Lake Chad Basin (Chad's Lac Province, Cameroon's Far North Region, Niger's Diffa Region and Nigeria's North East Zone) hosted 3,012,282 IDPs, 301,504 Refugees, 1,939,661 Former IDP Returnees and 231,607 Returnees from abroad.

In 2021, Volatile security conditions, frequent attacks on security forces, civilians and humanitarian workers and intensifying conflict, abuses and other violations generated significant displacement of populations. Over the course of the year 2020, the total affected population in the Lake Chad Basin Crisis (LCBC) grew by 7 per cent, from 5,131,525 to 5,485,054 individuals. Over 157,000 additional persons were internally displaced between January and December 2021 (an increase of 4 per cent in the number of IDPs), topping the three million mark. The rising



8.2 million internally displaced persons reside in the West and Central Africa region

HIGHLIGHTS

number of internally displaced is a result of the multiplication of attacks by insurgent groups. Indeed, the vast majority of IDPs continued to be displaced by the armed conflict and insurgency.

A major trend observed in 2021 in the Lake Chad Basin Crisis was the advent of large-scale community conflicts in the Logone-Birni *commune* of Cameroon in August and December 2021. Deadly clashes between communities generated the displacement of 50,000 IDPs in Cameroon as well as an estimated 44,000 refugees to Chad.

COUNTRY	INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT FIGURE	SOURCE	TREND 2020
CAMEROON	377,877	DTM	+17%
CHAD	381,289	DTM	+13%
NIGER	81,464	GOV OF NIGER	-21%
NIGERIA	2,171,652	DTM	+7%
TOTAL	3,012,282		+11%

Number of IDPs in the Lake Chad Basin, as of December 2021

Central Sahel and Liptako Gourma

As of 31 December 2020, the Central Sahel, and in particular the Liptako Gourma region, the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and Western Niger hosted close to three million affected individuals (2,998,271), including 2,070,375 IDPs, 184,584 Refugees and 743,312 Returnees (including 659,005 former IDP Returnees and 84,307 Returnees from abroad). This represents a 47 per cent increase from the number of affected individuals a year earlier (1,619,863). The number of internally displaced grew by 33 per cent (up from 831,706),

The crisis affecting Central Sahel escalated sharply in 2021, the result of the proliferation of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) and militias, inter- and intra- communal conflicts, and the multiplication of human rights abuses in the region. Close to 70 per cent of IDPs are found in Burkina Faso, showcasing the fact that the country has become the epicentre of the crisis over the past two years. Mali, on the other hand, while remaining fragile, witnessed subsiding in fighting between NSAGs and a reduction in military operations. As a result, Mali was the only country in the subregion that saw a decrease in conflict-related deaths in 2021.

One of the major risks presented by the Central Sahel crisis is that of spilling over into southern coastal countries, particularly Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo and Ghana. These four countries saw an eight-fold increase of violent attacks since 2015 and a twenty-fold increase of IDPs over the same period.

COUNTRY	INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT FIGURE	SOURCE	TREND 2020
BURKINA FASO	1,579,976	CONASUR	+47%
MALI	350,110	DTM	+5%

**The Lake Chad Basin
hosts 3 million IDPs**

**The Central
Sahel/Liptako Gourma
hosts 2.1 million IDPs**

HIGHLIGHTS

NIGER	140,289	GOV OF NIGER	+1%
TOTAL	2,070,375		+33%

Number of IDPs in Central Sahel, as of December 2021

Central African Republic

A total of 691,791 internally displaced, in addition to 747,621 Refugees, 1,339,514 Former IDP Returnees and 362,788 Returnees from abroad were recorded in the Central African Republic (CAR) as of December 2021. After witnessing a relative stabilization in 2020, largely attributed to the Khartoum Agreement, which helped fashion a framework for a ceasefire between parties to the conflict, security conditions, and subsequent displacement, worsened in 2021, with the number of IDPs growing by 10 per cent over the course of the year (from 631,00 in November 2020). However, internal displacement in the Central African Republic witnessed significant fluctuations over the course of the year 2021.

The year began with the country witnessing an unparalleled wave of violence in the context of the Presidential and legislative elections which were held on 27 December 2020. Following this surge in violence, CAR security and defence forces launched an offensive against Non-State Armed Groups, taking a number of cities which had been controlled by rebel groups, spawning a stabilization of security situations in several areas in the country and a notable decrease in displacement in several of the countries' regions. Nevertheless, operations by security forces to counter the offensive by rebel groups, intense fighting between armed groups, attacks against civilians, abuses by armed groups both State affiliated and Non-State, and inter-community fighting particularly between herders and farmers which represented significant destabilizing factors, led to mass displacements in 2021 in other regions.

COUNTRY	INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT FIGURE	SOURCE	TREND 2020
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	691,791	CMP	+10%

Number of IDPs in the Central African Republic, as of December 2021

North West/North Central Nigeria

The crisis in Nigeria's North West and North Central Zones deteriorated significantly in 2021, as a result of steep increases in criminal acts by bandits, kidnappings for ransom, lootings, attacks by armed groups on villages, community clashes, in addition to natural hazards and environmental factors such as devastating floods, fire outbreaks and the climate crisis. As of 31 December 2021, the crisis affecting the two regions affected a total of 917,538 individuals, including 999,611 IDPs (983,701 IDPs in Nigeria's North West and North Central Zones as well as 15,910 IDPs in Niger's Maradi Region) and 68,622 Refugees.

The number of IDPs in North West and North Central Nigeria thus witnessed a 34 per cent growth in 2021. Attacks, banditry and communal clashes continues throughout 2021. The number of IDPs in Niger, on the other hand, saw a 15 per cent decrease over the course of the year (down from 18,636 in December 2020).

The Central African Republic hosts 690,000 IDPs

1 million IDPs are displaced by the crisis

HIGHLIGHTS

A novel trend observed in 2021 is the displacement of Nigerian refugees to Tahoua region in Niger, the number of which amounted to 11,500 in December 2021, adding to the 57,000 refugees residing in Maradi.

COUNTRY	INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT FIGURE	SOURCE	TREND 2020
NIGERIA	983,701	DTM	+35%
NIGER	15,910	GOV OF NIGER	-15%
TOTAL	999,611		+34%

Number of IDPs in Nigeria's North West/North Central Zones and Niger's Maradi Region, as of December 2021

North West/South West Cameroon

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as of 31 December 2021, over one million individuals are currently displaced by the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon, including 575,507 IDPs (present in the North West, South West, Littoral, West, Center and Adamaoua regions), 337,061 Former IDP Returnees, 46,535 Returnees from abroad and 63,697 Refugees in neighbouring Nigeria were displaced by the crisis in Cameroon's Anglophone regions.

Over the course of the year, the number of IDPs decreased by 19 per cent (down from 711,056 in December 2020). This decrease in the number of displaced persons may be attributed to improved security situations in some areas of origin of IDPs, which prompted IDPs to return to their locations of origin, and discrimination of IDPs at places of displacements, leading to IDPs not wishing to be identified as IDPs. Nevertheless, abuses by all parties to the conflict, deadly conflicts, attacks on civilian infrastructure and harassment and persecution continued generate large numbers of displaced.

COUNTRY	INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT FIGURE	SOURCE	TREND 2020
CAMEROON	575,507	OCHA	-19%

Number of IDPs displaced by Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis (North West/South West Regions), as of December 2021

3. MIXED MIGRATION TRENDS

In 2021, migration flows trends in West and Central Africa were characterized by three formative events: an increase in intraregional mobility within the region (prior and following restrictions of mobility during the COVID-19 crisis); the first increase in irregular migrant arrivals in Europe since 2015; and the large volume of irregular migration movements to the Canary Islands.

Intraregional mobility

**in North West/North
Central Nigeria**

**580,000 IDPs are
displaced by the crisis
in North West/South
West Cameroon**

**Migration flows in
West and Central**

HIGHLIGHTS

In 2021, mobility patterns were also influenced by other, non-COVID-19 related factors. The magnitude of flows witnessed a substantial dip in April and May 2021, corresponding to the period during which Ramadan occurred, when populations tend to avoid travel to celebrate with their families. Flows also witnessed substantial increases in the last quarter of the year, translating the movement of seasonal labourers for agricultural and mining activities during the rainy season.

Another notable factor behind the growth in migration flows recorded in 2021 was the discovery of multiple gold mining sites, which attracted large numbers of migrant labourers from across the region. In all three countries with active IOM DTM Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs) in 2021 (Chad, Mali and Niger), exponential numbers of third-country nationals were recorded entering the country to work in artisanal mining at newly discovered gold mines.

Irregular migrant arrivals to Europe

The total number of irregular arrivals to Europe increased in 2021, when compared to 2020. In 2020, 96,076 irregular migrants arrived in Europe (both by land and by sea) and 140,618 in 2021, which reflects an increase of 46 per cent arrivals to Europe. The ranking of the countries of arrival also witnessed stark shifts in 2021. While Spain (41,861) was the main country through which irregular migrants reached Europe in 2020, it was only the second country of arrival in 2021 (50,945), behind Italy (67,477). The number of arrivals to Greece saw a 39 per cent drop between 2020 and 2021, while arrivals to Italy almost doubled, and arrivals to Spain grew by 22 per cent over the same period.

COUNTRY	2020	2021	+/-
GREECE	14,785	9,026	--39%
ITALY	34,154	67,477	+98%
SPAIN	41,861	50,945	+22%
OTHER	5,276	13,170	+150%
TOTAL	96,076	140,618	+47%

Irregular migrant arrivals in Europe in 2020 and 2021

The proportion and number of West and Central African nationals among arrivals also grew in 2021, when compared to 2020. In 2020, 20,045 West and Central African nationals arrived in Europe, representing 21 per cent of all arrivals, against 27,648 in 2021 (20%).

COUNTRY	2020 (% proportion of WCA arrivals by country)	2021 (% proportion of WCA arrivals by country)
GREECE	894 (9%)	312 (3%)
ITALY	5,322 (16%)	11,763 (17%)
SPAIN	5,473 (14%)	15,763 (31%)
OTHER	545 (10%)	180 (1%)

Africa were 13% higher than in 2020 than in 2021

The total number of irregular migrant arrivals to Europe increased by 47% between 2020 and 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TOTAL	12,174 (13%)	27,648 (21%)
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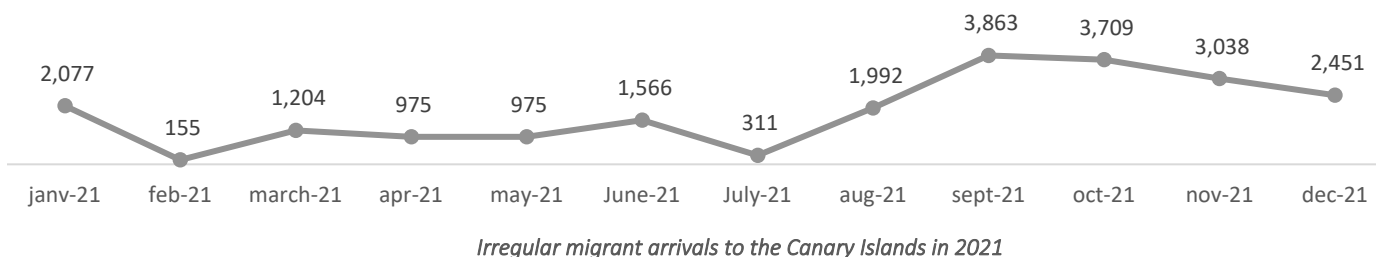
Number of irregular arrivals of migrants from West and Central Africa to Europe in 2020 and 2021, and proportion of total arrivals, by main country of arrival and year

This sharp increase of migration flows to Europe, and in particular of arrivals from West and Central African nationals, can be explained by multiple factors; stricter border surveillance, enhanced and strengthened cooperation agreements on border controls, COVID-19 mobility restrictions, decreased livelihood opportunities and incomes for potential migrants, as well as higher risks of travels.

West African Atlantic Route (WAAR)

In 2021, the use of the West African Atlantic Route (WAAR) by migrants seeking to reach Europe continued to remain at high levels. According to the Spanish Ministry of the Interior, 22,316 people landed irregularly in the Canary Islands in 2021, a slight decrease of 707 people compared to 2020 (23,023). The fourth quarter saw the biggest spike in arrivals, with exponential growth starting in August. The increase in departures along this dangerous route has been accompanied by an increase in deaths and disappearances. Eighty-two shipwrecks were recorded along the WAAR in 2021, resulting in the death of 1,176 migrants, half of whom were presumed drowned. By way of comparison, in 2020, 38 shipwrecks caused the death of 849 migrants.

22,316 individuals arrived irregularly on the Canary Islands in 2021, as compared to 23,023 individuals in 2020



Migration is an integral part of life in West and Central Africa

This report provides an overview of the main population movement trends in West and Central Africa in 2021

INTRODUCTION

Migration is an integral part of life in West and Central Africa, a long tradition embedded in its historical, economic, social and cultural fabric. The region is a pivotal area of mobility, home to strong intraregional migration and, thanks to its strategic location at the crossroads, close exchanges with other regions.

Home to an estimated population of 459 million, of which 43 per cent are under the age of 15, the region hosted 9.8 million international migrants in 2021¹. Diverse economic opportunities throughout the region, seasonal and circular movements and agropastoral transhumance spur large internal migration flows. As such, West and Central Africa is witness to some of the closest and most intense migration flows in the world and home to intricate mobility networks and routes. At the same time, inter-regional mobility involves large movements of people to and from North Africa, Europe, North America, the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa.

Because of multiple, cross-cutting and mutually reinforcing vulnerabilities, including demographic pressure; dwindling resources; economic and climate shocks and environmental degradation; long-standing communal tensions; and violent extremism, West and Central Africa is also the setting of several complex security crises which have displaced millions of people. With more than 8.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 1.5 million refugees and asylum-seekers recorded by the end of the year 2021, countries in the region continue to experience significant levels of internal and cross-border displacement.

The “A Region on the Move” report aims to provide an overview of the main population movement trends in the West and Central Africa region (WCA) in 2021. It presents regional mobility using two broad strokes: internal displacement and migration flows. In each of these sections, the report showcases the primary mobility trends, key events, and profiles of mobile populations observed in 2021. The 2021 edition of the report also includes a section exploring in detail the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on regional mobility and on migrant populations.

The analysis builds on multiple data sources, most of them directly managed and collected by IOM, with external sources used to further complement the mobility picture and provide a holistic understanding of population movement dynamics in West and Central Africa. IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), which monitors internal forced displacements, migration flows, and characteristics of populations on the move, as well as other data on migration flows, targeting specific sub-groups (such as transhumant herders, migrants departing from Senegalese coasts, or migrant stocks in Mauritania) at different stages of their migration journey, constitutes the main data source for the report. At the regional level, the Data and Research Unit was established to enhance coordination, harmonize the different data sources and foster a multi-layered analysis of regional migration data.

¹ UNDESA, *World Population Prospects 2019*, 2020.



FORCED DISPLACEMENT

ON THE MOVE: MOBILITY TRENDS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA IN 2021

FORCED DISPLACEMENT

West and Central Africa hosts one of the largest displaced populations worldwide. Conflicts, insecurity and generalized violence, violent extremism, limited government services and institutions, high levels of poverty, environmental vulnerabilities, natural disasters and climate change all contribute to high levels of displacement in the region². Displacement in West and Central Africa is complex, with multiple factors overlapping and reinforcing one another, and near-term drivers compounded by structural factors³. Thus, violent extremism may be, and often is, rooted in economic hardship, disaffection with the government, perceived grievances, or limited State institutions and authority, while conflicts surrounding the control of resources may rekindle or exacerbate underlying ethnic or religious animosity.

As of December 2021, over 8.2 million individuals were estimated to be internally displaced in West and Central Africa, while UNHCR reported that close to 1.5 million refugees were displaced by crises in the region⁴. An additional 3.8 million former IDP Returnees and over 1 million Returnees from abroad are also accounted for. The countries hosting the largest internally displaced populations (IDPs) were Nigeria (3,176,363 IDPs), Burkina Faso (1,599,976), Cameroon (963,138) and the Central African Republic (695,991 IDPs). In 2021, Burkina Faso overtook Cameroon as the country with the second-largest internally displaced population and IDP numbers in western Niger and Mali grew at a rapidly accelerating rate, reflecting the significant deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Central Sahel.

While internal displacement in countries across the region grew in 2021, with the number of IDPs increasing by 9 per cent (up from 7,545,209) since December 2020, this increase is smaller than that recorded in 2020, when the number of internally displaced grew by 32 per cent. This slowdown in the growth in internal displacement is a result of a relative stabilization of security in some regions of the Central African Republic⁵ and a decrease in the number of recorded IDPs in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Nevertheless, other humanitarian situations witnessed an escalation in violence and large increases in the number of IDPs- the North West/North Central crisis in Nigeria and the Sahel crisis.



West and Central Africa hosts 8.2 million IDPs, one of the largest displaced populations worldwide



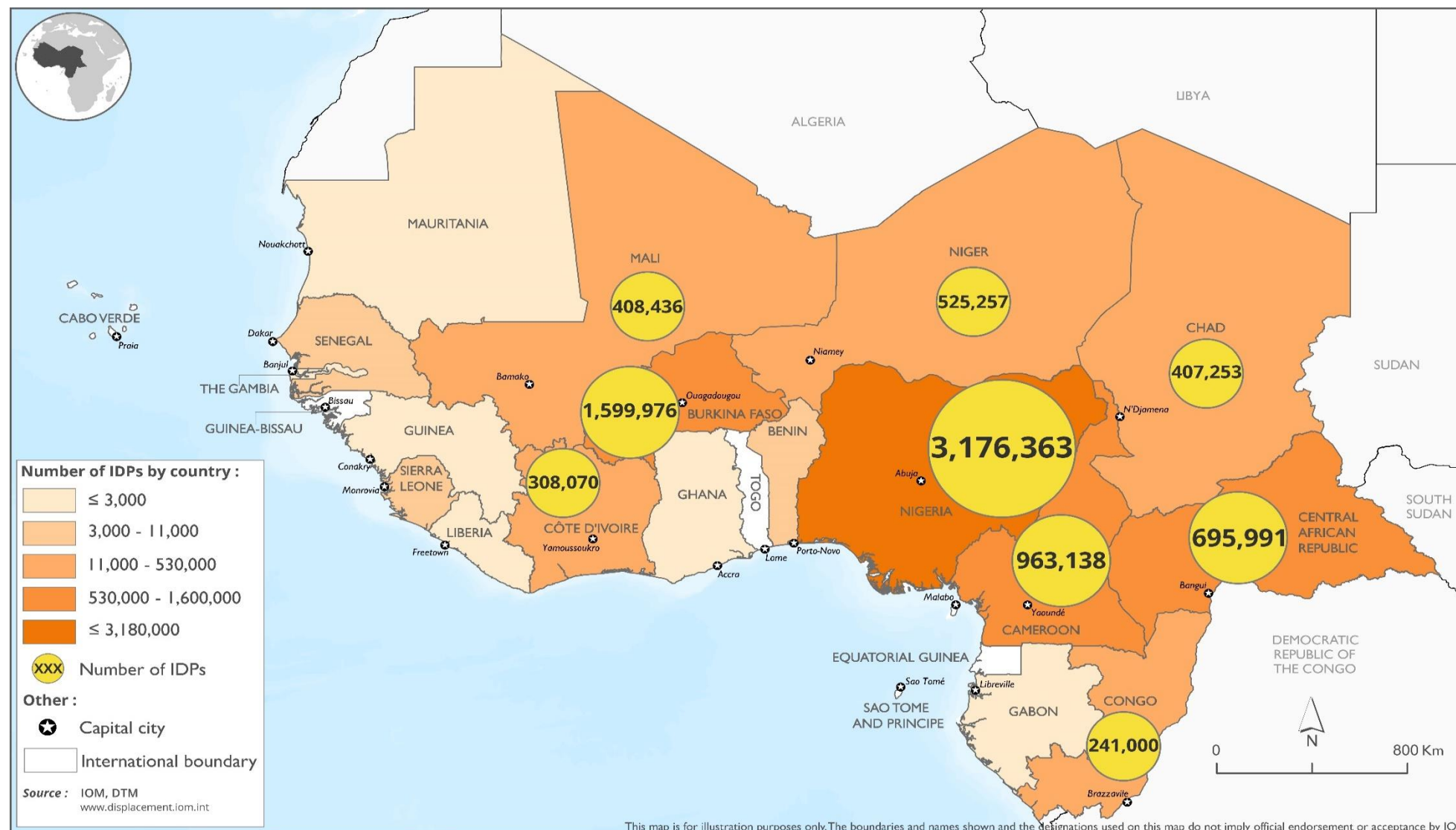
The number of IDPs grew by 9% in 2021

² Ferris, Elizabeth and Stark, Chareen, *Internal Displacement in West Africa: A Snapshot*, Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, 2012.

³ ACSS, *Shifting Borders: Africa's Displacement Crisis and Its Security Implications*, 2019.

⁴ UNHCR figures. This number includes refugees displaced by crises in West and Central Africa and does not include refugees from other regions residing in West and Central Africa, most notably Sudanese refugees in Eastern Chad and Refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Central African Republic.

⁵ DTM Central African Republic, *Rapport sur les déplacements 14 (Décembre 2021)*, March 2022.



Map 1. Number of IDPs in the 9 countries hosting the largest IDP populations in West and Central Africa, in 2021⁶

⁶ IDMC, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021*, May 2021; CONASUR, *Enregistrement des Personnes déplacées internes du Burkina Faso*, 31 December 2021; CMP, *Personnes déplacées internes en République centrafricaine*, 31 December 2021; IOM Mali, *Rapport sur les déplacements (Décembre 2021)*, February 2022; IOM Chad, *Rapport sur les déplacements 17 (Décembre 2021)*, April 2022; IOM Cameroon, *Rapport sur les déplacements 24 (Décembre 2021)*, April 2022; IOM Nigeria, *North East Displacement Report 40 (December 2021)*, March 2022; IOM Nigeria, *North West & North Central Displacement Report 8 (December 2021)*, March 2022; UNHCR Cameroon, *Statistiques des personnes relevant de la compétence du HCR*, 31 December 2021; UNHCR Niger, *Population of Concern Map*, 31 December 2021.

1. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON DISPLACED POPULATIONS

Vaccination of displaced populations

Vaccination is a key strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic, but one which can only be successful if everyone is vaccinated, including, and particularly, the most vulnerable sections of the population, which include displaced people⁷. Because displaced populations are more vulnerable and face heightened medical risks to the health effects of COVID-19⁸, the urgency of vaccinating displaced populations becomes more pressing.

Nevertheless, vaccination of forcibly displaced people faces substantial hurdles, and COVID-19 vaccines are frequently unevenly distributed and displaced people left out of vaccination campaigns⁹. This is rooted in a number of factors: displaced populations are often not included in national vaccination plans, a by-factor of the pre-existing marginalization of displaced people. At the same time, limited supply and the fact that comparatively few vaccine doses reach low-income countries, which host the largest numbers of IDPs, and despite the United Nation's COVAX programme, which aims to ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, means that few IDPs are vaccinated. To this should be added, vaccine hesitancy, misinformation, lack of trust in authorities, and pre-existing social ostracism, all of which contribute to low vaccination rates amongst displaced populations¹⁰.

Assessments conducted by IOM in North East and North Central & North West Zones in Nigeria show the degree of vaccine hesitancy amongst displaced populations: while almost all displaced persons were aware of the existence and availability of COVID-19 vaccines (93% in North East and 96% in North Central & North West), close to half of respondents indicated they would never get vaccinated (48% in North East and 45% in North Central & North West). Furthermore, the majority of IDPs (55% in North East and 52% in North Central & North West) stated not to have sufficient information to be able to make informed decisions on whether to get the vaccines¹¹.

Impact of COVID-19 on displacement and IDP populations

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the risks and vulnerabilities faced by displaced populations living in countries with some of the weakest health systems in the world. Because of their vulnerable situations, displaced populations, similarly to migrant communities, are more at risk than the general population of being adversely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis¹². Mobility restrictions and other measures imposed by countries



Vaccination of displaced persons remains extremely scarce

⁷ UNDESA, "A vaccine will not end the pandemic unless everyone gets it", 2021.

⁸ Refugees International, *COVID-19 and the Displaced: Addressing the Threat of the Novel Coronavirus in Humanitarian Emergencies*, 30 March 2020.

⁹ *The New Humanitarian*, "2021 in review: Migration and forced displacement", 22 December 2021.

¹⁰ *The New Humanitarian*, "On COVID vaccination for refugees, will the world live up to its promise?", 8 June 2021.

¹¹ IOM Nigeria, *North-central and north-west COVID-19 Situational Analysis 6 (December 2021)*, March 2022; IOM Nigeria, *North-east COVID-19 Situational Analysis 9 (December 2021)*, March 2022.

¹² Refugees International, *COVID-19 and the Displaced: Addressing the Threat of the Novel Coronavirus in Humanitarian Emergencies*, 30 March 2020.

to limit the spread of the coronavirus; unsanitary conditions in which displaced populations may live; promiscuity in displacement camps; limited access to services; and the economic impacts of the crisis have all contributed to increasing the vulnerable situations of IDPs.

Access to basic goods & services and humanitarian assistance

As a consequence of governments lifting measures implemented by governments to limit the spread of COVID-19 and the resumption of the humanitarian supply chain, access of IDPs to services and assistance significantly improved in 2021. DTM assessments in Nigeria's North East found that only 7 per cent of sites hosting IDPs experienced disruptions in basic services, compared to 56 per cent at the height of the COVID-19 crisis in June 2020¹³. This figure stood at 30 per cent in Nigeria's North West & North Central Zones¹⁴. Similarly, in Cameroon, basic services were either unavailable or shut down in 25 per cent of locations assessed by DTM, compared to 45 per cent in June 2020. The socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic have increased the prevalence of acute food insecurity amongst displaced communities. With most displaced persons unable to access social protection systems, this reduction in service delivery impacted heavily on IDPs and exacerbated their vulnerabilities¹⁵.

Nevertheless, worldwide disruptions the supply chain led to continued scarcity of goods and services and increased prices of basic goods in displacement sites. In Cameroon, DTM assessments have found that the scarcity of basic necessities and rise in the price of goods had grown in IDP sites between 2020 and 2021; in 58 per cent of locations hosting IDPs, basic necessities had become scarcer, while the prices of goods had risen in 75 per cent of locations¹⁶.

Furthermore, despite the severity of the COVID-19 epidemic and its impact on public health, medical and sanitary equipment and services have not improved much in displacement sites across West and Central Africa. Assessments conducted by IOM in the Central African Republic thus found that the hygiene situation in displacement sites was highly concerning, with only 11 per cent of sites having functional handwashing stations with sufficient soap and water¹⁷. Likewise, in Nigeria's North East and North West & North Central Zone, 91 per cent and 79 per cent of displacement sites reported not having any functioning handwashing stations, respectively¹⁸.



Access of IDPs to basic services improved in 2021

¹³ IOM Nigeria, *North-east COVID-19 Situational Analysis 9 (December 2021)*, March 2022.

¹⁴ IOM Nigeria, *North-central and north-west COVID-19 Situational Analysis 6 (December 2021)*, March 2022

¹⁵ OECD, *The impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on forcibly displaced persons in developing countries*, June 2020.

¹⁶ IOM Cameroon, *Rapport sur les déplacements 23 (7 – 18 juillet 2021)*, September 2021.

¹⁷ IOM Central African Republic, *Rapport de suivi des déplacements 14 (Décembre 2021)*, February 2022.

¹⁸ IOM Nigeria, *North-central and north-west COVID-19 Situational Analysis 6 (December 2021)*, March 2022; IOM Nigeria, *North-east COVID-19 Situational Analysis 9 (December 2021)*, March 2022.



Five regional crises represent 89% of internal displacement in West and Central Africa

2. REGIONAL CRISES

Five main regional crises beset West and Central Africa: the Lake Chad Basin Crisis, which covers North East Nigeria, Cameroon’s Far North, Diffa region in Niger and Chad’s Lac Province; the Central Sahel/Liptako Gourma crisis (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger’s Tahoua and Tillabéri regions), which is fast becoming one of the world’s worst humanitarian disasters¹⁹; the Central African Republic crisis; Nigeria’s North Central-North West crisis, which also affects Niger’s Maradi Region; and Cameroon’s North West-South West crisis, also known as the Anglophone Crisis. These five crises, which collectively have displaced 7,278,330 IDPs as of 31 December 2021, represent 89 per cent of the 8.2 million displaced individuals in West and Central Africa.

These crises all share common traits: the struggle for control over natural resources and key infrastructure; climate change and dwindling natural resources creating tensions between communities, increasing the frequency and severity of natural disasters and generating displacement; demographic growth and resulting pressure on land and natural resources; violent extremism and separatism²⁰; the exploitation of tensions between ethnic or religious communities by Non-State Armed Groups, criminal or rebel groups; and the absence of the State. The commonalities between the crises underscores the similar challenges, issues and problems common to the entire West and Central Africa region.

Furthermore, the environmental dimension is a key factor underlying these situations, which have emerged from a unique conflation of converging climate factors. Escalating tensions, insecurity and conflict are amplified by climate shocks, in a region where 80 per cent of the population depends on natural resources for their livelihoods²¹. In a region with one of the world’s highest population growth rates, environmental disasters, dwindling resources and rising food prices begotten by climate change have increased vulnerabilities, heightened tensions and fuelled new conflicts and forced migration.

These crises have led to high numbers of attacks directly targeting civilian populations and public institutions such as health facilities, community centres and schools, leading to the death of more than 5,700 civilians²² and the abduction of thousands more. This has created an unmatched protection crisis with devastating impacts on the survival, education, development and health of children²³.

Insecurity and attacks are disrupting the provision of basic social services, depriving violence-affected people and host communities of critical services. The regions affected by the five crises face alarming deterioration in food security, with chronic climatic factors impacting food

¹⁹ NRC, “A record one million displaced by violence in Burkina Faso amid COVID-19”, 18 August 2020.

²⁰ Except in Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis.

²¹ OCHA, *Overview of Humanitarian Needs and Requirements: Sahel Crisis*, May 2020.

²² ACLED, *ACLED Dashboard*

²³ OCHA, *Overview of Humanitarian Needs and Requirements: Sahel Crisis*, May 2020.

production and availability and upsurges in violence and insecurity driving chronic lack of food. It is estimated that 8 million individuals are facing crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity in the Central Sahel alone²⁴.

Several other situations in West and Central Africa region, while mostly internal and not regional in scope, have caused largescale internal and cross-border displacement, with hundreds of thousands of people displaced:

- Eastern Chad continues to host hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees displaced by the 2003 Darfur War. More recently, a new wave of violence which began in November 2021 flared in Sudan’s Darfur region, with devastating impact on civilians, forcing over 2,000 refugees to find shelter on the Chadian side of the border²⁵. As of 31 December 2021, Chad hosted 376,172 Sudanese refugees.
- Côte d’Ivoire hosts an estimated 303,000 IDPs, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). They were primarily displaced by the 2002-2007 civil war and the political and constitutional crisis which followed the 2010 Presidential elections.
- Finally, the Republic of Congo hosts 241,000 IDPs. Devastating floods in recent years have displaced over 100,000 individuals, with floods growing more destructive each year. An addition 140,000 people were displaced following violent clashes between rebel forces and the army.²⁶

²⁴ OCHA, *Overview of Humanitarian Needs and Requirements: Sahel Crisis*, May 2020.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch, “Sudan: New Wave of Attacks in Darfur”, 14 December 2021; UNHCR, “Darfur clashes displace thousands”, 7 December 2021.

²⁶ OCHA, Center for Humanitarian Data, “Making sense of displacement data in the Republic of Congo”, 2017.

**CAMEROON**

377,877 IDPs

+17% (2020-2021)

CHAD

381,289 IDPs

+13% (2020-2021)

NIGER

81,464 IDPs

-21% (2020-2021)

NIGERIA

2,171,652 IDPs

+7% (2020-2021)

TOTAL

3,068,417 IDPs

+4% (2020-2021)

2. REGIONAL CRISES**LAKE CHAD BASIN CRISIS**

The Lake Chad Basin, which is composed of North East Geopolitical Zone in Nigeria, Lac Province in Chad, Far North Region in Cameroon and Diffa Region in Niger, has been facing an insurgency by Boko Haram and deriving Non-States Armed Groups - in 2016, Boko Haram split between two factions (Islamic State West Africa Province, or ISWAP, and Boko Haram) - since 2009, first affecting North-East Nigeria before spreading in 2014-2015 to neighbouring Cameroon (Far North Region), Chad (Lac Province) and Niger (Diffa Region). The insurgency by these groups generates high levels of violence, marked by brutal campaigns of attacks on civilians and defence forces and violent counterinsurgencies by security forces, and has led to mass displacements of population.

In addition to the insurgency, the Lake Chad Basin is affected by several threat multipliers, factors which exacerbate existing risks and feed into the conflict, while their impact are themselves compounded by the crisis. Climate variability, which includes unpredictable rainfall patterns, flooding, drought and landslides, is a significant contributor to the crisis: in addition to displacing large, and growing, numbers of people, climatic events aggravate existing fragilities and foster instability and insecurity; at the same time, the conflict contributes to environmental degradation, livelihood insecurity and increased poverty, undermining the ability to adapt to and heightening vulnerabilities in the face of climate change²⁷. The Lake Chad Basin is also characterized by communal conflicts, as tensions between communities deepened and new fractures emerged in the context of the crisis affecting the region.

Evolution of crisis over reporting period

COUNTRY	INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT FIGURE	TREND 2020
CAMEROON	377,877	+17%
CHAD	381,289	+13%
NIGER	81,464	-21%
NIGERIA	2,171,652	+7%
TOTAL	3,012,282	+4%

Table 1. Number of IDPs in the Lake Chad Basin, as of December 2021 ²⁸

²⁷ ADELPHI, *Climate-Fragility Profile: Lake Chad Basin*, 2018.

²⁸ IOM Chad, *Rapport sur les déplacements 17 (Décembre 2021)*, April 2022 ; IOM Cameroon, *Rapport sur les déplacements 22 (Décembre 2021)*, April 2022 ; IOM Nigeria, *North East Displacement Report 40 (December 2021)*, March 2021 ; UNHCR Niger, *Population of Concern Map*, 31 December 2021.



The number of IDPs in the Lake Chad Basin grew by 4% in 2021



Inter-community conflicts in Far North Cameroon marked a turning point in the crisis

As of 31 December 2021, the Lake Chad Basin hosted 3,012,282 IDPs, 301,504 Refugees, 1,939,661 Former IDP Returnees and 231,607 Returnees from abroad. Over three-quarters of the affected population (75%, representing 4,131,210 individuals) were located in Nigeria, while 11 per cent resided in Cameroon (628,918 individuals), 9 per cent in Chad (488,798 individuals) and 4 per cent in Niger (246,932 individuals)²⁹. In 2019-2021, the crisis affecting the Lake Chad Basin worsened markedly, after witnessing a relatively positive evolution between 2016 and 2018. Volatile security conditions, frequent attacks on security forces, civilians and humanitarian workers and intensifying conflict, abuses and other violations generated significant displacement of populations. As a result, over 157,000 additional persons were internally displaced between January and December 2021 (an increase of 4 per cent in the number of IDPs), topping the three million mark. The rising number of internally displaced is a result of the multiplication of attacks by insurgent groups. Indeed, the vast majority of IDPs continued to be displaced by the armed conflict and insurgency: this was the case for 99 per cent of IDPs in Chad, 83 per cent of IDPs in Cameroon,

A major trend observed in 2021 in the Lake Chad Basin Crisis was the advent of large-scale community conflicts in the Logone-Birni *commune* of Cameroon in August and December 2021. Deadly clashes between communities generated the displacement of 50,000 IDPs in Cameroon as well as an estimated 44,000 refugees to Chad³⁰. IOM data shows that communal clashes were behind 45 per cent of displacement movements in 2021 in Far North Cameroon, compared to 10 per cent in previous periods. These community conflicts thus open a new chapter in the Lake Chad Basin Crisis, one which may mark a turning point in the crisis.

Furthermore, a growing number of individuals were displaced by natural hazards such as flooding, drought and fire outbreaks, which in recent years have grown in intensity and frequency³¹. In Cameroon, for instance, 10 per cent of displacements which occurred in 2021, and 10 per cent of displacements in 2020, were caused by climatic events³². Throughout the Lake Chad Basin, 4 per cent of all IDPs were displaced by natural disasters, compared to 1 per cent in 2016.

The crisis has evolved differently in affected countries. While the numbers of IDPs in Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria grew by 17 per cent, 13 per cent and 7 per cent over the year, a result of intensifying attacks by Non-State Armed Groups, military operations, growing communal tensions and more frequent and more intense natural hazards, the number of IDPs decreased in Niger's Diffa region, which follows 7 per cent drop in Niger's Diffa Region witnessed in 2020.

Displacement in the Lake Chad Basin is not only internal. Since the crisis started in 2009, hundreds of thousands of Nigerians fled the violence to seek refuge in the three other countries of the Lake Chad Basin. As of 31 December 2021, there were 301,504 Nigerian Refugees in Niger (129,835), Cameroon (116,564) and Chad (55,105). When compared to January 2020, the number of refugees increased by 17 per cent, an exemplar of the deterioration in security in North East Nigeria and beyond.

²⁹ IOM, *Lake Chad Basin Crisis Monthly Dashboard 42*, 28 March 2022.

³⁰ UNHCR, *Tchad : Afflux de réfugiés camerounais au 2 février 2022*, February 2022.

³¹ OCHA, *Aperçu des besoins humanitaires au Tchad 2022*, March 2022

³² IOM Cameroon, *Rapport sur les déplacements 24 (Décembre 2021)*, April 2022.



Returns of formerly displaced persons to their location of origin grew by 11% in 2021

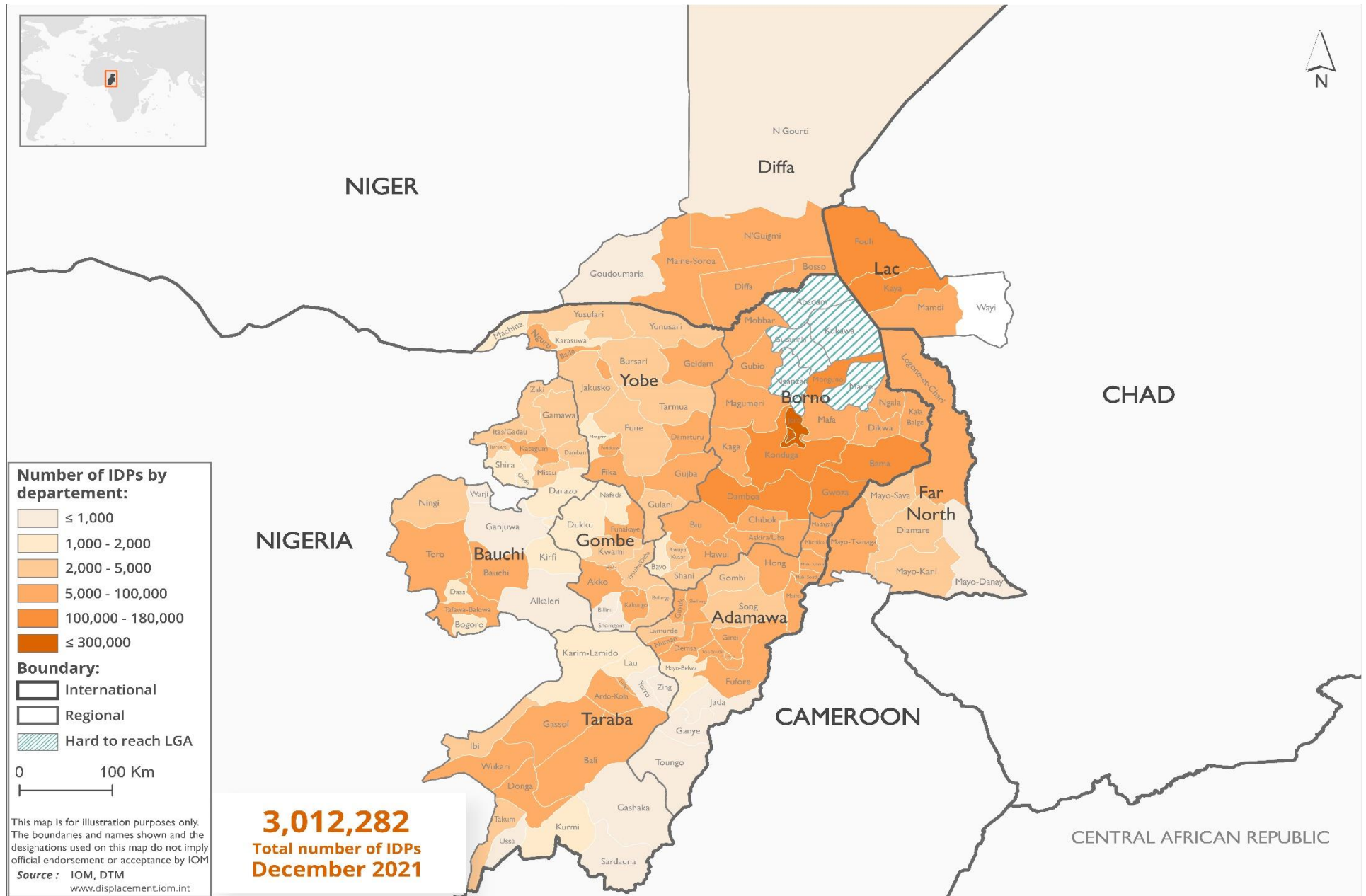
Despite continued insecurity and displacement across the Lake Chad Basin, returns of formerly displaced persons to their location of origin, a phenomenon which has been continuously observed since the implementation of DTM return assessments, continued in 2021, with the number of returnees increasing by 11 per cent over the year (from 1,961,955 to 2,171,268). Plans by the government to close IDP camps, resettle and promote the return of IDPs in North East Nigeria³³, the stabilization of several ‘pockets of stability’ in the region, combined with the reduction in available assistance and services and worsening living conditions in displacement locations, are behind the increase in returns observed in the region. However, despite growing returns in certain areas, the overall perception of security and, consequently, the intentions of IDPs to return to their areas of origin, remained low in 2021. This is exemplified by surveys conducted with displaced households in Cameroon and Chad, which showed that in 2021, only 25 per cent and 9 per cent of IDP households reported the wish to leave³⁴. Indeed, in both contexts, the primary reason preventing the return of displaced households was insecurity, fear of attacks in the area of origin and a sense of security in the displacement location.



Displaced women in Diffa, Niger © IOM/Natalie Oren 2022.

³³ OCHA, [Nigeria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022](#), March 2022.

³⁴ IOM Chad, [Province du Lac: Enquête sur les intentions de retour 3 \(Août – Septembre 2021\)](#), November 2021 ; IOM Cameroon, [Enquête sur les intentions de retour 23 \(Novembre 2021\)](#), March 2022.



Map 2. Distribution of the internally displaced population in the Lake Chad Basin, as of December 2021

CASE STUDY 1 – MEASURING STABILITY TO IDENTIFY DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN



13% more individuals returned to their location of origin in 2021 compared to 2020.



To find durable solutions, it is critical to understand relative levels of stability.

The conflict in the Lake Chad Basin (North-East Nigeria, Far North Cameroon, Lac Province Chad and Diffa Region Niger) is one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. It has generated widespread displacement, including internally displacing 3,068,417 people, and has exacerbated social, political, economic and health crises. While new displacements continue to take place, some areas have become more stable and have seen the return of displaced persons. As of December 2021, 2.15 million individuals have returned to their location of origin in the LCB region – an increase of 13% compared to the 1.75 million individual returnees recorded in 2020.

In order to find durable solutions for internal displacement — whether through return to communities of origin, local integration, or relocation — and to prevent new displacements in the region, it is critical to understand the relative levels of stability in locations hosting returnees or displaced populations. To better measure this phenomenon and provide structured solutions, IOM launched the Stability Index (SI), to evaluate the stability of areas hosting returnees or displaced populations in the LCB. The SI seeks to understand which factors influence a location's stability, which can inform priority programmatic interventions along the humanitarian, peace and development nexus in order to strengthen the resilience and stability and prevent future forced displacements.

In practical terms, the Stability Index combines 35 key indicators crucial to stability, including measures of safety and security, livelihoods and basic services, and social cohesion. The tool can serve as an estimate of the relative stability in targeted areas in the LCB to enable governmental authorities and partners to develop better strategies, and to prioritize and plan resources in fragile, unstable areas for coherent and comprehensive interventions that link humanitarian, recovery, and stabilization approaches.

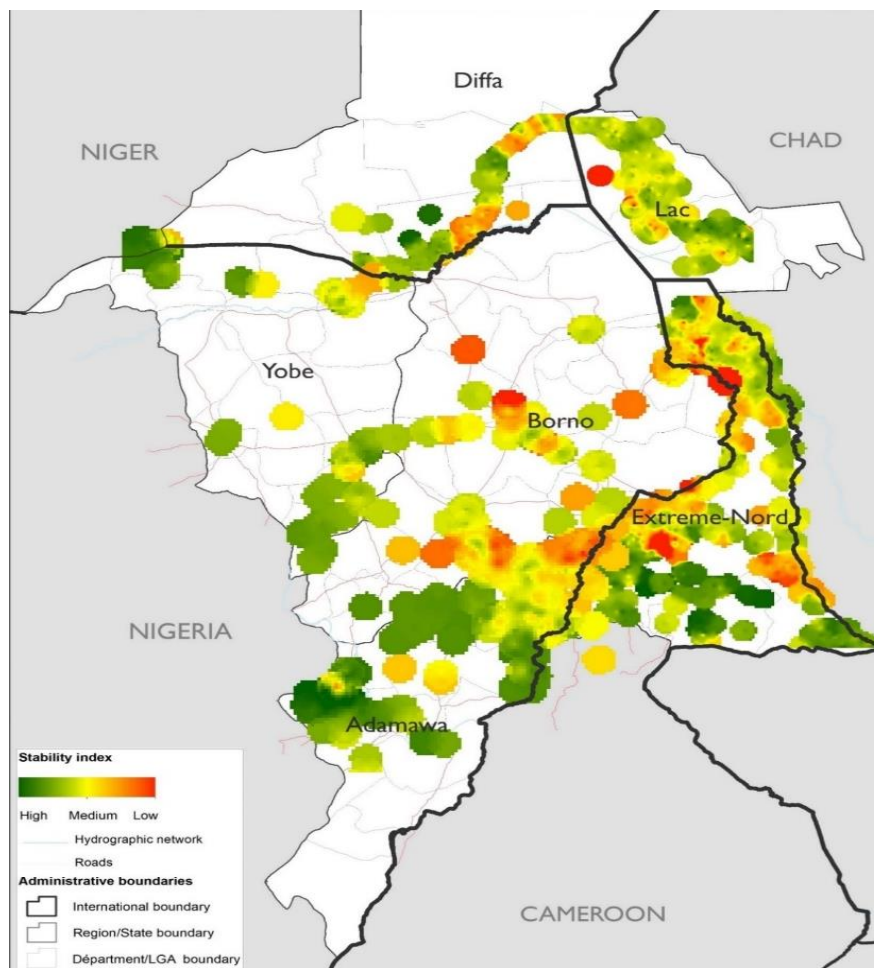
The first region-wide Stability Index assessment was carried out between March and April 2021, via interviews with key informants, including mayors, community leaders, aid workers, in 1,893 localities throughout the region. The results of the first round of the Lake Chad Basin Stability Index demonstrate the range of stability situations throughout the region, including within divisions and subdivisions. For example, in Round 1, the average Stability Score in Nigeria was 74 (*all Stability Scores range from 1, the lowest stability, to 100, the highest stability*). Adamawa State had an average Stability Score slightly higher than the country-wide average, at 76. Within Adamawa State, however, LGAs displayed a wide range of average scores between 49 in Madagali LGA, bordering Borno State, and 99 in Lamurde LGA, further south in Adamawa.

This analysis indicates that, even within the same state, villages in different LGAs may benefit from interventions along the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. For instance, in Madagali, residents face acute needs for basic humanitarian assistance. Over 80 per cent of markets are either closed or under-supplied. Less than 5 per cent of villages have electricity, and only 45 per cent have a regular water supply. In Lamurde, on the other hand, 100 per cent of the villages assessed had fully stocked markets, access to electricity, and a regular water supply. In terms of

54% of key respondents reported that residents in their village are somewhat or very worried about security.

security, 72 per cent of key informants in Madagali reported that residents were “very worried” about security, and 98 per cent of localities reported the presence of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs). In Lamurde, no key informants reported that residents were “very worried” about security, and no NSAG presence was reported.

The Stability Index facilitates the quick identification of areas of high and low stability, as in Lamurde and Madagali, to target programming and further research. SI data has already been used in Nigeria to target specific interventions for pilot projects relating to Shelter and NFI, and to identify LGAs for the analysis of durable solutions. In Cameroon, the SI has been used to prioritize areas of convergence with HDPN stakeholders. Moving forward, future rounds of Stability Index data will allow for analysis not only of geographic pockets of stability and changes over time.



Map 2.bis Stability Index scores of assessed locations in the Lake Chad Basin

2. REGIONAL CRISES

CENTRAL SAHEL/LIPTAKO GOURMA



An IOM staff member conducts a Focus Group Discussion with displaced women in Bamako, Mali © IOM/Julia Quintero 2013.

Central Sahel, which covers the countries of Mali and Burkina Faso as well as the Tahoua and Tillaberi Regions in western Niger, has been hit by a dual crisis, one that has become the fastest-growing humanitarian crisis in the world, displacing over a million people and disrupting the lives of millions more.

Northern Mali has been in the throgs of a civil crisis since 2012, when the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) launched an armed campaign against the Malian government in the north of the country, with the aim to attain independence or greater autonomy for northern Mali. After a *coup d'état* led to a political and leadership vacuum, the MNLA, and subsequently Non-State Armed Groups taking advantage of the power vacuum, gained significant territory and control of Northern Mali. Following the intervention of foreign forces and years



BURKINA FASO

1,579,976 IDPs
+47% (2020-2021)

MALI

350,110 IDPs
+5% (2020-2021)

NIGER

140,289 IDPs
+1% (2020-2021)

TOTAL

2,070,375 IDPs
+33% (2020-2021)

of conflict, a peace agreement was signed between the Government of Mali and northern rebels in Bamako in April 2015, officially ending the conflict. Despite the peace agreement, Northern Mali continues to face high levels of violence and frequent attacks by Non-State Armed Groups.

Expanding from this crisis, the Central Sahel Region has, since 2016, seen an unprecedented surge in violence, implicating violent extremism, banditry, communal conflicts, localized conflicts, erosion of people’s access to essential services and limited government services³⁵. The crisis is primarily spurred by a southward push on the part of NSAG, conflicts for the control of resources rekindled by climate factors, the absence of effective State control and communal tensions³⁶. Violence in Mali spread from the north of the country to Central Mali, which has seen a steep worsening of violence and conflict since 2015 as extremist groups expanded their spheres of influence. Meanwhile, violence soon spilled over into Burkina Faso, which witnessed a dramatic increase of attacks by NSAG, in particular Jama’a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), Islamic State Greater Sahara (ISGS), and the locally grown Ansaroul Islam, and has now become the epicenter of violence in Central Sahel³⁷. Violence soon spread to the Tahoua and Tillaberi regions in western Niger and now affects the entirety of the Liptako Gourma region.

Evolution of crisis over reporting period

The crisis affecting Central Sahel escalated sharply in 2021, with 5,720 reported fatalities³⁸, albeit affecting the three countries differently. According to ACLED, Burkina Faso has replaced Mali as the epicenter of the regional conflict. In 2021, the number of violent events in Burkina Faso doubled compared to 2020, while annual reported fatalities surpassed reported fatalities in Mali for the second time in three years. The worsening violence in Burkina Faso was largely driven by attacks by Non-State Armed Groups, which increased by more than 200 per cent in 2021 compared to 2020³⁹. Similarly, Niger’s Tahoua and Tillaberi regions saw unparalleled levels of violence, with 80 per cent of civilian deaths in 2021 directly associated with NSAG activity⁴⁰. Mali, on the other hand, while remaining fragile, witnessed subsiding in fighting between NSAGs and a reduction in military operations. As a result, Mali was the only country in the subregion that saw a decrease in conflict-related deaths in 2021⁴¹. Nevertheless, security conditions in central Mali continued to be dire and generate mass displacement⁴².

COUNTRY	INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT FIGURE	TREND 2020
BURKINA FASO	1,579,976	+47%
MALI	350,110	+5%
NIGER	140,289	+1%

³⁵ Institute for Security Studies, *Extremism and conflict in Liptako-Gourma*, 2018; OCHA, *Overview of Humanitarian Needs and Requirements: Sahel Crisis*, May 2020.

³⁶ FIDH, *Dans le centre du Mali, les populations prises au piège du terrorisme et du contre-terrorisme*, November 2018.

³⁷ The Jamestown Foundation, “Burkina Faso: Jihadists’ Ethnic Strategy”, in *Terrorism Monitor*, December 2019.

³⁸ ACLED, “The Sahel: Persistent, expanding, escalating instability”, March 2022.

³⁹ ACLED, “The Sahel: Persistent, expanding, escalating instability”, March 2022.

⁴⁰ ACLED, “Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines”, October 2021.

⁴¹ ACLED, “The Sahel: Persistent, expanding, escalating instability”, March 2022.

⁴² Mixed Migration Centre, *Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: West Africa (Quarter 4 2021)*, February 2022.



The number of violent events doubled in Burkina Faso in 2021

TOTAL	2,070,375	+33%
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*Table 2. Number of IDPs in Central Sahel, as of December 2021*⁴³

As of 31 December 2020, the region hosted close to three million affected individuals (2,998,271), including 2,070,375 IDPs, 184,584 Refugees and 743,312 Returnees (including 659,005 former IDP Returnees and 84,307 Returnees from abroad). This represents a 47 per cent increase from the number of affected individuals a year earlier (1,619,863). The number of internally displaced grew by 33 per cent (up from 831,706), and displacement trends reflected the evolution of the crisis in the three countries: while the number of IDPs grew by 1 per cent (up from 138,229) in Niger and 5 per cent (up from 332,957) in Mali, Burkina Faso witnessed an increase in IDP numbers of close to 50 per cent over the course of the year (up from 1,074,993). Over 70 per cent of IDPs are found in Burkina Faso, showcasing the fact that the country has become the epicenter of the crisis over the past two years. This sharp rise in internal displacement throughout Central Sahel is the result of the proliferation of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) and militias, inter- and intra- communal conflicts, and the multiplication of human rights abuses in the region⁴⁴. The factors are exacerbated by ancient inter-community tensions, changes in agricultural production, climate variability, demographic growth, conflicts between herders and farmers and the absence of State institutions and effective redress mechanisms⁴⁵.

Interestingly, after the number of refugees witnessed an increase of 83 per cent in 2020, growing from 96,270 to 175,835, the growth in the number of individuals seeking refuge in neighbouring countries slowed down in 2021: the number of refugees grew by 5 per cent in 2021, up from 175,835. However, the situation of refugees points to become increasingly protracted. A worsening security situation has reduced desire on the part of Malian refugees in Burkina Faso to return to Mali. Whereas some 3,500 Malian refugees in Burkina Faso expressed intentions to return in 2020, as of July 2021 only five Malian refugees were expressing such intentions⁴⁶.

In addition, and reflecting a slowdown in armed violence in parts of the country, return movements in Mali continued to grow in 2021, with the number of returnees increasing by 11 per cent (up from 666,728 in December 2020, including 582,079 former IDP Returnees and 84,649 Repatriated individuals). Return movements are primarily the result of households formerly displaced by the 2012-2015 crisis in Mali returning home.

One of the major risks presented by the Central Sahel crisis is that of spilling over into southern coastal countries, particularly Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo and Ghana. These four countries saw an eight-fold increase of violent attacks since 2015 and a twenty-fold increase of IDPs over the same period. The crisis in the Liptako Gourma has created a ripple effect, as NSAGs have expanded activities and reached areas beyond the tri-border region, consolidating their strength⁴⁷ and expanding into southern coastal countries⁴⁷.



**Burkina Faso hosts
71% of IDPs in the
Central Sahel**



**The Liptako Gourma
Crisis risks spilling over
into southern coastal
countries**

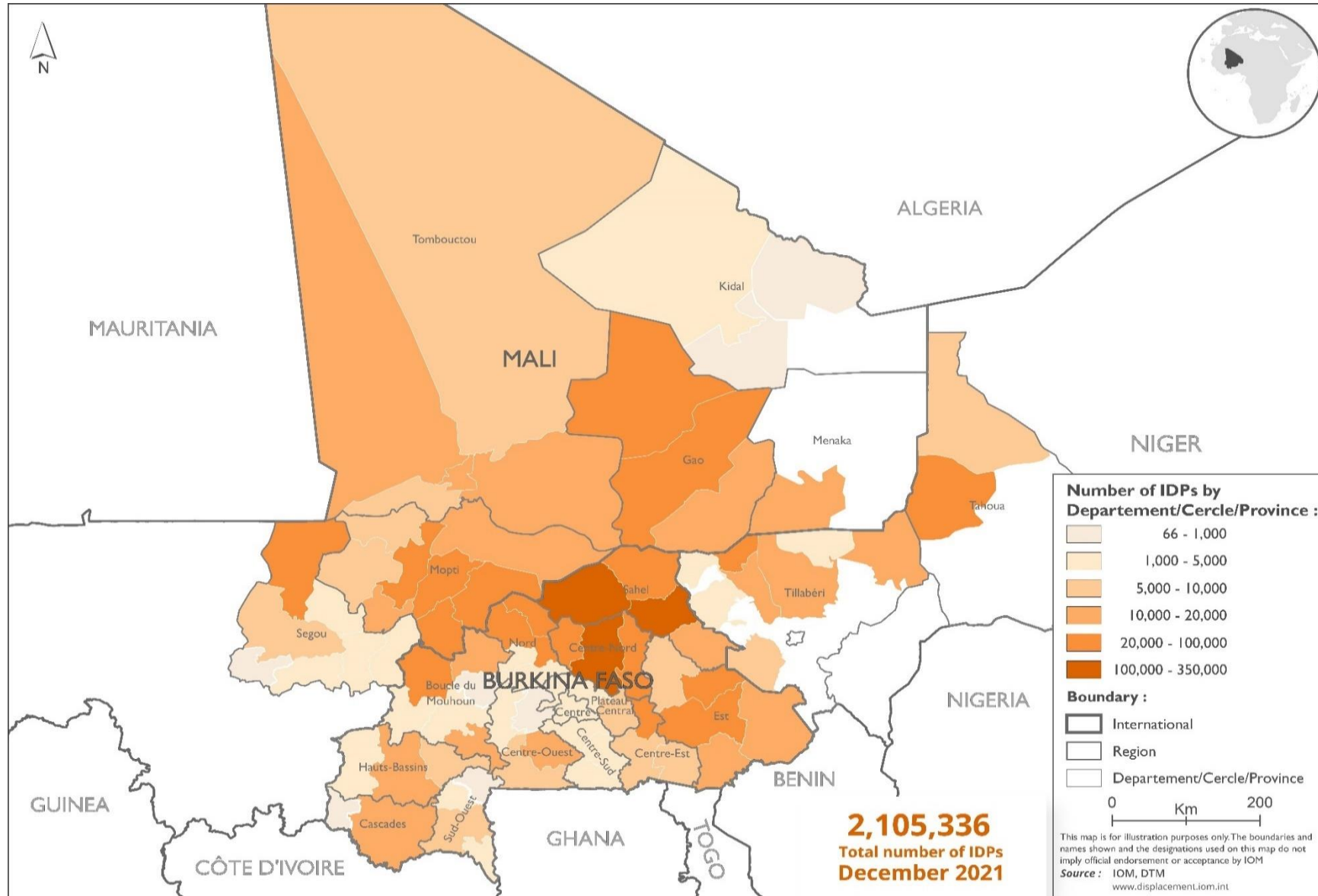
⁴³ CONASUR, *Enregistrement des Personnes déplacées internes du Burkina Faso*, 31 December 2021 ; IOM Mali, *Rapport sur les déplacements (Décembre 2021)*, February 2021; UNHCR Niger, *Population of Concern Map*, 31 December 2021.

⁴⁴ ACF, FAO, OIM, "United Nations call for urgent strengthening of the protection of civilian populations in the Sahel", 11 June 2020.

⁴⁵ FIDH, *Dans le centre du Mali, les populations prises au piège du terrorisme et du contre-terrorisme*, November 2018.

⁴⁶ Mixed Migration Centre, *Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: West Africa (Quarter 3 2021)*, November 2021.

⁴⁷ ACLED, "Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines", October 2021.



Map 3. Distribution of the internally displaced population in Central Sahel, as of December 2021

**TOTAL**

691,791 IDPs

+10% (2020-2021)

2. REGIONAL CRISES**CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

The Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced continuous volatility and recurring violent clashes for the past two decades. However, the most recent crisis in 2012-2013 has developed into an extremely complex protracted state of permanent insecurity and fragility. The crisis, which is characterized by power struggles amongst elites, the absence of state institutions and public investment, religious and ethnic tensions and contests for the control of key resources⁴⁸, first emerged as a political conflict between predominantly Muslim rebel groups, known as Séléka, and anti-balaka groups, mostly Christian opposition militias. By the end of 2014, Séléka and anti-balaka groups controlled most of the country. Despite the intervention of French and UN Peacekeeping forces, fighting spread and devolved into a crisis of generalized violence involving dozens of armed groups and the perpetration of mass atrocities. In February 2019, the government and rebel groups signed the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (*Accord Politique pour la Paix et la Reconciliation*), known as the Khartoum Agreement, to bring an end to the crisis. The conflict nevertheless continues to affect large swathes of the Central African Republic, with Non-State Armed Groups controlling most of the Central African territory and the country largely a “phantom State”⁴⁹.

In addition to the security crisis, CAR is also shaken by tensions between nomadic pastoralist herders and farmers, which have been deepening as a result of changes in transhumance routes, growing scarcity of natural resources, and antagonism between communities. Tensions between farmers and transhumant herders, which the presence of armed groups has exacerbated, regularly break out into open fighting and have displaced large numbers of individuals. Finally, natural disasters are a significant contributing factor to the crisis affecting CAR, not only because they generate displacement of significant numbers of people, but because they interact with and reinforce other dimensions of the conflict, deepening tensions and heightening vulnerabilities of populations.

Evolution of crisis over reporting period

COUNTRY	INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT FIGURE	TREND 2020
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	691,791	+10%

*Table 3. Number of IDPs in the Central African Republic, as of December 2021*⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Siradag, Abdurrahim, “Explaining the Conflict in the Central African Republic: Causes and Dynamics”, in *Epiphany*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2016.

⁴⁹ International Crisis Group, *Central African Republic: Anatomy of a Phantom State*, Report No. 136, 2007.

⁵⁰ CMP, *Situation des déplacements de populations en RCA*, 31 December 2021.



**Security conditions
and subsequent
displacement
deteriorated in 2021**

As of 31 December 2021, a total of 691,791 internally displaced, according to the Commission mouvements de populations (CMP)⁵¹, in addition to 747,621 Refugees, 1,339,514 Former IDP Returnees and 362,788 Returnees from abroad⁵². After witnessing a relative stabilization in 2020, largely attributed to the Khartoum Agreement, which helped fashion a framework for a ceasefire between parties to the conflict, security conditions, and subsequent displacement, worsened in 2021, with the number of IDPs growing by 10 per cent over the course of the year (from 631,00 in November 2020). However, internal displacement in the Central African Republic witnessed significant fluctuations over the course of the year 2021.

The year began with the country witnessing an unparalleled wave of violence in the context of the Presidential and legislative elections which were held on 27 December 2020. The escalation of violence, which pitted government and MINUSCA forces against a coalition of rebel forces and paralyzed the main corridor linking CAR to Cameroon, through which the vast majority of goods are transported⁵³, displaced over 240,000 individuals within CAR, while over 105,000 people fled to neighbouring countries, with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) hosting 90 per cent of new refugees⁵⁴. Many of the people displaced by the electoral violence have since returned home, although large fractions of people displaced by the crisis choose to remain in their displacement location out of fear of further violence⁵⁵.

Following this surge in violence, CAR security and defence forces launched an offensive against Non-State Armed Groups, taking a number of cities which had been controlled by rebel groups, notably in the Bamingui-Bangoran, Mbomou, Ouaka and Haute-Kotto *prefectures*, spawning a stabilization of security situations in several areas in the country and a notable decrease in displacement in several of the countries' regions (notably, by 39% in Bamingui-Bangoran, 31% in Mbomou and 29% in Haute-Kotto between October and December 2021)⁵⁶.

Nevertheless, operations by security forces to counter the offensive by rebel groups, intense fighting between armed groups, attacks against civilians, abuses by armed groups both State affiliated and Non-State, and inter-community fighting particularly between herders and farmers which represented significant destabilizing factors, led to mass displacements in 2021 in other regions, including Ouham Pende, Nana-Mambere, rolling back the relative stabilization of the crisis which had been observed in 2020. Return Intention Surveys (RIS) conducted in CAR found that a majority of IDPs (51%) reported the wish to remain in their displacement location⁵⁷. This indicates that pockets of insecurity throughout the country continue to witness violence and volatility.

⁵¹ There is no unified nationwide system to track displacement in the Central African Republic. Instead, several actors, including DTM, collect data on the number of displaced populations separately. The Commission sur les mouvements de populations (CMP) provides official government figures on nationwide displacement.

⁵² Returnee numbers are collected by DTM CAR through DTM Mobility Tracking activities. See IOM Central African Republic, *Rapport sur les déplacements 14 (Janvier 2022)*, March 2022.

⁵³ *Le Monde*, « Les attaques de rebelles paralysent la route qui relie le Cameroun et la république centrafricaine », 2 February 2021.

⁵⁴ OCHA, *Central African Republic Situation Report: Alarming rise in displacement across the Central African Republic*, 8 February 2021.

⁵⁵ The number of IDPs in Bangui, Mbomou and Ombella Mpoko, the regions most affected by the electoral crisis, decreased by 43 per cent, 43 per cent and 23 per cent respectively. See IOM Central African Republic, *Rapport sur les déplacements 12 (Avril – Juin 2021)*, July 2021.

⁵⁶ IOM Central African Republic, *Rapport sur les déplacements 14 (Décembre 2021)*, March 2022.

⁵⁷ IOM Central African Republic, *Enquête sur les intentions de retour (Août – Septembre 2021)*, November 2021.



The number of returnees grew by 20% in 2021



Increasing numbers of displaced persons are seeking refuge in neighbouring countries

Furthermore, continuing a trend witnessed in 2021, disaster-related displacement movements grew in 2021. DTM' Emergency Tracking Tool (ETT) identified close to 6,000 individuals displaced as a result of floods⁵⁸, while 5 per cent of all displacement identified in the country were related to flash floods and bushfires. This trend reflects the growing impact of environmental factors on internal displacement in the Central African Republic.

The aforementioned stabilisation of a number of areas in CAR and improvement of security conditions in several parts of the country is the driving force behind the increase in the number of returnees, which grew by 20 per cent in 2021 (up from 1,172,193), which follows a growth of 16 per cent witnessed in 2021. In 70 per cent of displacement hosting locations, a majority of returnees indicated that the improvement in security conditions in the location of origin was the primary factor behind their returning home⁵⁹. The prefectures of Haute-Kotto (north-east CAR), Ouham-Pende (western CAR) and Mbomou (south-east CAR), in particular, have grown increasingly stable and witness only infrequent security incidents. Together, they host over two-thirds (68%) of returnees. In addition, Return Intention Surveys show that amongst IDPs who wish to return home, 44 per cent indicate that recent improvements in security conditions in their location of origin motivate their wish to return (although, notably, eviction risks, deterioration of security conditions in the displacement location, and lack of assistance remain significant factors behind the wish to leave the current residence)⁶⁰.

The Central African Republic is a regional crisis, affecting several neighbouring countries. The spill over of the CAR crisis is reflected in the high number of refugees hosted in neighbour countries, primarily Cameroon (342,877 Refugees, or half of CAR Refugees), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (224,304 or 30 per cent of Refugees) and Chad (121,511, or 15 per cent of Refugees). Over the course of the year, the number of refugees grew by 18 per cent, up from 635,000 in January 2021. The significant increase in the number of refugees in 2021, which outpaced the increase in the number of IDPs, demonstrates, on the one hand, that border regions are those most affected by the crisis in CAR and, on the other hand, that a growing number of displaced persons are increasingly seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. This expansion of the crisis is putting significant burdens on countries hosting refugees⁶¹.

⁵⁸ See e.g. IOM Central African Republic, *Flash Info Inondations (27 Juillet 2021)*, July 2021.

⁵⁹ IOM Central African Republic, *Rapport sur les déplacements 14 (Décembre 2021)*, March 2022.

⁶⁰ IOM Central African Republic, *Enquête sur les intentions de retour (Août – Septembre 2021)*, November 2021.

⁶¹ CMP, *Situation des déplacements de populations en RCA*, 31 December 2021.

2. REGIONAL CRISES

NIGERIA (NORTH WEST/NORTH CENTRAL)

The crisis affecting Nigeria's North West and North Central geopolitical zones as well as the Maradi region in Niger, is a complex, multifaceted situation, interlocking historic ethno-social disparity; religious and communal antagonism pitting ethnic, religious and language-based communities; land-use contest; tensions between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers; territorial dispute; and banditry, grand larceny and criminal activity⁶². The crisis, which began in 2013, accelerated in 2018, with an intensification in attacks on civilian populations and violent conflicts. The increase in violence was largely the result of transhumant herders being driven south as a result of climate variability and growing scarcity of resources, as well as the expansion of farmland encroaching onto passages traditionally reserved to herds. These events, which begot growing competition over land and resources, heightened and were themselves exacerbated by other mutually reinforcing factors, including inter-community tensions and conflicts, the spread of violent extremism, cattle rustling, banditry and kidnappings, and climate induced disasters and resource degradation⁶³. These factors combined into a perfect storm, leading to spiralling violence and mass displacements.

Evolution of crisis over reporting period

COUNTRY	INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT FIGURE	TREND 2020
NIGERIA	983,701	+35%
NIGER	15,910	-15%
TOTAL	999,611	+34%

Table 4. Number of IDPs in Nigeria's North West and North Central Zones and Niger's Maradi Region, as of December 2021⁶⁴

The crisis in Nigeria's North West and North Central Zones deteriorated significantly in 2021, as a result of steep increases in criminal acts by bandits, kidnappings for ransom, lootings, attacks by armed groups on villages, community clashes, in addition to natural hazards and environmental factors such as devastating floods, fire outbreaks and the climate crisis. As of 31 December 2021, the crisis affecting the two regions affected a total of 917,538 individuals, including 999,611 IDPs (983,701 IDPs in Nigeria's North West and North Central Zones as well as 15,910 IDPs in Niger's Maradi Region) and 68,622 Refugees.



NIGERIA

983,701 IDPs

+35% (2020-2021)

NIGER

15,910 IDPs

-15% (2020-2021)

TOTAL

848,916 IDPs

+14% (2020-2021)



Displacement in Nigeria's North West/North Central grew by 34% in 2021

⁶² IOM Nigeria, *North Central & North West Displacement Report 8 (December 2021)*, January 2022.

⁶³ International Crisis Group, *Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence*, July 2018.

⁶⁴ IOM Nigeria, *North Central & North West Displacement Report 8 (December 2021)*, January 2022; UNHCR Niger, *Population of Concern Map*, 31 December 2021.

The number of IDPs in North West and North Central Nigeria thus witnessed a 34 per cent growth in 2021. Attacks, banditry and communal clashes continues throughout 2021. These events affected Katsina State most, which following waves of cattle rustling, kidnappings and acts of banditry became the State hosting the second-largest number of IDPs in the two regions. The number of IDPs in Katsina grew by 61 per cent over the course of the year, reaching 175,510 individuals. Displacement in Benue, the State hosting the largest number of IDPs, also grew significantly (by 75%, reaching 357,473 IDPs) as a result of the multiplication of community conflicts, and particularly herder-farmer conflicts.

The number of IDPs in Niger, on the other hand, saw a 15 per cent decrease over the course of the year (down from 18,636 in December 2020).

Following a trend first observed in 2020, as of December 2021, the majority of IDPs (54%) resided in North West Zone (309,231 individuals), and 46 per cent in North Central Zone (419,457), compared to 65 per cent of IDPs who were in North Central Zone in 2019. The States hosting the largest number of IDPs were Benue (28%) and Plateau (12%) States.

Reasons for displacement of IDPs remained similar to previous years, with half of displaced individuals (50%) displaced by community clashes and inter-community tensions, followed by banditry and kidnappings (41%). Over 5 per cent of IDPs were also displaced by natural disasters, a result of severe floods, fire outbreaks and sandstorms which have increasingly been affecting the region over the years.

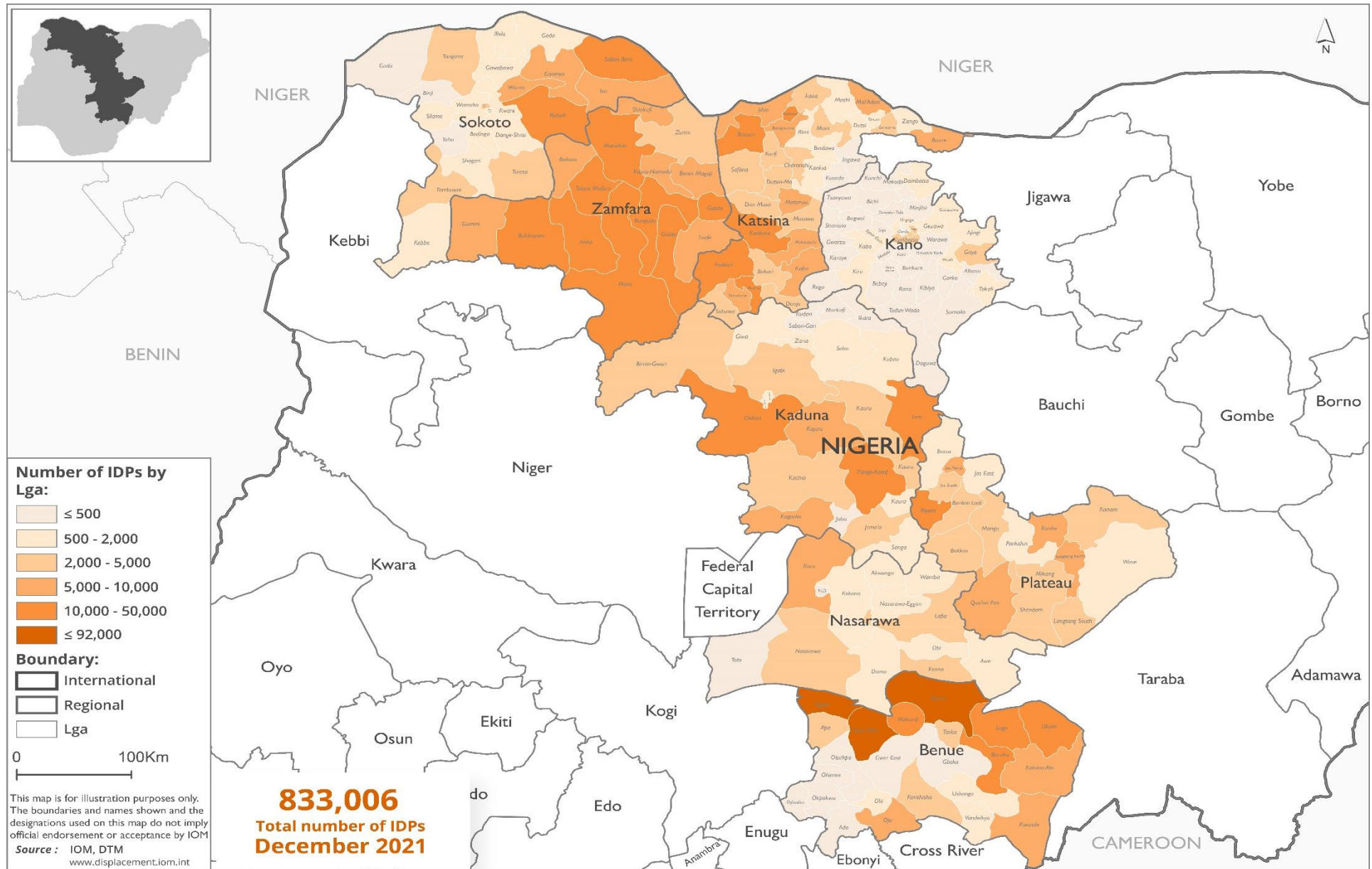
The crisis in the Middle Belt has also provoked the displacement of significant numbers of people to neighbouring Niger. Fearing attacks by armed groups, violent looting and communal clashes, dozens of thousands of Nigerians, many of them women and children, have sought refuge in Niger's Maradi Region⁶⁵. A novel trend observed in 2021 is the displacement of Nigerian refugees to Tahoua region in Niger, the number of which amounted to 11,500 in December 2021⁶⁶, adding to the 57,000 refugees residing in Maradi, and adding to the burden faced by Tahoua, a region already significantly affected by the Liptako Gourma crisis.



Attacks, acts of banditry, kidnappings and communal clashes multiplied in 2021

⁶⁵ UNHCR, [“Surging violence in Nigeria drives displacement to Niger”](#), 2 March 2021.

⁶⁶ UNHCR, [“Killings, kidnappings and looting force 11,500 Nigerians to flee to Niger”](#), 3 December 2021.



Map 5. Distribution of the internally displaced population in Nigeria's North West and North Central Zones and Niger's Maradi Region, as of December 2021

**TOTAL**

575,507 IDPs

-19% (2020-2021)



The number of IDPs displaced by Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis declined by 19% in 2021

2. REGIONAL CRISES

CAMEROON (NORTH WEST/SOUTH WEST)



IOM staff members visit communities affected by fighting in North West Cameroon © IOM Cameroon 2021.

The North West and South West regions of Cameroon have been in the grips of a crisis, known as the Anglophone Crisis since 2016, when demonstrators protested the marginalization of the Anglophone community and the growing influence of the French system and language in English-speaking regions of Cameroon. This disaffection finds its roots in post-independence Cameroon: following a referendum in 1961, the English-speaking South West and North West Regions were united with majority French-speaking Cameroon, favoured over unification with Nigeria. Since then, and particularly since the shift from a federal to a centralized system in 1972, disaffection and hostility mounted, with English-speaking Cameroonians (20% of the population) perceiving themselves as second-class citizens and anger growing over what they saw as marginalization by the French-speaking authorities⁶⁷. The peaceful protests of 2016 soon evolved into a low-scaled insurgency, with separatists calling for the independence of the English-speaking regions. By 2017, violence spread to the entire regions and the crisis evolved into a full-fledged armed conflict between separatists and Cameroonian forces. The conflict sharply escalated over the years, spurring the displacement of hundreds of thousands of individuals and killing thousands of people.

⁶⁷ International Crisis Group, *Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads*, August 2017.

Evolution of crisis over reporting period

COUNTRY	INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT FIGURE	TREND 2020
CAMEROON	575,507	-19%

Table 5. Number of IDPs displaced by Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis (North West and South West Regions), as of December 2021 ⁶⁸

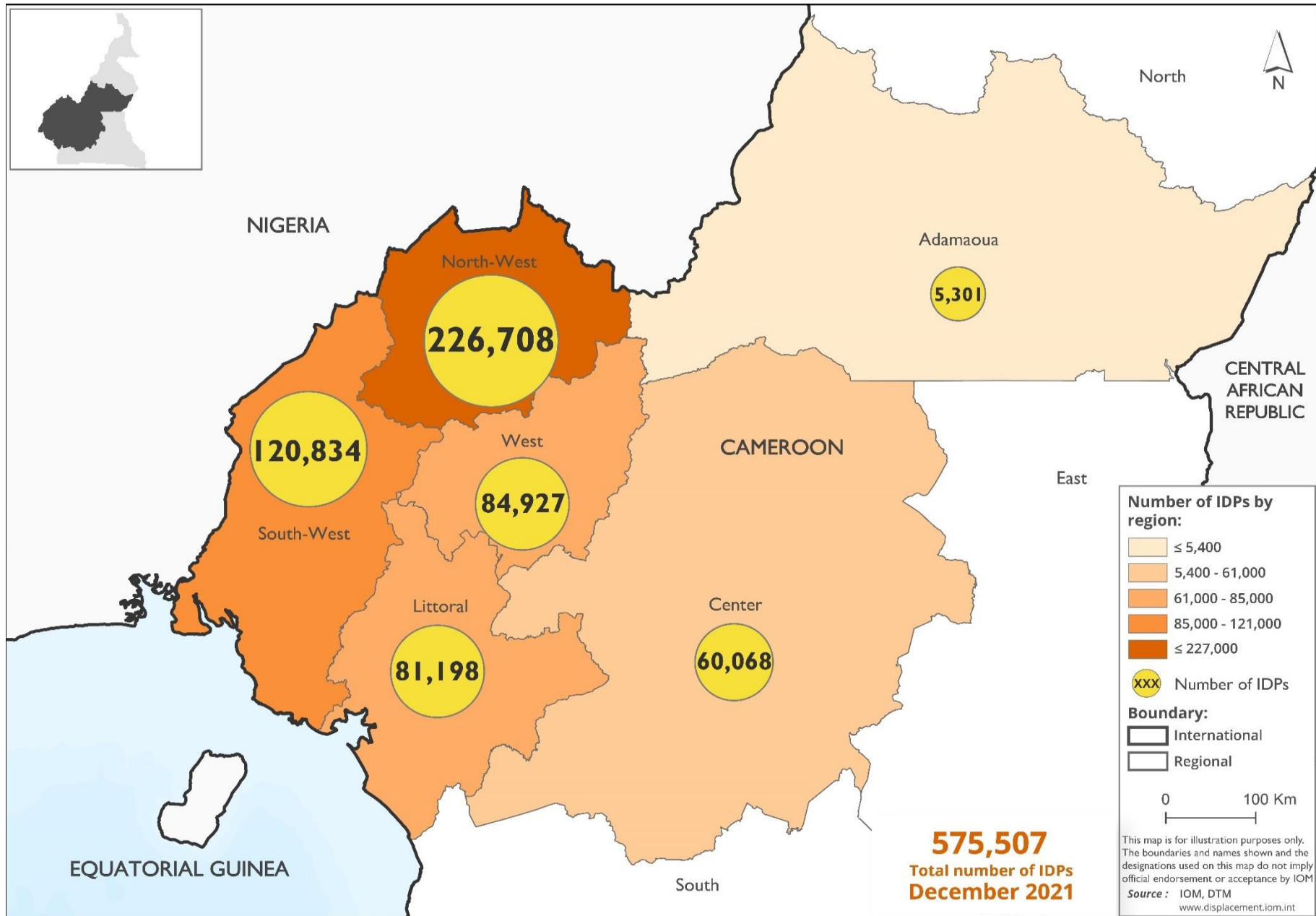
According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as of 31 December 2021, over one million individuals are currently displaced by the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon, including 575,507 IDPs (present in the North West, South West, Littoral, West, Center and Adamaoua regions), 337,061 Former IDP Returnees, 46,535 Returnees from abroad and 63,697 Refugees in neighbouring Nigeria were displaced by the crisis in Cameroon’s Anglophone regions.

Over the course of the year, the number of IDPs decreased by 19 per cent (down from 711,056 in December 2020). This decrease in the number of displaced persons may be attributed to improved security situations in some areas of origin of IDPs, which prompted IDPs to return to their locations of origin, and discrimination of IDPs at places of displacements, leading to IDPs not wishing to be identified as IDPs. Nevertheless, abuses by all parties to the conflict, deadly conflicts, attacks on civilian infrastructure and harassment and persecution continued to generate significant levels of displacement.⁶⁹

The number of Returnees, meanwhile, witnessed an increase of 12 per cent during the year (up from 383,596), reflecting the improvement of the crisis in certain areas of the Anglophone region. Of the 430,131 returnees, 54 per cent (230,902) returned for positive reasons and pull factors, including improved security, better access to farmland and access to basic services in places of origin. Thirty-six per cent of returnees (152,694), however, returned due to negative reasons and push factors, namely the lack of basic services or assistance in the displacement locations, by order of the authorities. This growth is also at least partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic: as the government adopted preventive measures to limit the spread of the virus, including the shutdown of businesses and school closures, large numbers of IDPs and Refugees returned to their location of origin from displacement locations in the West, Littoral and Centre Regions of Cameroon and Cross River State in Nigeria. Most returned to their location of displacement once classes resumed and businesses reopened.

⁶⁸ UNHCR Cameroon, *Statistiques des personnes relevant de la compétence du HCR*, 31 December 2021.

⁶⁹ *Foreign Policy*, “Cameroon’s Forgotten Civil War is Getting Worse”, 2 December 2021.



Map 6. Distribution of the internally displaced population displaced by Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis (North West and South West Regions), as of December 2021



MIGRATION

A REGION ON THE MOVE: MOBILITY TRENDS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA IN 2021

MIGRATION

West and Central Africa is a region of high mobility and intricate networks of migration flows. Migration is historically, culturally and sociologically rooted in the region, and is one of its defining characteristics⁷⁰. Migration both internal and inter-regional is a long-standing tradition in the region⁷¹. West and Central Africa hosts the largest stock of migrants in the whole African continent (9.5 million migrants): an estimated 3 per cent of the region's population are international migrants⁷².

Regional mobility is primarily intra-regional⁷³, and with the presence of several political, economic and cultural hubs, West and Central Africa witnesses large internal flows involving labour migrants, seasonal and circular movements, movements of students and family reunification⁷⁴. These movements are facilitated by visa-free movement within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC)⁷⁵ as well as strong networks among ethnic groups.

Strategically situated at the crossroads of Southern Africa, Northern Africa, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic Ocean and the Horn of Africa, West and Central Africa is also witness to large inter-regional movements. While mobility trends and migration routes taken by migrants trends constantly evolve according to shifts in national policies, economic opportunities and migration controls, the routes themselves remain relatively stable over time. Regional mobility mainly takes place along one main east–west axis and is then distributed north- and southwards through ancillary routes.

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect regional mobility, this time by spurring departures and prompting migration. Despite continued mobility restrictions and border closures, the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 crisis has led many desperate young people to leave in search of economic and livelihood opportunities. The year 2021 also saw the first increase in irregular migrant arrivals to Europe since 2015, while the number of deaths and disappearances grew during the year.



West and Central Africa hosts 9.5 million international migrants, the largest migrant stock in Africa

The socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19 crisis spurred significant numbers of migration movements in 2021

⁷⁰ Robin, Nelly, « Migrations en Afrique de l'Ouest, une longue histoire », in *Grain de Sel*, No. 40, November 2007.

⁷¹ OECD, *Identifying the factors driving West African migration*, West African Papers No. 17, July 2018.

⁷² RFI, *Les migrations en Afrique de l'Ouest*, 2019.

⁷³ An estimated 90% of migration flows are internal to the region. See IOM WCA, *Regional Mobility Mapping*, January 2022..

⁷⁴ Charriere, Floriane and Fresia, Marion, *L'Afrique de l'Ouest comme espace migratoire*, 2008.

⁷⁵ Economic Community of Central African States, *Free Movement of Persons*



Map 7. Main migration routes in West and Central Africa⁷⁶

⁷⁶ IOM WCA, *Regional Mobility Mapping*, January 2022.



As of 31 December 2021, there were over 1.1 million confirmed COVID-19 cases in West and Central Africa, representing 0.2% of worldwide cases and 10% of cases in Africa

1. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MIXED MIGRATION FLOWS

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been described as a once-in-a-lifetime global health crisis and the greatest challenge faced by the world since World War II⁷⁷. The epidemic began in December 2019, when a new, previously unknown virus, subsequently referred to as Sars-Cov-2. The virus rapidly spread to all corners of the world, leading the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a pandemic on 11 March 2020 and creating one of the worst epidemiological crises in a hundred years. As of 31 December 2021, there were over 90 million confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide, including close to 2 million deaths, according to the WHO⁷⁸.

At that same date, West and Central Africa (WCA) recorded 1,110,855 confirmed cases, representing 0.2 per cent of worldwide cases and 10 per cent of cases in Africa; in addition, 14,713 deaths linked to the coronavirus were officially reported in WCA, or 0.2 per cent of worldwide deaths and 6 per cent of deaths in Africa⁷⁹. The region witnessed its three biggest outbreaks in 2021, in March, July and December, which led to thousands of deaths, many more of which may be undocumented.

Beyond the medical and sanitary crisis wrought by the pandemic, it has also engendered an unprecedented worldwide social, economic, political, cultural and demographic crisis: as countries around the world brought their economies and activities to a standstill to prevent and fight the spread of COVID-19, imposing measures such as the shutdown of businesses, schools, restaurants and cultural spaces, the prohibition of gatherings and closure of public spaces, the socio-economic fallout cut deep and wide, and was linked to an increase in inequalities and growing fragility of the most vulnerable populations⁸⁰.

⁷⁷ UNDP, *The COVID-19 pandemic* [online] accessed 13 December 2020.

⁷⁸ WHO, *Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard* [online], accessed 5 January 2020.

⁷⁹ These figures should be considered with caution: confirmed cases and reported deaths may be largely underreported and may not reflect the true scale of cases and deaths linked to COVID-19.

⁸⁰ *The Economist*, "The plague year", 19 December 2020 – 1 January 2021; The World Bank, "2020 Year in Review: The Impact of COVID-19", 14 December 2020.



12% of all Points of Entry in West and Central Africa remained fully closed as of 31 December 2021

MOBILITY RESTRICTION MEASURES

To combat the spread of COVID-19, countries took to impose strict restrictions on mobility soon after cases were first identified in the region in March 2020. Measures included: the closure of maritime, air and land borders; restrictions on internal mobility; curfews, lockdowns and quarantining of cities or regions; states of emergencies; and mandatory isolation of travellers.

Governments began easing and lifting measures from July 2020 onwards, most notably easing restrictions in internal travel and reopening airports. As of December 2021, the number of PoEs fully open to traffic had grown to 52 per cent of assessed PoEs, while 10 per cent were partially open. Nevertheless, land borders were still officially closed in a number of countries (including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Congo), and some countries continued to impose restrictions on air travel⁸¹. 12 per cent of assessed PoEs remained closed as of 31 December 2021.

It should be noted that, although land borders continued to be shut off in several countries and that mobility restrictions and entry conditions, such as requirement of a negative COVID-19, proof of vaccination, or mandatory quarantine upon entry, remained in place in every West and Central African country, this did not seem to have an impact on mobility, as migration flows steadied and grew unabated, regardless of restrictions in place. The conclusion may therefore be reached that, while COVID-19 related conditions and restrictions continued to be implemented on paper, travellers were, in practice, still able to cross borders and move between countries with relative ease (see section [Mobility flows](#)).

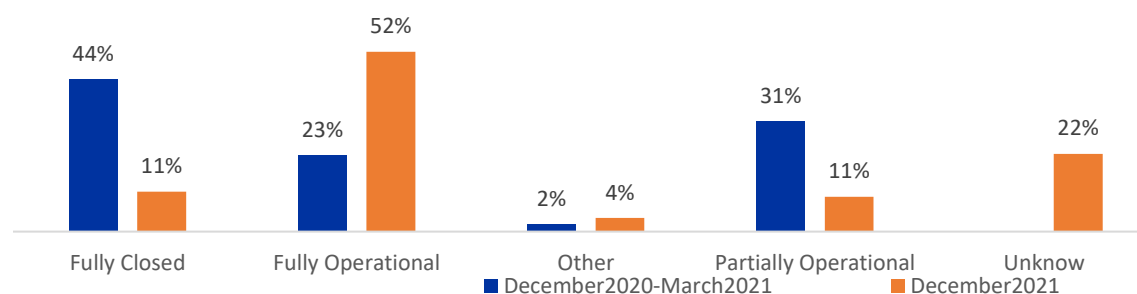
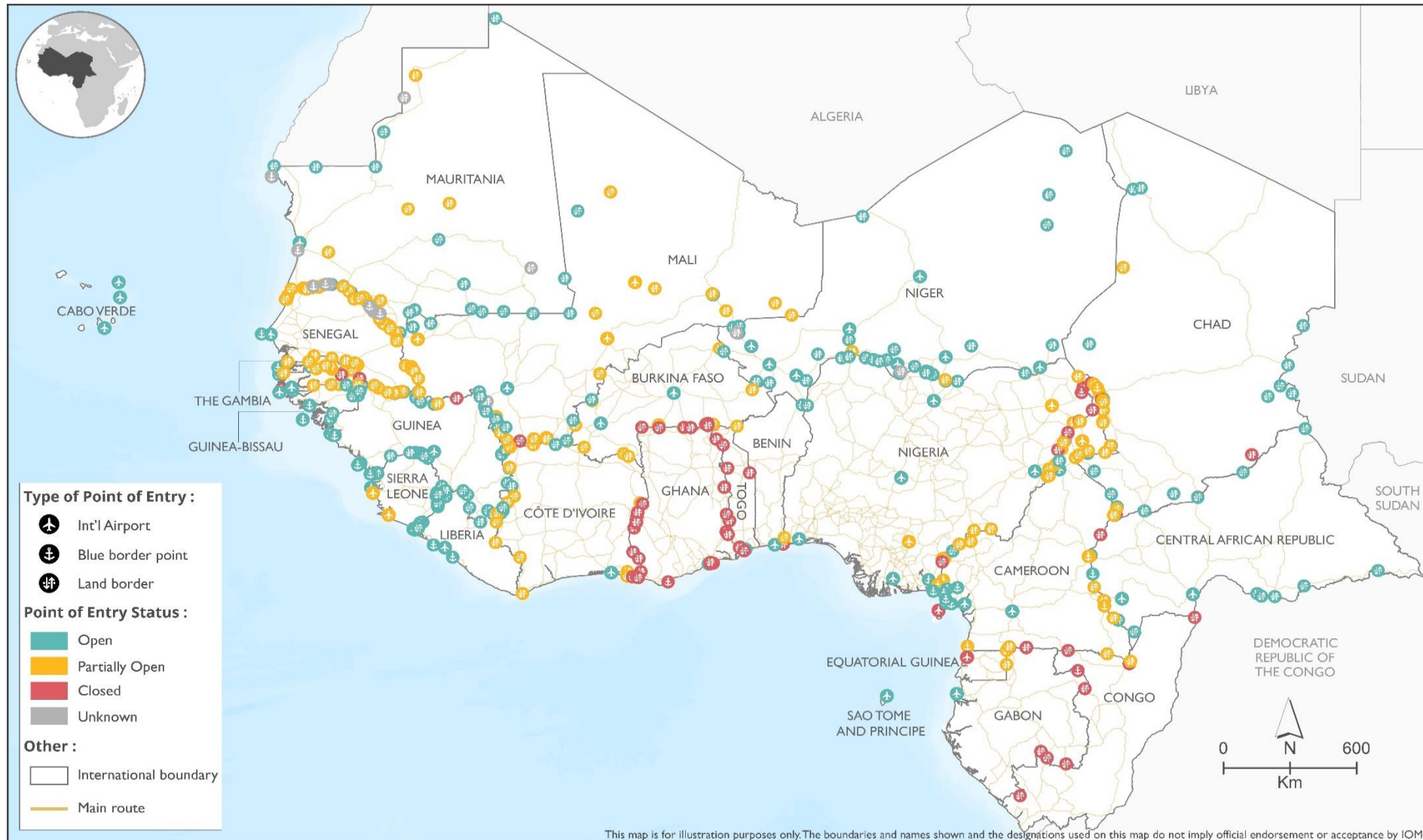


Figure 3. Operational status of Points of Entry across West and Central Africa in December 2021 and December 2020⁸²

⁸¹ Assessments conducted in December 2020 found that 44 per cent of Points of Entry in the region continued to be completely closed off to traffic. Moreover, as a second wave hit West and Central Africa, some countries re-implemented partial restrictive measures, including curfews, lockdowns and the closure of public spaces.1)

⁸² IOM WCA, *COVID-19 : Impact on Mobility Report (April 2020)*, June 2020; IOM WCA, *COVID-19: Regional Flow Monitoring Report (December 2020)*, February 2021.



Map 8. Operational status of Points of Entry in West and Central Africa, December 2021⁸³

⁸³ Data from IOM’s Mobility Restriction Monitoring (MRM) system.

MOBILITY FLOWS

After travel disruptions, restrictions and bans in West and Central Africa, in conjunction with other measures taken by governments to stem the spread of COVID-19, resulted in significant shifts in mobility across the region⁸⁴ and significantly curtailed regional migration flows in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had the opposite effect in 2021, prompting a growth in migration flows throughout the region.

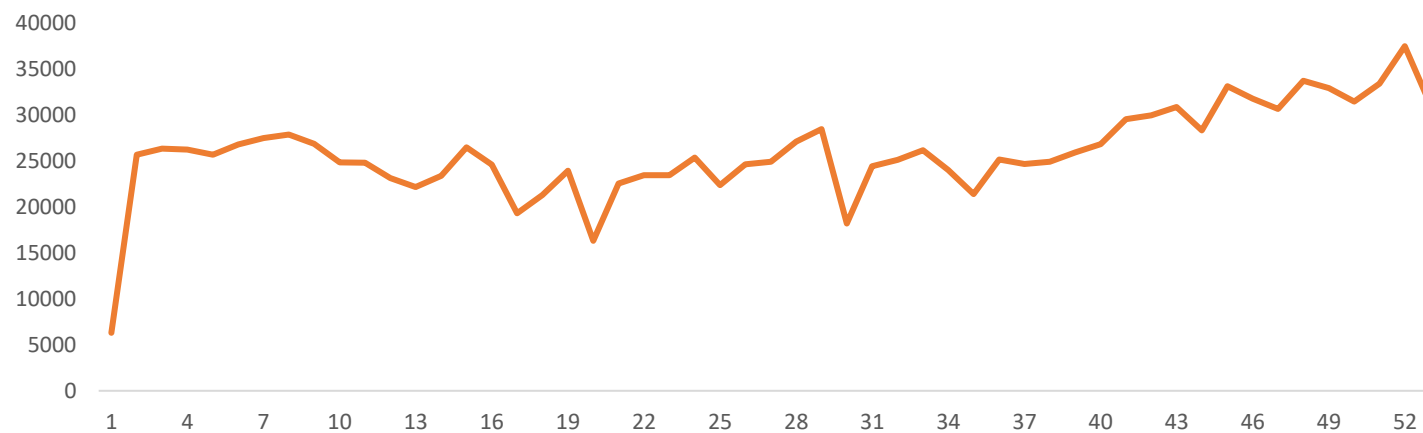


Figure 4. Weekly number of travellers recorded at IOM's Flow Monitoring Points in 2021⁸⁵

Regional migration flows increased by 13% between 2020 and 2021

Flows grew significantly in 2021, when compared to previous years. Analysis of flows recorded at IOM DTM Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs) active throughout the period shows that observed movements increased by 13 per cent between 2020 and 2021, from 1.5 million travellers recorded in 2020 to 1.7 million movements witnessed in 2021. What is more, mobility was also higher when compared to flows recorded prior to the COVID-19 pandemic: the number of movements recorded at FMPs in 2021 was 65 per cent higher when compared to that observed in 2019. This demonstrates that mobility has grown above its usual level and expanded in 2021. This growth may be explained by multiple factors: This growth may be explained in part as a rebound after COVID-19 restrictions: migrants that were unable to travel due to border closures and mobility restrictions in the initial months of the pandemic may have delayed their departures until restrictions were eased in the second half of 2020, leading to increased migration flows in 2021.

Another reason behind this growth are the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, which have led large numbers of individuals to migrate in search of economic opportunities. The consequences of the COVID-19 crisis on economic, business and livelihood conditions of populations throughout West and Central Africa have pushed large numbers of people into extreme poverty, prompting them to leave and migrate in search of economic and livelihood

⁸⁴ IOM WCA, *COVID-19 — Regional Flow Monitoring Report*, December 2020

⁸⁵ IOM DTM Flow Monitoring data. The data presents the number of travellers recorded at Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs) active in Chad, Niger and Mali for the whole of 2021.



The socio-economic fallout of the COVID-19 crisis was a driving force behind the growth

opportunities⁸⁶. Indeed, a study by the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) found that the economic fallout of the COVID-19 crisis and the resulting lack of opportunities overwhelmingly influenced migrants' decision to migrate along the Western African Atlantic Route (WAAR) to the Canary Islands⁸⁷.

As border reopened and controls loosened, the evolution of mobility trends in West and Central Africa had a direct impact on travel between West and Central Africa and other regions, most notably North Africa, and beyond. The escalation of regional migration flows in 2021 was thus reflected in increases in movements from Mali, Niger and Chad to North African countries as well as a stark growth in the number of sea arrivals to continental Europe, which grew for the first time since 2015 (see sections [Movements between West and Central Africa and North Africa](#) and [Movements from West and Central Africa to Europe](#)). A similar trend was also observed in return migration, as the number of migrants who benefited from Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) espoused regional mobility flow trends (see section [Voluntary return in the age of COVID-19](#)).



IOM staff members train community leaders on COVID-19 preventive measures in Gabù, Guinea-Bissau © IOM/Sandro Moreira 2020.

⁸⁶ IOM Mali, *Rapport trimestriel sur les flux migratoires au Mali (Octobre – Décembre 2021)*, February 2022.

⁸⁷ Mixed Migration Centre, *A Gateway re-opens: the growing popularity of the Atlantic route*, February 2022.

63% of travellers faced additional challenges because of the COVID-19 crisis

The COVID-19 crisis led to steep reductions in remittances

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MIGRANTS' LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

While mobility resumed to pre-COVID-19 levels, the COVID-19 crisis continued to affect migrants throughout the region, adversely impacting migrants' livelihoods and access to services. Indeed, a larger share of travellers (63%) interviewed by IOM throughout West and Central Africa indicated having experienced challenges because of the pandemic in 2021 than in 2020 (47%), highlighting the socioeconomic impact the crisis has had in the region, beyond its health dimensions.

CHALLENGES	% OF RESPONDENTS
No challenge	37%
Difficult continuing economic activities	17%
Accessing PPE	10%
Access to basic services	8%
Quality of food worsened	5%
Difficulty sending or receiving remittance	8%
Difficulty accessing health services	10%
Diagnosed with COVID-19 but recovered	< 1%
Acquaintance contracted COVID but recovered	<1%
Discrimination	3%
Acquaintance have died of COVID	<1%

Table 6. Challenges encountered by travellers in West and Central Africa since the start of the COVID-19 crisis^{88, 89}

Livelihoods and income

The first way by which the crisis impacted migrants was by the loss of income and the inability to continue income generating activities because of reduced livelihood opportunities and the closure of businesses which resulted from the COVID-19 crisis's economic fallout. 17 per cent of migrants interviewed by IOM throughout West and Central Africa reported having faced difficulties in continuing their economic activities.

Loss of income and a drop in activity in all sectors, both by migrants and their relatives and friends in their home communities, led to a reduction in remittances sent and received by migrants. In a study conducted by IOM in Niger, 73 per cent of interviewed households reported a reduction in the amount received through remittances since the outbreak of COVID-19, while 69 per cent of households reported a decrease in the frequency of remittances received. A quarter of households received nothing at all between Mid-March 2020 and the time of data collection⁹⁰.

⁸⁸ Multiple answers possible, except if "No challenge")

⁸⁹ IOM DTM Flow Monitoring data.

⁹⁰ IOM Niger, *The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on free movement and migration in Niger*, November 2021.



51% of migrants could no longer afford food of adequate quality as a result of decreased income or remittances

Migrants surveyed by IOM who were facing difficulties sending or receiving remittances reported that the main challenge was the closure of borders preventing them from sending or receiving money via friends or couriers (57%). The second issue related to sending or receiving remittances was the loss of income (either from the respondent or family and friends), which precluded the ability to send or receive additional funds (43%). Remittances in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) could drop to USD 25.9 billion in 2020, its lowest level in ten years⁹¹. Migrant remittances being an important source of income in many countries in the region⁹², this may have repercussions on the well-being of individuals and households and on the development of wider economies⁹³.

Access to goods and services, increased risks and discrimination

The loss of economic opportunities, remittances and income resulting from the COVID-19 crisis also affected migrants' ability to access services. Indeed, loss of income as well as increased costs has made it harder for migrants in the region to afford food, shelter, education and other basic goods⁹⁴. The crisis exacerbated migrants' personal, social, situational and structural vulnerabilities and thereby impacted migrants' access to goods and services⁹⁵. Half of migrants interviewed by MMC (49%) mentioned increased costs as barriers to access healthcare⁹⁶, while a large share of respondents surveyed by IOM who were facing challenges in sending or receiving remittance (39%) indicated that they could no longer afford food of adequate quality due to decreased incomes⁹⁷. Others reported not being able to afford rent or mortgages (19%) or continue operating a business (17%).

IMPACTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
Can no longer afford good food	39%
Can no longer afford paying for education	9%
Can no longer pay for our house	19%
Can no longer repay our loan	9%
Can no longer pay for stocks	7%
Can no longer sustain our business	17%

Table 7. Impact of decreased remittances resulting from the COVID-19 crisis on migrants in West and Central Africa⁹⁸

⁹¹ ECOWAS, *Covid-19 Pandemic: Impact of Restriction Measures in West Africa*, December 2020.

⁹² In 2019, these transfers amounted to \$ 33.7 billion for ECOWAS as a whole, or nearly 5% of the regional GDP.

⁹³ Guadagno, Lorenzo, "Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: An initial analysis", *IOM Migration Research Series No. 60*, 2020.

⁹⁴ IMREF, *Exploring the Impact of COVID-19 on the Vulnerabilities of Migrants on the Central Mediterranean Route*, July 2020.

⁹⁵ IOM, *Migration Factsheet No. 6: The impact of COVID-19 on migrants*, 2020.

⁹⁶ Mixed Migration Centre, *Quarterly Mixed Migration Report: West Africa, Quarter 3 2020*, July 2020.

⁹⁷ IOM DTM Flow Monitoring data.

⁹⁸ IOM DTM Flow Monitoring data.

The economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis may lead to future emigration

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis is confirmed by a survey conducted by IOM Niger, which found that 99 per cent of surveyed households experienced a negative change in well-being since the advent of the COVID-19 crisis, including a reduction of household food spending and consumption (32%); reduced economic well-being (24%); and limited access to healthcare (16%) and education (12%)⁹⁹.

Impact on future migration

The impact of COVID-19 on school enrolment, access to basic goods and businesses has and could further deepen poverty and inequalities and lead to further increases in migration movement. Indeed, the economic impact of COVID-19 has already generated further emigration (see Section Migration flows). A vast majority of migrants surveyed by MMC for whom the crisis was a factor in their decision to migrate (84%) mentioned the economic impact of the crisis as the primary reason for travel¹⁰⁰.

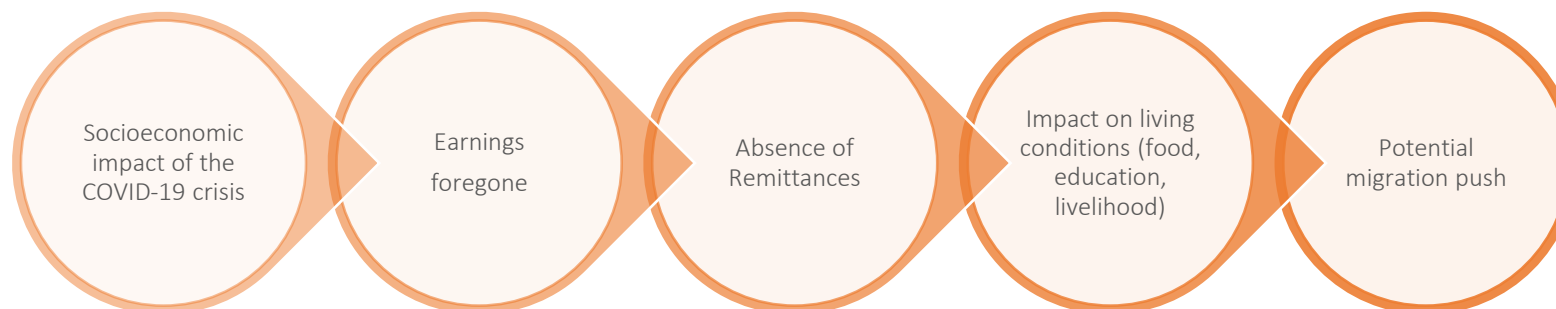


Figure 6. Impact of COVID-19 mobility restriction measures on mobility and livelihoods in West and Central Africa

⁹⁹ IOM Niger, *The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on free movement and migration in Niger*, November 2021.

¹⁰⁰ Mixed Migration Centre, *Quarterly Mixed Migration Report: West Africa, Quarter 3 2020*, July 2020.

2. INTRA-REGIONAL MIGRATION

West and Central Africa, a region with multitude of interlocking migration networks and intense mobility flows, hosts an estimated 9,803,923 migrants. This represents 3 per cent of all international migrants worldwide. The vast majority of migration flows take place within the region: 83 per cent of migration movements take place internally to the region. Côte d'Ivoire hosts the highest number of immigrants (estimated at 2.6 million individuals), followed by Nigeria (1.3 million) and Burkina Faso (724,000)^{101, 102}.

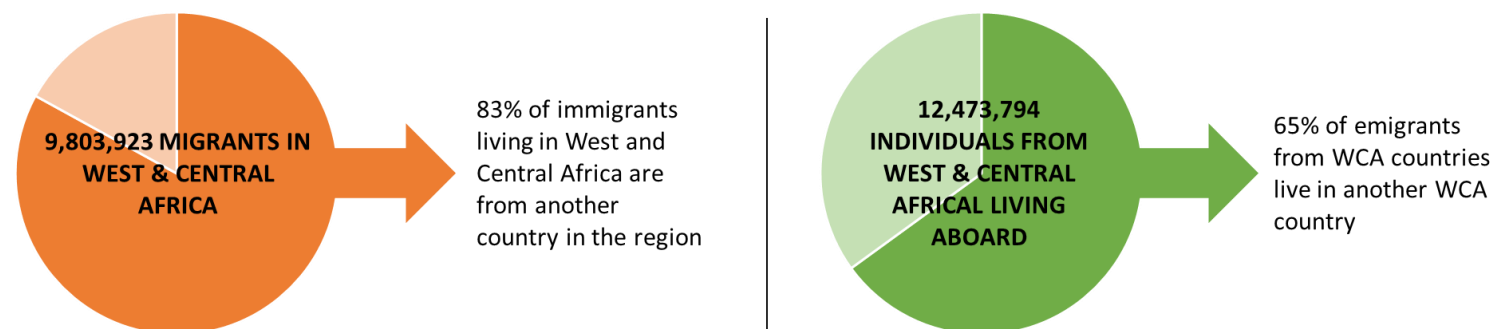


Figure 7. Immigration and Emigration in West and Central Africa ¹⁰³

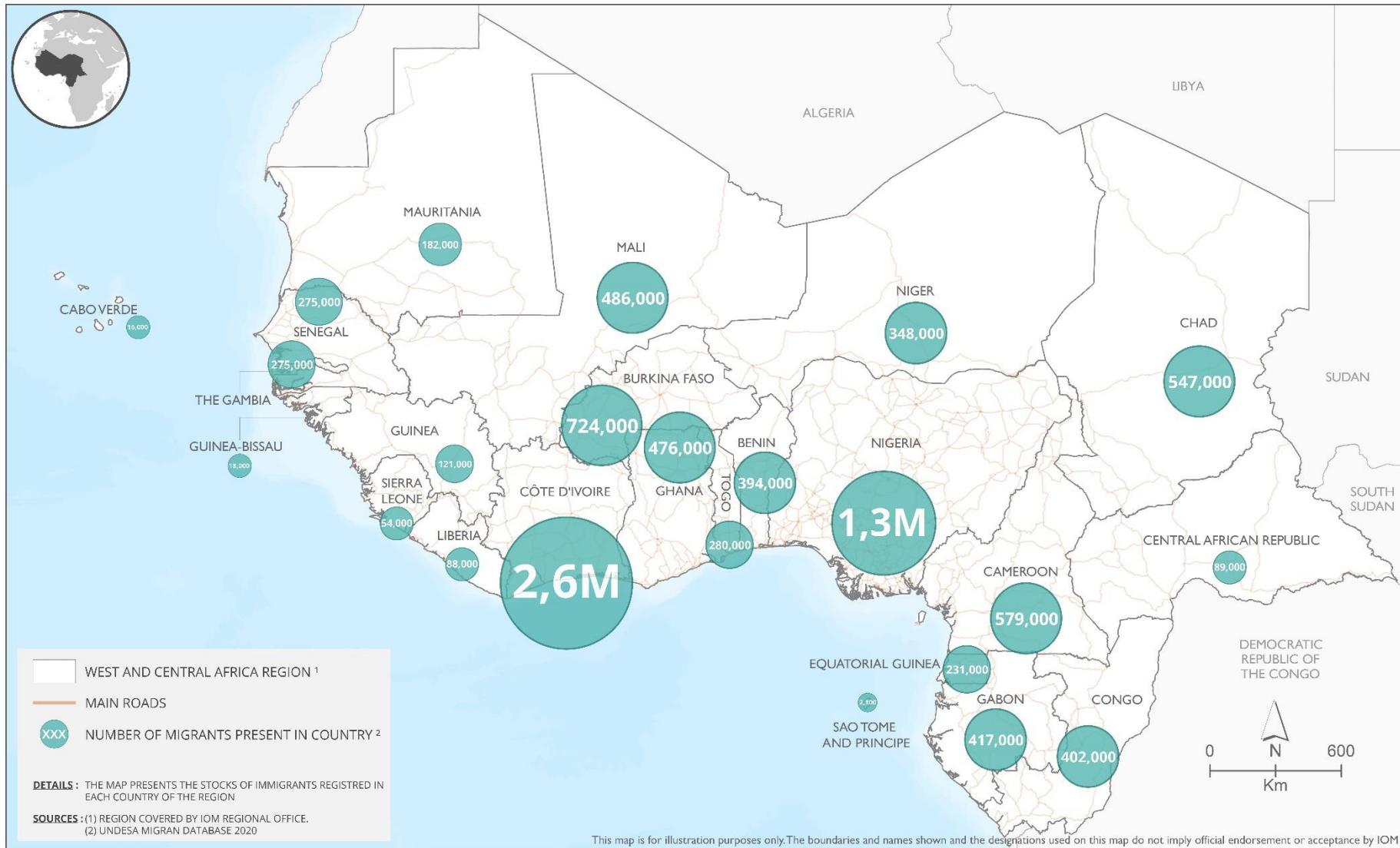
West and Central Africa is also a key region of origin of migrants: 12,473,794 migrants come from West and Central Africa, representing 4 per cent of all emigrants worldwide. Reflecting the largely internal dimension of regional migration, 65 per cent of West and Central African migrants live in another country in the region. Nigeria (1.6 million individuals), Burkina Faso (1.6 million), Mali (1.3 million) and Côte d'Ivoire (1.1 million) have the highest number of emigrants, with the vast majority residing in a neighbouring country. According to UNDESA, 66 per cent of the 12.5 million West and Central African migrants reside in another country in the region. Nevertheless, a third (34%) live in another region, primarily Europe (19%), North America (8%). North African countries also attract large numbers of migrants, where they can find employment in a wide range of sectors, including agriculture, construction, and domestic work.

→
83% of migrants in West and Central Africa come from another country in the region

¹⁰¹ UNDESA, *International Migration Highlights 2020*, 2021.

¹⁰² There are significant data deficits on movement, and accurate migration figures are difficult to ascertain. Making reliable migration data available presents a key challenge to supporting State- and regional-level decision-making. Wide and porous borders, weak capacities to register entry to and exit from national territories, as well as the nature, diversity and complexity of certain migration flows contribute to this data challenge.

¹⁰³ UNDESA, *International Migration Highlights 2020*, 2021.



Map 9. Migrant stocks in West and Central Africa, in 2021 ¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ UNDESA 2020; taken from IOM WCA, *Regional Mobility Mapping*, January 2022..

OTHER MIGRATION TRENDS

In 2021, mobility patterns were also influenced by other, non-COVID-19 related factors, witnessing characteristic ebbs and flows. These patterns coincide with seasonal periods of intensified mobility involving cross-border agropastoral movements, movements of seasonal labourers during, harvesting, mining or fishing season, the beginning and end of school terms, and religious and cultural festivities.

The magnitude of flows witnessed a substantial dip in April and May 2021, corresponding to the period during which Ramadan occurred, when populations tend to avoid travel to celebrate with their families. Flows also witnessed substantial increases in the last quarter of the year, translating the movement of seasonal labourers for agricultural and mining activities during the rainy season.

Another notable factor behind the growth in migration flows recorded in 2021 was the discovery of multiple gold mining sites, which attracted large numbers of migrant labourers from across the region. In all three countries with active IOM DTM Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs) in 2021 (Chad, Mali and Niger), exponential numbers of third-country nationals were recorded entering the country to work in artisanal mining at newly discovered gold mines¹⁰⁵.

Countries also witnessed specific mobility trends over the course of the year. In Chad, migration flows directly correlated with the security situation in northern Chad. As fighting between government forces and Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) raged in early 2021, vast movements of artisanal gold miners were observed leaving the conflict areas; as hostilities intensified, mobility came to an almost complete halt, as migrants avoided insecurity; following a cessation in hostilities, government authorities adopted strict restrictions in mobility in northern Chad, further hindering mobility in the region¹⁰⁶. Southern Chad, meanwhile, saw large movements of people fleeing insecurity in northern Central African Republic¹⁰⁷.

In Niger, the discovery of several gold mining sites in northern and southern Niger fed substantial increases in movements recorded at FMPs throughout the country. This trend is also linked to a year of poor harvest due to insufficient rainfall in some regions and flooding which destroyed crops in other region; the destruction of crops and poor harvest meant less work for labour migrants as well as increased food insecurity, triggering vast movements of migrants to northern Niger in search of opportunities on gold mines or in Algeria. Insecurity in southern Niger, meanwhile, had two notable consequences: an increase in internal migration as populations fled the region, crippled by bandit groups and communal tensions, and a decrease in cross-border flows between Niger and Nigeria as a result of increased controls along the border¹⁰⁸.

Intraregional migration witnessed characteristic ebbs and flows in 2021



The discovery of gold mining sites attracted vast numbers of migrant labourers

¹⁰⁵ IOM Mali, *Rapport trimestriel sur les flux migratoire au Mali (Janvier – Mars 2021)*, May 2021 ; IOM Niger, *Analyse d'enquêtes individuelles du suivi des flux de populations (Octobre – Décembre 2021)*, March 2022.

¹⁰⁶ IOM Chad, *Analyse d'enquêtes individuelles du suivi des flux de populations (Janvier – Mars 2021)*, May 2021 ; IOM Chad, *Analyse d'enquêtes individuelles du suivi des flux de populations (Avril – Juin 2021)*, August 2021 ; IOM Chad, *Analyse d'enquêtes individuelles du suivi des flux de populations (Octobre – Décembre 2021)*, March 2022.

¹⁰⁷ IOM Chad, *Analyse d'enquêtes individuelles du suivi des flux de populations (Octobre – Décembre 2021)*, March 2022

¹⁰⁸ IOM Niger, *Analyse d'enquêtes individuelles du suivi des flux de populations (Janvier – Mars 2021)*, May 2021 ; IOM Niger, *Analyse d'enquêtes individuelles du suivi des flux de populations (Avril – Juin 2021)*, August 2021 ; IOM Niger, *Analyse d'enquêtes individuelles du suivi des flux de populations (Octobre – Décembre 2021)*, March 2022.

TRANSHUMANCE

Transhumance, a form of pastoralism which sees herders and their livestock migrate on a seasonal basis between complementary ecological areas, from areas with scarce grazing lands and water sources to areas with more abundant pastures and water¹⁰⁹, is an historic, traditional and common practice across West and Central Africa. Indeed, transhumance is witnessed to varying degrees in every country of the region¹¹⁰, and contributes significantly to human mobility and livelihoods in the region. Transhumance pastoralism involves a very large number of individuals (20 million) and animals (70% of the region's cattle, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization¹¹¹); is one of the largest providers of meat and milk in the region¹¹²; and is also a highly productive economic activity¹¹³ upon which many populations depend for food and income.

Transhumant herders heavily rely on the openness of borders to conduct transhumance movements, highlighting the interconnectedness of mobility patterns in the region and importance of intraregional flows for the livelihoods of local communities.

In the recent years, a multitude of factors has altered the structures and patterns of transhumance mobility.¹¹⁴ An erratic climate and slow onset climate events such as desertification and irregular rainfall; demographic pressure; greater stress on land and natural resources, increasing population densities and shrinking pastoral areas and available water; insecurity and political instability and volatility; growing restrictions on cross-border movements; and policy changes have forced shifts in the seasonal routes of transhumance movements and rendered the timing of these movements more unpredictable and irregular. These events are also shifting the calendar of transhumant mobility, leading herds to travel earlier or later than expected.

In 2021, for instance, IOM and its partner Réseau Billital Maroobé (RBM) through the implementation of the Transhumance Tracking Tool¹¹⁵ were able to identify 280 early, late or massive movements of cattle which could have led to conflicts between herders and farmers in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. In a survey conducted in Mali and Mauritania between October 2021 and January 2022, 15 per cent of the transhumant herders surveyed declared to have changed their final destination since departure: availability of biomass (for 29% of the respondents) and access to water points (24%) were the most common reasons for changing route. In addition, 53 per cent of respondents changed their departure month over the past 20 years, and 44 per cent changed their arrival month over the past 20 years. Of the respondents that had changed their departure month over the past 20 years, 61 per cent changed it due to availability of biomass, and 12 per cent changed it due to access to water points.



**Transhumance
involves 70% of West
and Central Africa's
cattle**

¹⁰⁹ CIRAD, *Dictionnaire des sciences animales* [online] <http://dico-sciences-animales.cirad.fr> (accessed 30 December 2019); SWAC-OECD, *The future of livestock in the Sahel and West Africa: potentials and challenges*.

¹¹⁰ Corniaux, Christian et al., "*Cross-border livestock mobility: Challenges for West Africa*", *FAO Policy Brief*, January 2018.

¹¹¹ FAOSTAT, *Data on live animals in Western Africa* [online] (accessed 30 December 2019).

¹¹² An estimated 65% of cattle meat and 70% of milk, see SWAC-OECD, *Op. Cit.*

¹¹³ It is thought to contribute up to 15% of GDP of countries in the Sahel, see PRAPS, *Pastoral Livestock Farming in the Sahel and West Africa: Five preconceptions put to the test*, 2017.

¹¹⁴ UNOWAS, *Pastoralism and Security in West Africa and the Sahel: Towards Peaceful Coexistence*, August 2018; Corniaux et al, *Op. Cit.*

¹¹⁵ IOM, *Transhumance Infosheet*

Furthermore, climatic events such as droughts, floods and fire outbreaks, are also leading transhumant herders to adopt adaptation strategies and change their itinerary and timetable. In Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, IOM and RBM identified 63 disasters affecting transhumance in 2021, primarily bushfires, which forced herds to change their route or delay their travel. Every year, at the end of the rainy season, thousands of hectares of pastureland go up in smoke due to wildfires, leading to considerable losses of fodder, which is essential to the survival of livestock. Not only do these fires destroy pasture and constitute a direct threat to the already precarious survival of herders and their livestock, but they also affect pastoral dynamics by forcing herders to modify their routes and delay their journeys, threaten livelihoods and food security and jeopardize intercommunal peace.

Consequently, these circumstances have generated growing competition over resources. As a result, violent clashes between herders and farmers have become more frequent and have grown significantly in scale¹¹⁶, at times leading to population displacement. In 2021, IOM in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger recorded 1,291 agro-pastoralist conflicts and inter community tensions.

The year 2021 was marked by a late start of the rainy season¹¹⁷ and the unpredictability of mobility conditions in certain areas or countries.¹¹⁸ As mentioned above, the concentration and movements of cattle depend on the availability of natural resources, but also on security risks that persist or even intensify in regions such as the Liptako Gourma or in the Lake Chad Basin region. Increasingly, there is a tendency for herders to avoid these highly insecure areas and choose to stay in coastal countries with possible diplomatic tensions when the latter decide unilaterally to close their borders to transhumant herders. Several areas experienced unusual movements of animals at the end of 2021, in particular: (i) an early departure of Senegalese transhumant herders from the North to the South; (ii) a massive arrival of Mauritanian herds in transit in the Podor department in Senegal, before returning to the interior of Ferlo; and (iii) an early departure of Nigerian transhumant herds from the Tillabéry region to the Sahel region of Burkina Faso.¹¹⁹



Climate events are increasingly affecting transhumance patterns



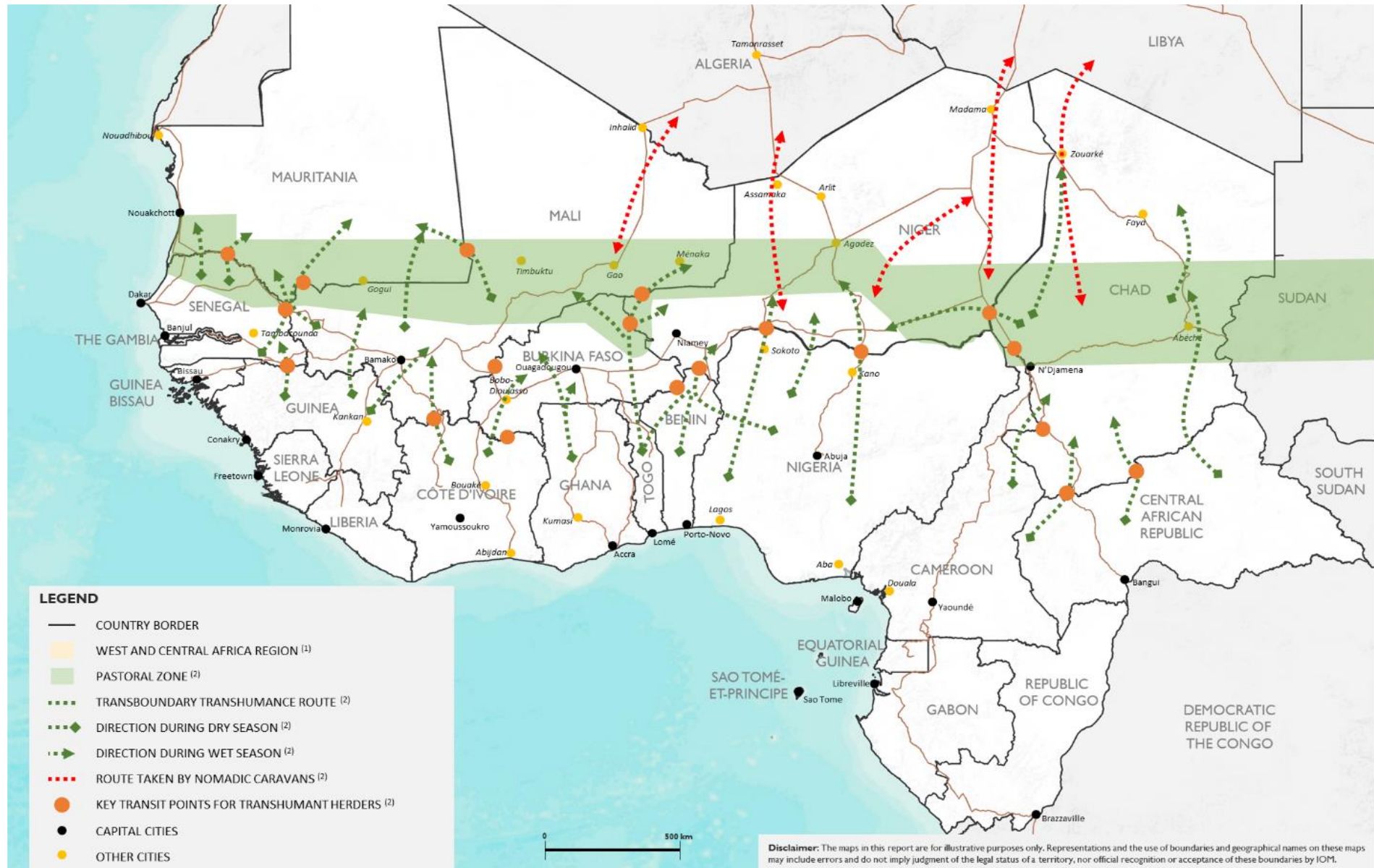
1,291 agro-pastoralist conflicts were recorded in 2021

¹¹⁶ ECOWAS, “Finding lasting solutions to resolve conflicts between farmers and herders in West Africa”, April 26, 2018; Human Rights Watch, “Farmer-Herder Conflicts on the Rise in West Africa”, 6 August 2018.

¹¹⁷ <https://www.maroobe.com/images/DOCS/Bulletin%20bimestriel%20sur%20la%20veille%20informatif%20et%20l'impact%20du%20covid%2019%20sur%20les%20menages%20pastoraux%20et%20agropastoraux%20-%20Aout%202021.pptx.pdf>

¹¹⁸ <https://www.maroobe.com/images/DOCS/Bulletin%20bimestriel%20sur%20la%20veille%20informatif%20et%20l'impact%20du%20covid%2019%20sur%20les%20menages%20pastoraux%20et%20agropastoraux%20-%20Octobre%202021.pdf>

¹¹⁹ <https://www.maroobe.com/images/DOCS/Bulletin%20Novembre%20D%C3%A9cembre%202021%20FINAL%201.pdf>



Map 11. Main transhumance routes in West and Central Africa¹²⁰

¹²⁰ IOM WCA, *Regional Mobility Mapping*, January 2022.

PROFILES OF MIGRANTS

Surveys conducted by IOM with travellers throughout West and Central Africa found that the majority of migrants travelling within the region (82%) were male, while 18 per cent were female. Most migrants were young: over 80 per cent of surveyed individuals were between the ages of 18 and 35, while 17 per cent were aged 36-59. A small number of migrants (1%) were children. While over half of migrants (53%) were married, a large proportion (42%) were single. There were vast differences between countries: 81 per cent of travellers interviewed in Mali were single, while the majority of travellers in Chad (55%) were married.

Most surveyed migrants (35%) were unemployed and looking for work. The share of unemployed migrants grew between 2019 and 2020, reflecting the economic toll of the COVID-19 crisis on employment in the region. A further 31 per cent were self-employed, while 19 per cent had a job. Indeed, many migrants are young men and women who work in the informal sector, as daily wage labourers, as street vendors and in small shops, or as trainees, and migrate in search of greater stability or better economic opportunities. Notably, 6 per cent of surveyed migrants were students. Here again, differences were observed between countries: 50 per cent of migrants in Mali were unemployed, while in Chad and Senegal, the majority of interviewees (35% and 61%, respectively) were self-employed. Furthermore, 29 per cent of travellers surveyed in Chad were students, reflecting the large movements of students observed each year at FMPs in southern Chad.

In terms of education, the largest share of intraregional migrants (29%) did not have any education of any kind, while 21 per cent had completed primary education and 21 per cent Koranic schooling. This situation reflects the importance of low-skilled labour migration in West and Central Africa. Only 4 per cent of travellers had a university education. In Chad, however, as could be deduced from the fact that many students cross FMPs in southern Chad, 20 per cent of travellers had a university education (this was only the case for 2% of migrants in Mali). Nevertheless, a large proportion of migrants (22% in Chad, 37% in Mali, 35% in Senegal) had not received any education. A much higher proportion of migrants in Chad (16%) than Mali (2%) and Senegal (9%) had received a religious education.

Most migrants (49%) were travelling in a group, while 23 per cent were travelling alone (27% did not give any answer). Women were much less likely than men to travel alone, possibly because of the increased risks and vulnerabilities which women face while travelling alone.

REASONS FOR MIGRATION

Labour migration

Economic and labour mobility are the most significant drivers of intraregional migration. Seasonal, temporary and permanent migrant workers typically move in pursuit of livelihood opportunities, with a significant proportion of labour migrants active in low-skilled sectors, including domestic work, informal trade, construction and agriculture.



Most migrants in West and Central Africa were male (82%), young (80%), unemployed (35%) and completed basic education (71%)

West and Central Africa offers a wide range of activities and livelihood opportunities. The tri-border area between Mali, Guinea and Senegal, Niger and Burkina Faso as well as northern Niger and northern Chad are large mining areas attracting many West and Central Africa nationals. Ports and fishing grounds along the long West and Central African coastline, from Mauritania to Gabon; industries; farmland; and forestland in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea are also drawing large mobile populations in search of employment opportunities. Large urban centres and capital cities, which offer a plethora of economic opportunities and service-related work (taxi, mobile credit sale, auto repairs, domestic work) also present a strong pull factor for migrants.

Other significant drivers of mobility include business-related movements, such as travelling to markets to buy and sell goods, to re-stock and to conduct business.

The importance of economic factors as contributors to intraregional migration dynamics is corroborated by surveys conducted by IOM with travellers throughout the region, a majority of which (84%) indicated travelling for economic reasons¹²¹. Chief amongst economic reasons were the search of work and livelihood opportunities (74%) and conducting business (13%). Interestingly, 5 per cent of migrants were travelling with cattle as part of agropastoral activities.

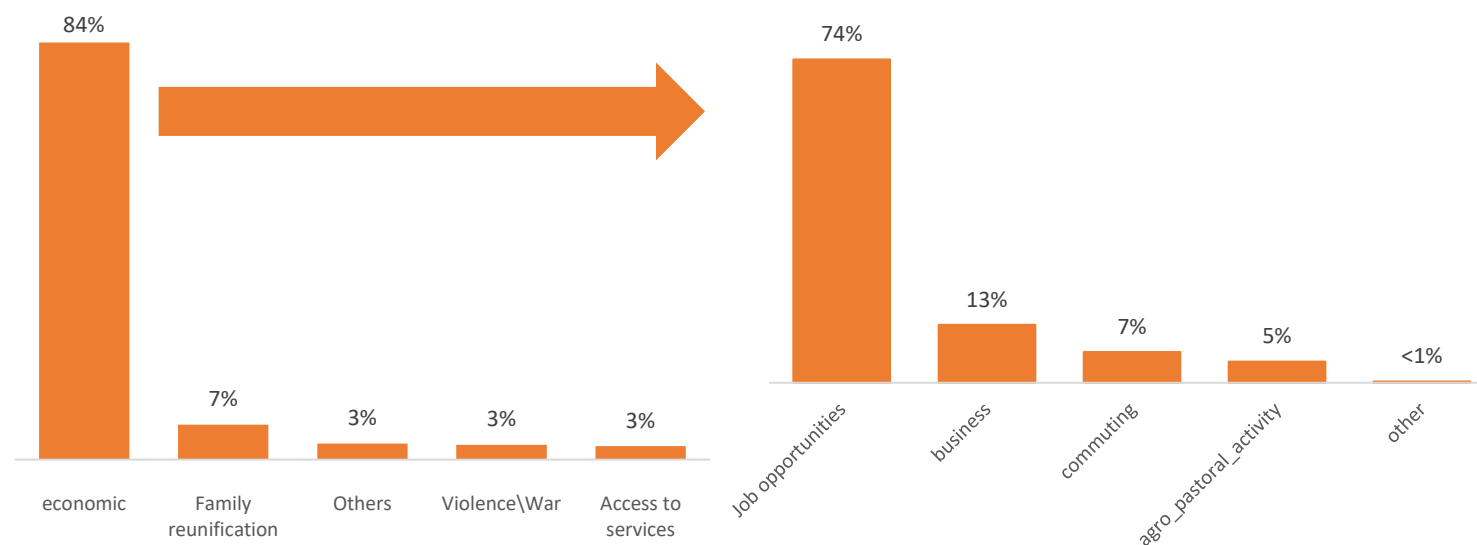


Figure 8. Reasons of movement of travellers in West and Central Africa, in 2021¹²²

Several reports published by IOM highlight the importance, and diversity, of labour migration in West and Central Africa.

¹²¹ IOM DTM Flow Monitoring data.

¹²² IOM WCA, Flow Monitoring Survey Report (2018-2020), April 2021.



Economic and labour mobility was the primary migration driver for 84% of travellers in West and Central Africa



Studies conducted by IOM in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire exemplified the diversity and significance of labour migration in West and Central Africa

A study conducted by IOM in Sierra Leone displayed the significance of mobility for cross-border communities, homogeneous units which straddle the borders between Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia¹²³. Members of the communities on both sides of the borders maintain close, intimate links with one another, and travel freely across borders on a daily basis, as part of a single community, often conducting pendular movements. Economic factors are key elements of this mobility: members of the cross-border communities regularly cross borders to carry out low-scale agricultural activities such as crop production or engage in trade, buying and selling goods on markets. Many members of the communities are transhumance herders, particularly in the Falaba district, regularly moving between communities along border areas in search of grazing land and water for their cattle. These organized patterns of mobility for cross border trade have a long history and are commonplace across Sierra Leone's border regions. The study also exemplified the inflow of migrants from third countries who move to Sierra Leone's cross-border communities to find the many economic opportunities available, such as fishing, trade and farming.

A study implemented by IOM in Guinea showcased the magnitude of migration of third-country nationals to gold mining areas in the country¹²⁴. Often perceived as primarily a country of departure of migrants, Guinea in recent years has attracted substantial numbers of foreign labour migrants seeking to work in artisanal mining. The study showed that migrants came to Kolenda district from across West and Central Africa, including Burkina Faso (51%), Mali (32%), Côte d'Ivoire (6%) and Sierra Leone (6%). 94 per cent of migrants came to Kolenda to work and chose the area as a destination, as opposed to Kolenda being a place of transit on the way to another destination.

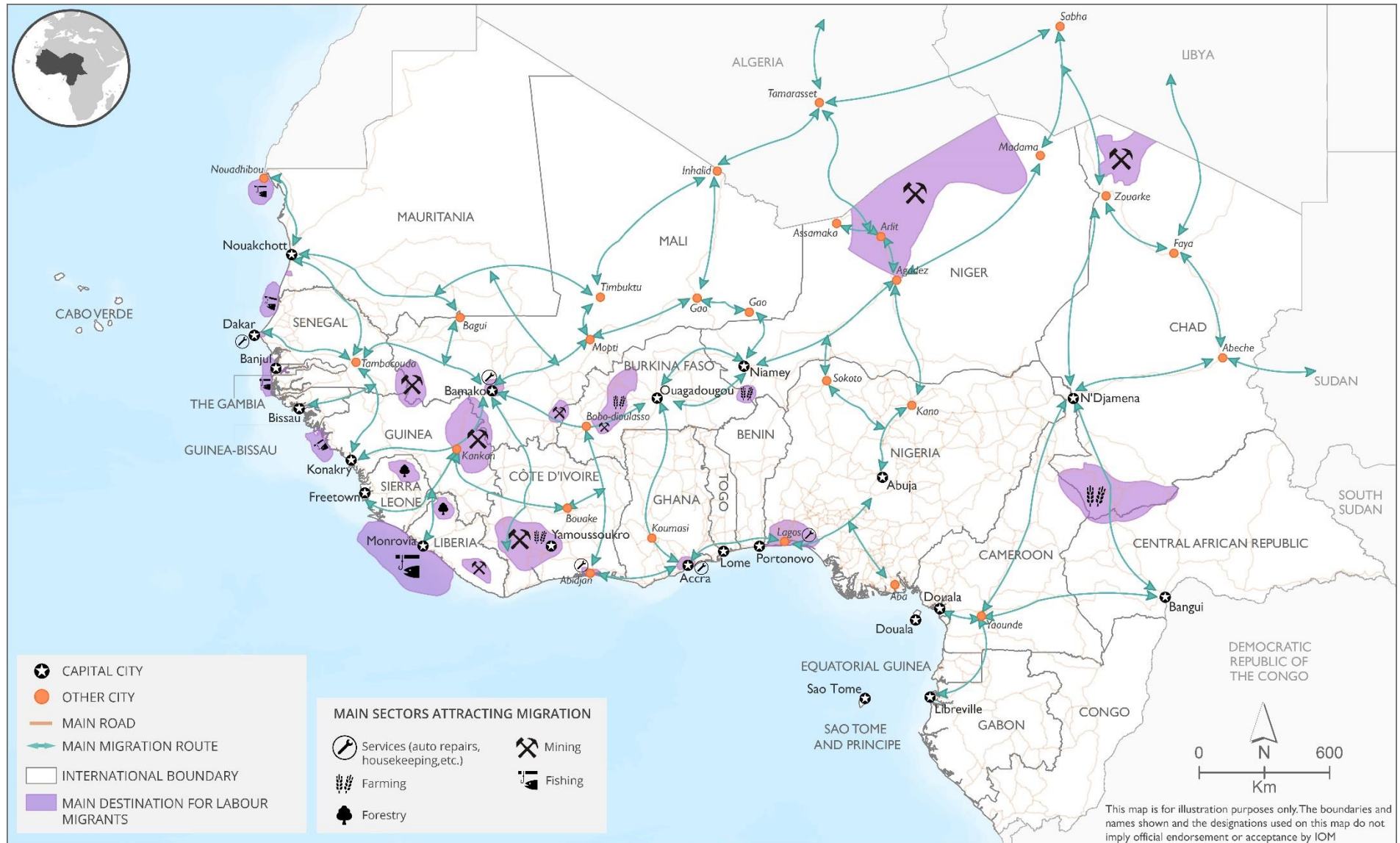
Finally, a survey carried out by IOM Côte d'Ivoire focused on migration to cacao-producing regions¹²⁵. Côte d'Ivoire is the world's largest exporter of cacao and produces close to half of global cacao reserves. Given the magnitude and economic significance of the cacao sector, cacao producing regions attract large numbers of migrants from neighbouring countries, including many children. Many of the migrants living in the two regions covered by the study were from Burkina Faso (80%) and Mali (11%). Notably, and in contrast to other types of labour migration, many migrants working in the cacao industry in Côte d'Ivoire had migrated to Côte d'Ivoire in the 1980s (45%). Over 90 per cent of migrants owned their own cacao farm¹²⁶.

¹²³ IOM Sierra Leone, *Points of Entry, Disease Surveillance and Mobility Patterns and Trends in Cross-border Communities (October 2021)*, December 2021.

¹²⁴ IOM Guinea, *Étude de profilage et évaluation des besoins des migrants orpailleurs étrangers à Kolenda (Février 2021)*, June 2021.

¹²⁵ IOM Côte d'Ivoire, *Profil pilote des populations migrantes et des populations hôtes dans les régions cacoyères du Cavally et du Gôh (Novembre 2021)*, April 2022.

¹²⁶ The study focused the two regions of Cavally and Goh in Cpte d'Ivoire- as such, results and figures are specific to the situation in these two region ans may not be generalized to the whole country.



Map 10. High labour mobility areas in West and Central Africa¹²⁷

¹²⁷ IOM WCA, *Regional Mobility Mapping*, January 2022.

Other factors of migration

Labour migration is not the only type of migration in the region: a significant share of travellers surveyed by IOM were joining family members (11%). Indeed, a study conducted by IOM in Sierra Leone found that family visitations and the observance of traditional and religious rites were a recurrent factor of mobility in cross-border communities¹²⁸.

Others were seeking better access to services (2%). A survey conducted by IOM in Mauritania, for instance, underscored the importance of migration of children to Mauritania to study in Koranic schools (*madrasas*)¹²⁹. Mauritania is a country with large numbers of Koranic schools, perceived as offering a religious education of high standard, many of which are integrated into the official school system. As such, parents from across West and Central Africa send their children, at times unaccompanied, to Mauritania to study in Koranic schools (albeit some are sent to the *madrasas* because their parents do not have the means to take care of them). The study found that the majority of children come from neighbouring countries Mali (69%) and Senegal (14%), although children from countries across the region (amongst which Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and Togo) and beyond are found in Mauritanian *madrasas*. While a third of children are aged 15-17, large fractions are aged 6-10 (28%) and 11-14 (29%). Even children under five years old (10%) are sent to Mauritania to the *madrasas*. Conditions in which Koranic school students live vary significantly between *madrasas*, and many face exposure to abuse, exploitation and child labour.

Notably, 3 per cent of travellers recorded at FMPs were forcibly displaced as a result of conflict, violence or insecurity. Migrants who reported having been forcibly displaced were primarily observed in Chad and Niger, which in 2021 saw escalations of violence in northern Chad (armed conflict between government forces and Non-States Armed Groups) and southern Niger (banditry and communal violence).



Education is a significant factor for migration in West and Central Africa

¹²⁸ IOM Sierra Leone, *Points of Entry, Disease Surveillance and Mobility Patterns and Trends in Cross-border Communities (October 2021)*, December 2021.

¹²⁹ IOM Mauritania, *Enquête sur les enfants migrants résidant dans les madrasas en Mauritanie (Janvier 2022)*, April 2022.

RISKS AND CHALLENGES IN INTRAREGIONAL MIGRATION

Intraregional migration, while less hazardous than migration to North Africa and Europe (See section Risks and challenges in migration to North Africa and Europe), nevertheless holds risks and challenges. Amongst travellers interviewed by IOM between 2018-2020 who provided information on hazards faced during the journey, 38 per cent indicated having faced challenges during their travels. The main issues faced by respondents were linked to strained finances (43%), lack of documentation (41%), food insecurity (39%) and lack of shelter (39%). These reported difficulties are interrelated. Financial problems lead to food and accommodation insecurity, while lack of documentation can prevent physical access to shelters¹³⁰.

A small but significant percentage of respondents who reported facing challenges mentioned exposure to physical harm as one of the difficulties along their journeys. Incidents of attacks were reported by 6 per cent of respondents, while 2 per cent mentioned physical injuries.



Migrants in the Nigerien desert © IOM 2020.



The main challenges faced by travellers in West and Central Africa were financial hardship, lack of documentation, food insecurity and lack of shelter

¹³⁰ FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, IOM, *See Migration Like Water™: An Analysis of IOM Flow Monitoring Survey Data on Migration Flows in West and Central Africa*, March 2021.

CASE STUDY 2 – MIGRATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The nexus between environment and human mobility is not a new one – people have been moving in response to changes in their environment for millennia. However, environmental factors are intertwined with other factors – demographic, economic, social, or even political – in any form of human mobility¹³¹. Within these considerations, it is also essential to account for people’s perceptions of environmental factors, as they influence migration decision-making¹³². In the context of sudden or slow onset events and processes -, many options in terms of (im)mobility are possible: staying in place to adapt (or attempt to adapt) with changes or because one cannot or does not want to migrate¹³³; or migrate in reaction, or proactively, in order to minimize the impact, temporarily or definitively and more or less voluntarily in search of additional income or better opportunities, or for questions of survival. Therefore, human mobility in contexts of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation takes various forms: temporary or permanent; forced or voluntary; in proximity or at a longer distance; internal or international; and anything in between.

West and Central Africa carries a long history of human mobility, and the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters contribute to this mobility. In 2011, the United Nations Environment Program highlighted nineteen climatic hotspots in West Africa, these hotspots – areas where strong physical and ecological effects on climate change come together with large numbers of vulnerable and poor people and communities - were located in the central part of the Sahel, in Niger, in Burkina Faso, in the north and on the coast of Ghana, northern Togo, Benin and Nigeria. Since the 1970s, rainfall variability has led to increased droughts and advanced land degradation¹³⁴. Besides being a region particularly vulnerable to sudden onset events such as floods, West and Central Africa is also exposed to land degradation, water scarcity and coastal erosion. Droughts, desertification, deforestation, water scarcity, rising sea levels, coastal erosion have increased in occurrence and severity over the last few decades due to the adverse effects of climate change, compelling people directly and indirectly to leave their homes in a region – West and Central Africa - where 80% of the population depends on natural resources for their livelihoods (OCHA). Food insecurity is set to worsen as the impacts of climate change continue to grow across the continent. Agriculture, in turn, is also a sector which is heavily dependent on seasonal labor migration. Generally low-skilled, these seasonal migrants are themselves farmers whose livelihoods depend on rain and therefore are extremely vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

Most migration and displacement observed in these contexts currently is within countries or between neighbouring countries, rather than to more geographically distant high-income countries (IPCC, 2022). In the region, 824,000 new internal displacements happened in the context of

¹³¹ Ionesco, Mokhnacheva, Gemenne, 2016. Atlas des migrations environnementales ; Foresight, 2011

¹³² de Longueville et al., 2020

¹³³ Foresight, ‘Migration and Global Environmental Change’ (UK Government Office for Science 2011) Final Project Report 11–14. Zickgraf (2018)

¹³⁴ NEF/IIED/IED-Afrique Consortium, 2014



824,000 persons were displaced by natural hazards in 2021

disasters (IDMC, 2021). In West Africa, floods were with wind storms the most important cause of disaster displacement, displacing 276.000 people in Niger, 279.000 in Nigeria and 20.000 in Burkina Faso. But as important as they may be, these figures do not consider migration in the context of slow onset events beyond droughts. The region is also considered by the United Nations to have the highest rate of urbanization in the world by 2050, and particularly in the coastal areas, where a third of the region's population is concentrated. In the region, cities are already facing the joint challenges of intensive and unplanned urbanization, climate change and migration. In landlocked Sahel cities, the challenges are mostly related to floods, and internal displacement is challenging cities capacities in terms of human mobility management.

Climate change, environmental degradation and disasters also affect herders in their transhumance, a common practice across West and Central Africa. Every year, at the end of the rainy season, thousands of hectares of pastureland go up in smoke due to wildfires, leading to considerable losses of fodder, which is essential to the survival of livestock. Fires but also changes in rain patterns and the multiplication of extreme events constitute not only a direct threat to the already precarious survival of herders and their livestock, but they also affect pastoral dynamics by forcing herders to modify their routes and delay their journeys, threaten livelihoods and food security and jeopardize intercommunal peace, generating at times deadly conflicts between transhumant herders and farmers, while pastoralism can be considered as an essential climate adaptation measure in the context of agriculture in a changing environment. Other communities in the region are also affected by climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters such as the fishermen living on coastal areas dealing with coastal erosion, sea rise level or overfishing.

In addition, in areas of the Sahel facing insecurity and protracted crises such as the Liptako-Gourma region or the Lake Chad Basin, competition for access to scarce resources has become an additional driver of conflict and intercommunal tensions. In parallel, social structures that used to settle community disputes over natural resources have been weakened by the presence of armed groups who have instrumentalized intercommunal tensions to feed conflicts¹³⁵.

In a national study on the link between Migration, Environment and Climate Change conducted in Niger, survey data highlighted the central place occupied by migration as a coping mechanism within rural households in the face of environmental upheavals and climate change showing an intensification of internal and external mobility in regions particularly exposed to environmental degradation and climate change such as Tahoua, Tillabéri, Zinder and Maradi¹³⁶. Indeed, mobility can be considered as a strategy to improve livelihoods and to adapt to challenging situations. Moreover, migrants can have a positive impact on food security, economic growth, and more largely on the resilience of the territories they are going to. In fact, migration helps households diversify their livelihoods and protect their incomes and reduce the pressure on natural resources in the communities of origin. Remittances help fund investments that support resilience, as well as recovery after disasters, helping families staying behind to access food, shelter and healthcare. Ultimately, migration can enable people to thrive in their homes despite the environmental challenges they face. Migration can be an adaptation strategy for the migrants, and the families and communities of origin.

¹³⁵ Farah Hegazi, Florian Krampe, Elizabeth Seymou Smith, 2021. Climate-related Security Risks and Peacebuilding in Mali, SIPRI Policy Paper n. 60

¹³⁶ <https://rodakar.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl696/files/documents/etude-mecc-niger.pdf>

Up to 32 million people will be internal climate migrants in West and Central Africa by 2050

But it also supports adaptation and resilience objectives in communities of destination¹³⁷. Migration is key to fostering and sustaining economic well-being, diversifying social and cultural capital, and supporting transfers of knowledge and technologies. Planned relocation - permanent relocation out of areas exposed to or affected by sudden-onset hazards or slow-onset environmental change - has also been recognized as a possible disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation strategy but is largely considered as a last resort measure due to the socioeconomic, cultural, human security and human rights implications. Some governments in the West and Central Africa have already resorted to planned relocation in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change¹³⁸.

Estimates indicate that future climate change effects on internal migration in Africa will be considerable (Rigaud et al., 2018) with up to 32 million internal climate migrants in West African countries by 2050 in the absence of concrete climate and development action. It will be essential to ensure protection and inclusion of people who move, including those in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters.



A caravan carries water during a major drought in Mauritania © IOM 2017.

¹³⁷ Gemenne, F. and J. Blocher, 2017. How can migration serve adaptation to climate change? Challenges to fleshing out a policy ideal. *The Geographic Journal*, volume 183, Issue 4.

¹³⁸ International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2022. *Leaving Place, Restoring Home II: A Review of French, Spanish and Portuguese Literature on Planned Relocation in the Context of Hazards, Disasters, and Climate Change*. IOM, Geneva.



89% of migration flows in West and Central Africa are internal to the region

3. INTER-REGIONAL MIGRATION

The vast majority of migration flows in West and Central Africa are internal to the region. According to UNDESA, 66 per cent of the 13 million West and Central African migrants reside in another country in the region. IOM data shows that, in 2020, 89 per cent of flows (accounting for 1.5 million movements) across the region were internal to the region (from one West and Central African country to another).

		DEPARTURE REGION			TOTAL
		WCA	NORTH AFRICA	OTHER	
DESTINATION REGION	WCA	89%	4%	0%	93%
	NORTH AFRICA	7%	0%	0%	7%
	OTHER	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Total	96%	4%	0%	100%

Table 8. Regions of departure and intended destination regions of travellers in West and Central Africa in 2021¹³⁹

According to UNDESA, a third of migrants (34%) live in another region, primarily Europe (19%) and North America (8%)¹⁴⁰. North African countries also attract large numbers of migrants, where they can find employment in a wide range of areas, including agriculture, construction, and domestic work. Indeed, IOM recorded 11 per cent of inter-migration flows (163,000 movements) in 2010, mostly headed to and coming from Algeria and Libya. These trends show the close bonds between West and Central African countries and their northern neighbours, driven by centuries of inter-regional trade, migration and exchanges.

MOVEMENTS BETWEEN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA AND NORTH AFRICA

West and Central Africa and North Africa enjoy close links, driven by centuries of exchange and trade

Libya has historically been a major destination country for foreign workers from across sub-Saharan Africa, as well an important country of refuge and of transit for refugees seeking protection and safety. Despite the ongoing conflict in parts of the country and the related economic disruption, Libya remains an attractive destination for migrants, as high demand for migrant labour in Libya's labour market continue to make it an attractive destination for migrants. Algeria also constituted a prime country of destination for migrants from West and Central Africa, and in particular witnesses large circular migration movements of migrants in search of temporary and seasonal labour. Southern Algeria is also at the crossroads of trade routes, particularly the Trans-Saharan Road linking Algiers (Algeria) to Lagos (Nigeria)¹⁴¹.

¹³⁹ IOM WCA, 2020 Flow Monitoring Registry data.

¹⁴⁰ UNDESA, *International Migration Highlights 2020*, 2021.

¹⁴¹ IOM, UNHCR, *Mass Expulsions from Algeria and Eastern Libya: Background Paper and Points for Discussion*, December 2020.



Between 2018 and 2020, fewer migrants travelled from West and Central Africa to North Africa

IOM Flow Monitoring Points along the borders between Mali, Niger and Chad and Algeria and Libya¹⁴² recorded over 1.4 million individual movements in 2019-2021. The majority of these flows (76%) were headed to a destination in West and Central Africa. Migrants were either returning home from North Africa or heading from countries in North Africa to the northern regions of Chad, Mali and Niger to work in the mining industry or for other economic activities. Over three years of data collection (2019-2021), the proportion of movements to North Africa, when compared to movements from North Africa, progressively decreased from 28 per cent of all flows in 2019 (110,000 travellers), to 24 per cent in 2021 (153,000 individuals), showcasing the more balanced and less one-sided nature of flows between the two regions. Analysing this trend, it can safely be assumed that, over these three years, fewer migrants travelled to North Africa, possibly because of stricter controls at the borders.

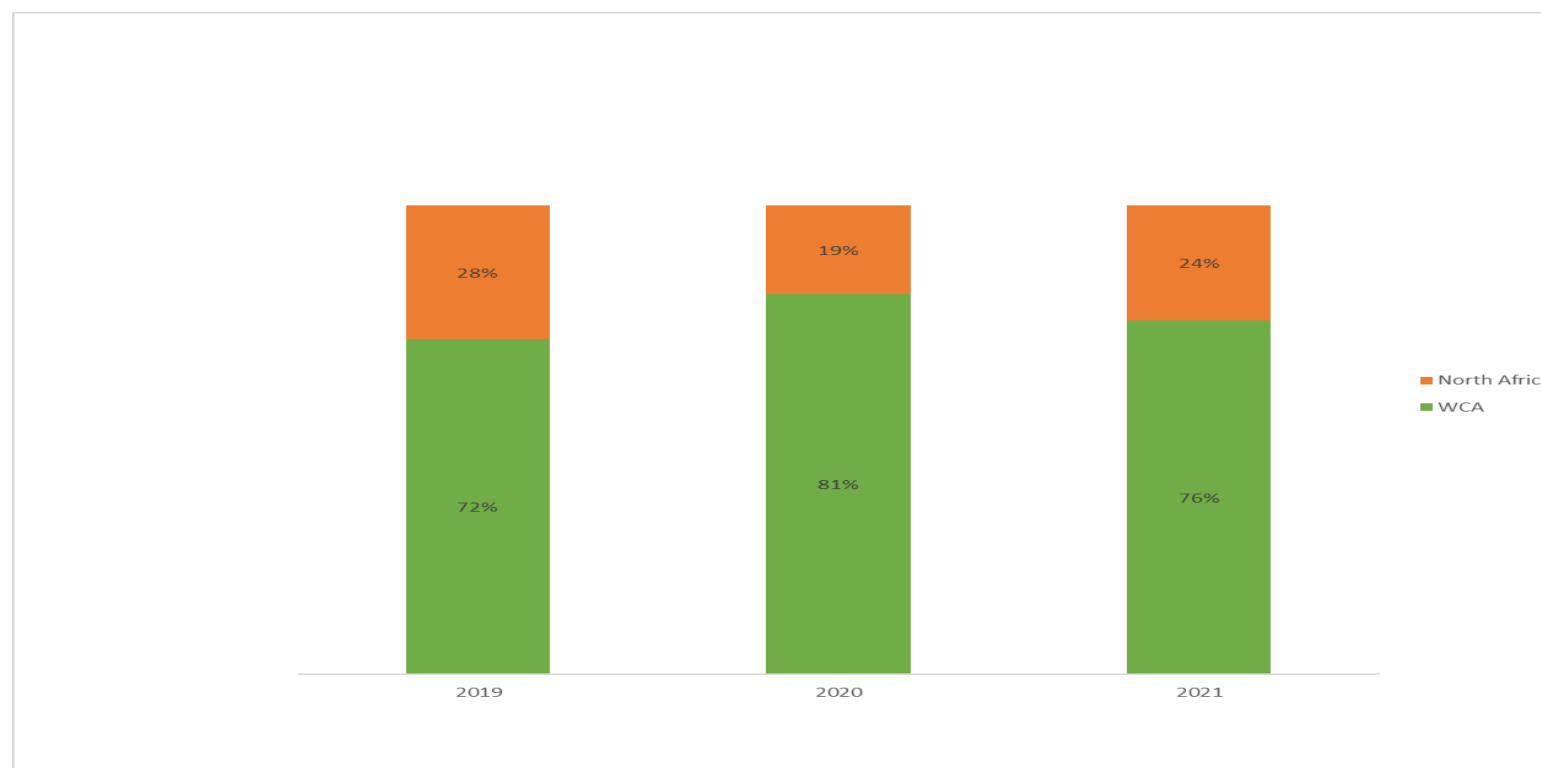
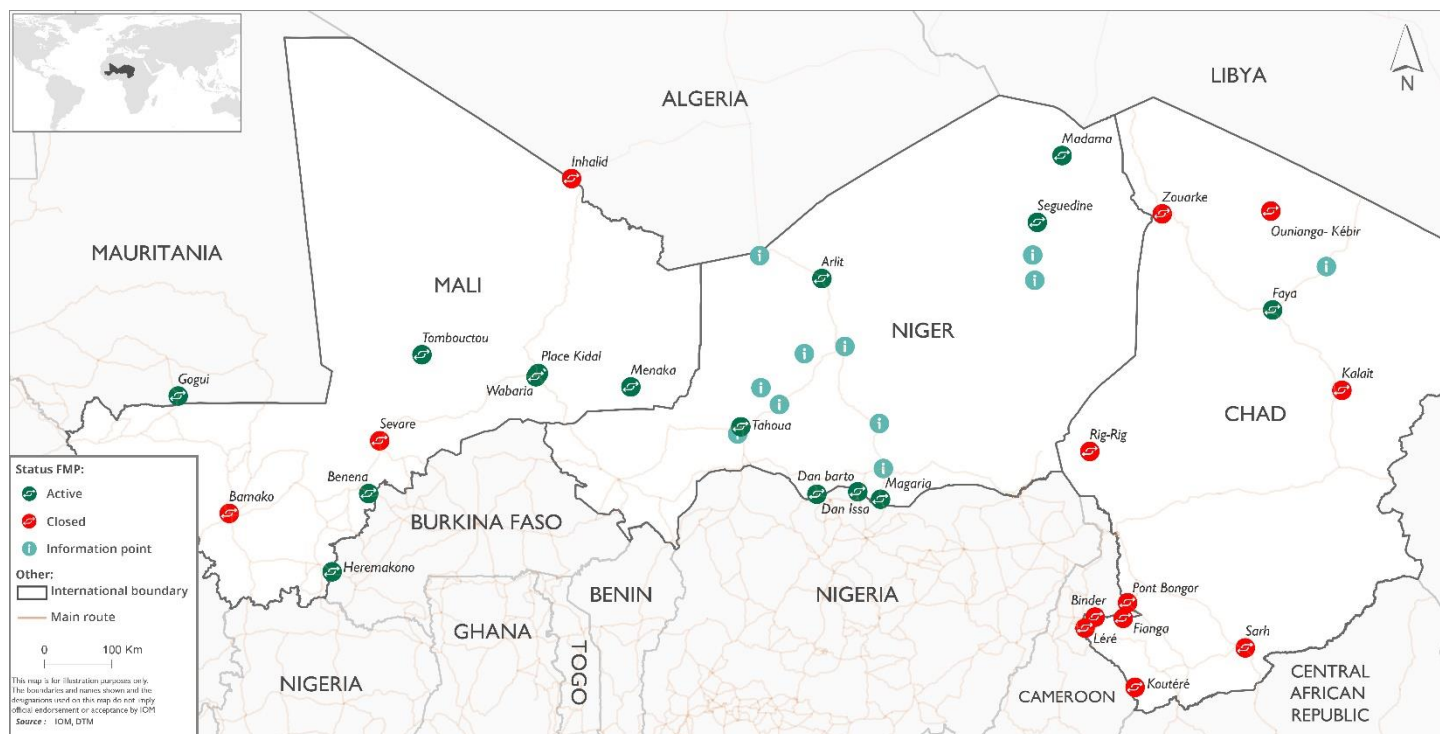


Figure 9. Regions of destination of travellers in Chad, Mali and Niger¹⁴³

¹⁴² FMPs are located in Inhalid, Timbuktu, Gao and Menaka (Mali), in Faya, Kalait, Ounianga Kebir and Zouarké Chad) and in Arlit, Madama, Tahoua and Séguédine (Niger).

¹⁴³ IOM Flow Monitoring Registry Data.

Detailing the destination of the 1.5 million movements recorded between West and Central Africa and North Africa provides a better understanding of migration trends in the northern border regions of West and Central Africa in 2019-2021. Outgoing movements, from West and Central Africa to North Africa, have been much more inconsistent than incoming movements, from North Africa to West and Central Africa. This points to the high volatility of movements in these areas rapidly impacted by various events linked to security conditions, economic opportunities or border management. The inconsistency of outgoing flows (from WCA to North Africa) highlights the quick adaptation of migration routes following border closures, emerging and declining economic opportunities, or increased surveillance at borders.



Map 12. Locations of FMPs in the northern regions of Chad, Mali and Niger

A comparative analysis of outgoing (from WCA to North Africa) and incoming (from North Africa to WCA) flows provides an indication of the evolution of the volume of migrants headed to North Africa from 2018 to 2020. In 2020, 34,000 more individuals travelled from West and Central Africa to North Africa than returned from North Africa to West and Central Africa. This is 40 per cent less than in 2019 (57,000) and 12 per cent less than in 2018 (39,000), reflecting the fact that movements out of the region decreased over time. These analyses may indicate that irregular migration flows from West and Central Africa to North Africa declined in 2020, while returns (both voluntary and forced) from North Africa continued throughout that period.

Indeed, in 2020, for the first time in 3 years of data collection, incoming movements (from North Africa to WCA) were larger than outgoing movements (from WCA to North Africa).

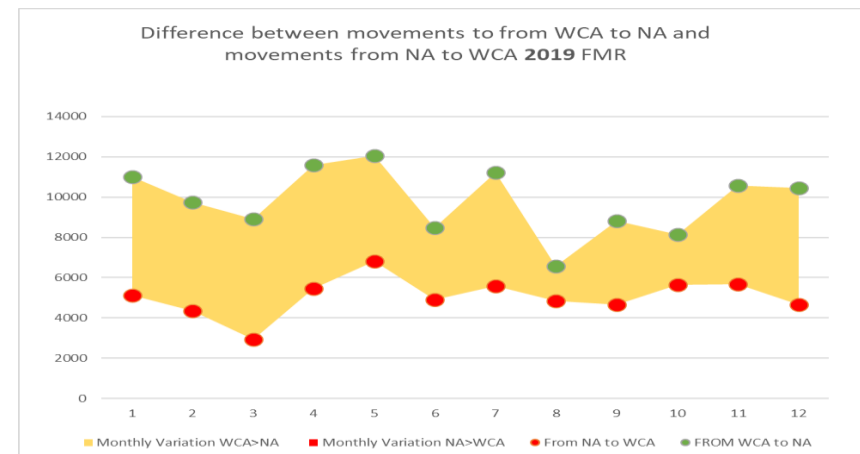
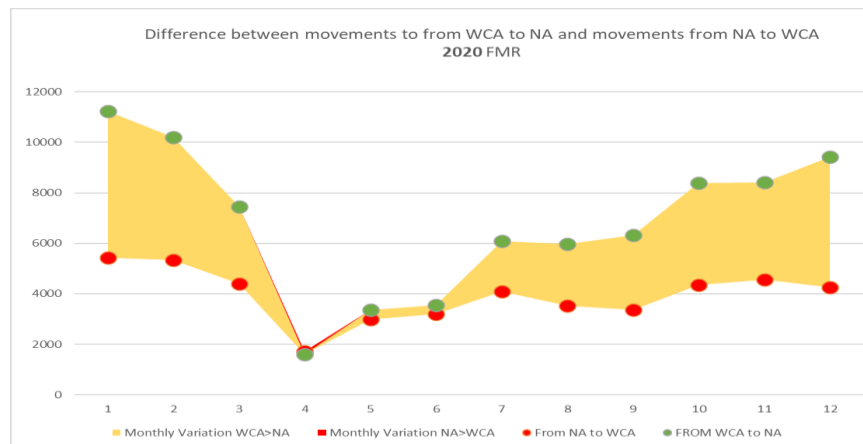
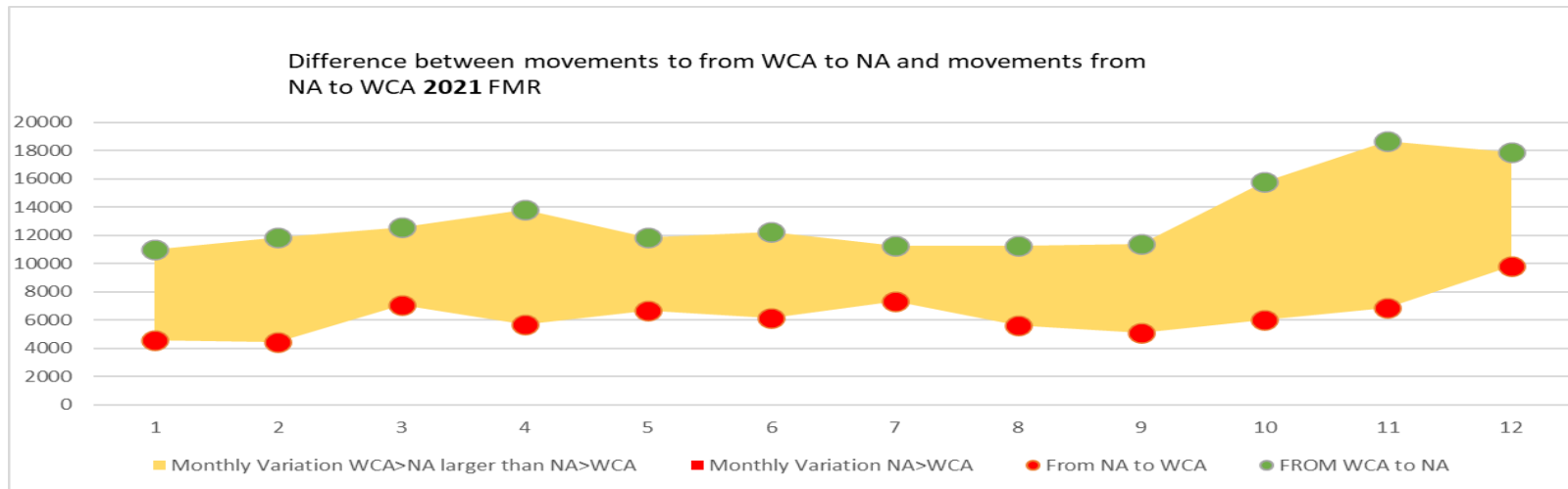


Figure 10. Differences in the magnitudes of flows from West and Central Africa to North Africa and from North Africa to West and Central Africa, in 2019, 2020 and 2021¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ IOM Flow Monitoring Registry Data.

Mobility dynamics to and from West and Central Africa varied between countries, which may be an indication of changing migration routes. While Chad witnessed more incoming movements from Libya than movements going to Libya (2,320 more arrivals than departures)- possibly the result of significant numbers of collective expulsions and pushbacks from Libya to Chad throughout 2020- both Niger and Mali witnessed more departures to Algeria than arrivals from Algeria (23,000 more departures in Mali and 109,000 more departures in Niger).

COUNTRY	2019	2020	2021	TOTAL VARIATION 2019-2021
MALI	1185	-2,810	-3,147	-4,772
NIGER	51,085	32,334	77,369	160,788
CHAD	- 352	- 1,005	- 542	- 2,1195

Table 9. Difference between movements from West and Central Africa to North Africa & movements from North Africa to West and Central Africa

Irregular migrant arrivals to Europe increased by 47% between 2020 and 2021

MOVEMENTS FROM WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA TO EUROPE

Between 2017 and 2021, more than 692,000 irregular migrants arrived in Europe (both by land and by sea). After witnessing several years of decline, halving between 2017 and 2020, irregular migrant arrivals to Europe grew significantly between 2020 and 2021, increasing by 46 per cent (from 96,076 to 140,618). It is the first time since the 2015 spike in arrivals that irregular migrant arrivals to Europe have grown.

The ranking of the countries of arrival also witnessed stark shifts in 2021. While Spain (41,861) was the main country through which irregular migrants reached Europe in 2020, it was only the second country of arrival in 2021 (50,945), behind Italy (67,477). Indeed, arrivals to Italy almost doubled (increase of 87%) between 2020 and 2021, while arrivals to Spain grew by 22 per cent over the same period. The number of arrivals to Greece, meanwhile, saw a 39 per cent drop between 2020 and 2021.

COUNTRY	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
GREECE	35,052	50,215	71,386	14,785	9,026
ITALY	119,369	23,370	11,471	34,154	67,477
SPAIN	28,707	65,325	35,513	41,861	50,945
OTHER	2,682	6,240	11,226	5,276	13,170
TOTAL	185,810	145,150	129,596	96,076	140,618

Table 10. Total number of irregular migrant arrivals to Europe, by main country of arrival and year (2017-2021)¹⁴⁵

Between 2017 and 2021, more than 180,000 individuals from West and Central Africa arrived irregularly in Europe in 2017-2021, representing 27 per cent of all arrivals during this period. As for overall arrivals, 2021 was the first year during which arrivals of West and Central African

¹⁴⁵ IOM, *Mixed Migration Flows to Europe, Quarterly Overview (October — December 2020)*, February 2021.

Between 2020 and 2021, the share of Nigerian nationals arriving in Europe jumped by 10 percentage points, while the share of Ivorian national declined by 10 percentage points

nationals grew since 2015. However, the share of West and Central African nationals amongst all migrants decreased significantly over that time: while WCA migrants represented 39 per cent of all arrivals to Europe in 2017, their share shrunk to 20 per cent in 2021. This sharp reduction of migration flows to Europe, and more specifically of flows from WCA nationals (decrease of 20 percentage points), can be explained by multiple factors: stricter border surveillance, enhanced and strengthened cooperation agreements on border controls, COVID-19 mobility restrictions, decreased livelihood opportunities and incomes for potential migrants, as well as higher risks of travels.

COUNTRY	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
GREECE	1,027 (3%)	2,701 (5%)	3,372 (5%)	872 (6%)	312(3%)
ITALY	56,409 (47%)	4,403 (19%)	2,592 (58%)	5,317 (16%)	11,393(17%)
SPAIN	14,157 (49%)	38,114 (58%)	14,027 (43%)	13,311 (32%)	15,763(31%)
OTHER	NA	NA	2,860 (25%)	545 (10%)	180(1%)
TOTAL	71,593 (39%)	45,218 (31%)	22,851 (18%)	20,045 (21%)	27,648 (21%)

Table 11. Number of irregular migrant arrivals to Europe of migrants from West and Central Africa, and proportion of West and Central African nationals amongst total arrivals, by main country of arrival and year (2017-2021)¹⁴⁶¹⁴⁷

A notable trend observed between 2020 and 2021 was the significant drop in the share of WCA nationals arriving in Italy and Spain: citizens of WCA countries arriving in Italy and Spain in 2021 represented 17 per cent and 31 per cent of all arrivals, respectively, compared to 47 per cent and 49 per cent in 2017. Meanwhile, the proportion of WCA nationals amidst arrivals to Greece grew from 6 per cent to 3 per cent over the same period. The primary nationalities of West and Central African migrants who arrived in Europe in 2017-2021 were Guinea (15%), Côte d'Ivoire (14%), Nigeria (12%), and Mali (11%). These four nationalities represented 52 per cent of arrivals from the WCA region. Over the last two years, the nationalities of WCA migrants witnessed radical shifts. The proportion of individuals from Nigeria arriving to Europe jumped significantly between 2020 and 2021, from 4 per cent of WCA arrivals to 14 per cent in 2021, while the proportion of individuals from Côte d'Ivoire declined from 22 per cent in 2020 to 12 per cent in 2021.

COUNTRY	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
GUINEA	13,839 (19%)	7,121 (16%)	2,676 (12%)	1,683 (14%)	28,015 (15%)
NIGERIA	18,260 (26%)	1,395 (3%)	898 (4%)	542 (4%)	26,692 (14%)
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	13,336 (19%)	3,552 (8%)	3,065 (13%)	2,701 (22%)	21,963 (12%)
MALI	7,796 (11%)	6,717 (15%)	2,571 (11%)	1,597 (13%)	20,442 (11%)

Table 12. Number of irregular migrant arrivals to Europe of the top 4 nationalities from West and Central Africa and proportion amongst all arrivals of WCA nationals, by main country of arrival and year (2017-2021)¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ An important note to be made here on the lack of a nationality breakdown for arrivals to Spain for October-December 2020, which was the most active period in term of arrivals from WCA to the Canary Islands, Spain. The figure of WCA arrivals to Europe is likely to be significantly affected by this missing data.

¹⁴⁷ IOM, *Mixed Migration Flows to Europe, Quarterly Overview (October – December 2020)*, February 2021.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.



In 2021, 22,316 individuals landed irregularly on the Canary Islands, as compared to 23,023 in 2020



Migrant deaths along the WAAR grew by 38%

WEST AFRICAN ATLANTIC ROUTE TO THE CANARY ISLANDS

A key trend observed since late 2019, which accelerated during the COVID-19 crisis and has since continuously grown, is the ‘reactivation’ of the West African Atlantic Route (WAAR), along which migrants cross the Atlantic from West African coasts to the Spanish Canary Islands. According to the Spanish Ministry of the Interior, 22,316 people disembarked irregularly in the Canary Islands, a slight decrease of 707 people compared to 2020 (23,023). This reflects the continued prominence of the WAAR as a major migration route to Europe. The fourth quarter saw the biggest increase in arrivals, with exponential growth starting in July¹⁴⁹. This is expected, as weather grows warmer and meteorological conditions become more clement during the rainy season (July – October).

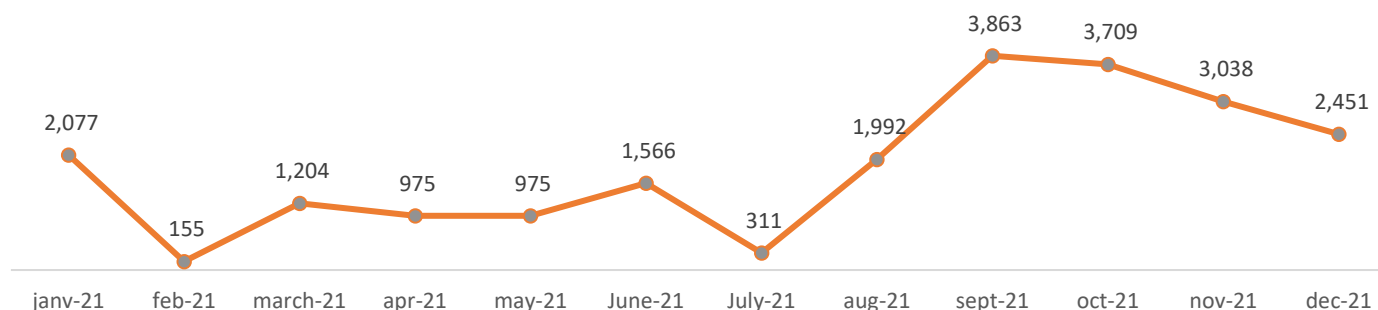


Figure 11. Monthly number of irregular migrant arrivals to the Canary Islands (Spain) in 2021¹⁵⁰

This trend is corroborated by data collected by IOM along the Senegalese coasts, which between September and December 2021 identified 32 boat departures from Senegal on board which 1,153 individuals departed¹⁵¹. Further, an increase of 41 per cent in the number of potential migrants registered on lists over that same period suggests that this trend is likely to continue in 2022.

The slight drop in departures along this dangerous route was nevertheless accompanied by an increase in deaths and disappearances along the WAAR. Eighty-four shipwrecks were recorded along the route in 2021, resulting in the deaths of 1,173 migrants, half of which were presumed drowning along the West African Atlantic Route¹⁵². As a point of comparison, in 2020, 12 shipwrecks caused the death of 849 migrants (See section [Migrant deaths and disappearances on West and Central African migration routes](#)).

¹⁴⁹ Spanish Ministry of the Interior, *Informe quincenal sobre inmigración irregular: datos acumulados del 1 Enero al 31 Diciembre 2021*, January 2022.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ IOM Senegal, *Monitoring of Departure Areas: Movements to the Canary Islands (November – December 2020)*, March 2021.

¹⁵² IOM WCA, *Irregular Migration Routes to Europe : Western African Atlantic Route (2021)*, March 2022.



Growing numbers of women and children are embarking on the West African Atlantic Route

This increase in popularity of the WAAR may be attributed to a number of factors, including the greater difficulty in travelling along other migration routes, particularly in West and Central Africa where many countries, since the advent of the COVID-19 crisis, have adopted stricter migration policies, tightened controls and carried out forced returns of migrants. The economic impact of COVID-19 may also have been a factor in increased crossings to the Canary Islands, forcing desperate young West and Central Africans to migrate at all costs. Surveys show that more than half of Senegalese migrants who attempted the crossing to the Canary Islands were fishermen, whose incomes have declined due to the pandemic and restrictions in mobility¹⁵³.

Other factors, including evolving political considerations such as political volatility and deteriorating security conditions in many countries in the region, which have encouraged migrants as well smugglers to find alternative routes, and the lower cost of the West African Atlantic Route for certain nationalities (Senegalese, Malian, Guinean) as compared with the Central Mediterranean and Western Mediterranean routes, may also have contributed in explaining this shift.

A study by the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) found that economic and livelihood factors play an overwhelming role in decisions to migrate along this route. Refugees and migrants have described their desire to escape poverty and to strive for greater economic security, with an inability to secure fruitful employment or a sustainable livelihood very frequently referenced as a main driver in their migration decision. Economic factors have heightened since the COVID-19 crisis, whose economic effects have spurred departures at all costs. In addition, the Canary Islands are widely seen as “the closest entry point” to Europe. The Atlantic route is considered by some as the “shortest and least problematic” route to Europe in the light of insecurity and other threats in countries such as Mali, Libya, Niger, and Algeria¹⁵⁴.

A significant trend observed along the WAAR is the increasing number of women and children travelling along this route. An estimated 34 per cent of arrivals are women and children. Indeed, coast guards have been observing greater numbers of women on the Atlantic route frequently seeking to escape conflict or human rights abuses. The majority (67%) of arrivals are from West and Central African countries, in particular Mali, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire and Guinea¹⁵⁵.

PROFILE OF MIGRANTS TRAVELLING TO NORTH AFRICA AND EUROPE

The profiles of individuals travelling to regions outside West and Central Africa showed some similarities to that of internal migrants, but also some stark differences with the profiles of intraregional migrants.

¹⁵³ Observatoire sénégalais des migrations, Policy Brief No. 01.01.2021, February 2021.

¹⁵⁴ Mixed Migration Centre, *A Gateway re-opens: the growing popularity of the Atlantic route*, February 2022.

¹⁵⁵ Mixed Migration Centre, *West Africa Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Quarter 3 2021*, November 2021.

Migrants heading to North Africa and Europe were younger, more highly educated and more likely to be single



Migrants heading to North Africa and Europe were more likely to be unemployed

Surveys conducted by IOM showed that similar shares of travellers were male, regardless of the intended region of destination (83%). In terms of marital status, a large share of migrants travelling to North Africa (68%) and an even larger share of travellers going to Europe (86%) were single; in addition, an overwhelming majority of migrants travelling to Europe (97%) and North Africa (90%) were young adults (aged 18-35), highlighting the fact that migration to these two regions, often dangerous and intended to be long-term, are usually conducted by young, single individuals. This contrasts with intraregional migrants, where the prevalence of circular, seasonal and short-term migration makes it more likely that migrants will be older and have families.

Although Nigerians represented large portions of migrants heading to West and Central Africa (13%), North Africa (26%) and Europe (24%), there were otherwise notable differences in the nationalities of migrants: significant shares of migrants travelling to Europe were from Guinea (24%) and Mali (18%), while they represented smaller shares of migrants travelling to North Africa or WCA. Meanwhile, Nigerian nationals represented a quarter of travellers going to North Africa (23%).

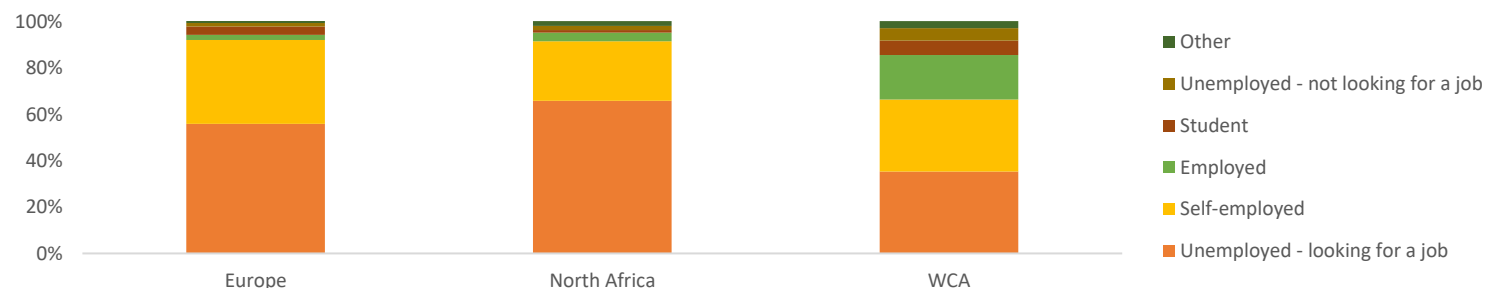


Figure 12. Employment status of travellers by intended final destination, in 2021 ¹⁵⁶

Migrants heading to North Africa (66%) and Europe (56%) were more likely to be unemployed than their intraregional counterparts, indicating that larger shares of travellers were migrating to find work in these two regions and that the reasons for migration were less diverse. This is corroborated by the finding that almost all migrants going to Europe (96%) and North Africa (90%) were travelling in the search of livelihood opportunities. Interestingly, 4 per cent of migrants going to Europe were students, possibly highlighting the lack of prospects for high school and university graduates in West and Central Africa.

In terms of education, migrants going to Europe were more highly educated: a third (30%) completed secondary school (against 8% of intraregional migrants and 15% of migrants going to North Africa), while 9 per cent of Europe-bound migrants had not received any kind of education (29% of migrants in WCA and 19% of migrants to North Africa). Migrants going to Europe were also less likely to have gone to Koranic school (1%, in contrast to 20% of intraregional migrants).

¹⁵⁶ IOM WCA, *Flow Monitoring Survey Report (2018-2020)*, April 2021.,

In 2020, IOM rescued 433 migrants in the Nigerien desert



Migrants heading to North Africa and Europe reported lack of shelter (24%), hunger (18%) and lack of financial resources (18%) as the main challenges faced

RISKS AND CHALLENGES IN MIGRATION

Migrants face many risks, dangers and hazards over the course of the migration journey. These include exposure to exploitation, abuse and trafficking; bribery and extortion by government officials and smugglers; isolated and dangerous routes; perils at sea, including overcrowding and shipwrecks; and protection risks such as gender-based violence, kidnappings and robberies.

Migrants crossing the Sahara towards North African countries are particularly vulnerable and face increased risks. The vast, inhospitable and remote terrain raises the prospect of dehydration, sickness and lack of health care, being left stranded after a vehicle accident or landmine explosions, and exposure to high temperatures and bearing sun¹⁵⁷. IOM Niger data shows that in 2021, 433 migrants were rescued during 33 Search and Rescue (SaR) Operations in the Sahara Desert¹⁵⁸. These factors are exacerbated by human-caused factors, primarily the increasing irregularization of migration, i.e. the greater use of irregular routes and the push of migration into clandestinity in the Saharan context, leading to violence, robbery, kidnapping and gender-based violence; instability and violence; abuse and exploitation by smugglers; and increased securitization of borders and crackdown on irregular migration, which have pushed migrants into invisibility and raised the dangers they face¹⁵⁹.

Migrants interviewed by IOM reported the lack of shelter (24%), hunger (18%), financial issues (18%) and absence of identification (12%) as the main challenges encountered during their travels, pointing to the extremely rough conditions and the vulnerabilities to which many migrants are confronted during their journey. Many risks arise from the lack of documentation and the irregularity of their situation: 7 per cent and 4 per cent of travellers indicated being afraid of deportation and arbitrary arrests, respectively.

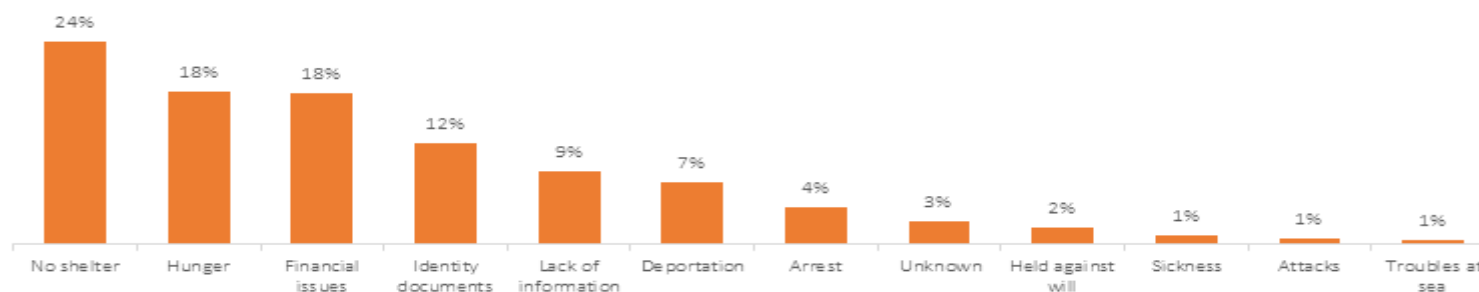


Figure 13. Challenges faced by migrants travelling from West and Central Africa to North Africa and Europe¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Black, Julia, "Risks faced by migrants in the Sahara Desert", in IOM, *Migration in West and North Africa and across the Mediterranean: Trends, Risk and Development*, 2020.

¹⁵⁸ It should be noted that SaR activities were restricted because of COVID-19 related mobility restrictions and that no SaR Operation was conducted in November and December 2020, and probably under-estimate the number of migrants stranded and in need of aid.

¹⁵⁹ Black, Julia, "Risks faced by migrants in the Sahara Desert", in IOM, *Migration in West and North Africa and across the Mediterranean: Trends, Risk and Development*, 2020.

¹⁶⁰ IOM WCA, Flow Monitoring Survey Report (2018-2020), April 2021.

MIGRANT DEATHS AND DISAPPEARANCES ON WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA MIGRATION ROUTES



1,199 migrant deaths and disappearances were recorded in West and Central Africa in 2021

Frequent accounts report deaths or disappearances of migrants along migratory routes from West and Central Africa, whether on their way to North Africa or at sea, during the crossing over the Mediterranean to continental Europe or on their way to Canary Islands. Daily, men, women and children die of dehydration, asphyxiation or drowning, a reality which reflects the hazards which migrants face along migration routes. From the Sahara Desert to the Atlantic Ocean, migrants do not hesitate to face high risks to their survival to reach certain destinations. Moreover, stricter controls at borders and continued mobility restrictions linked to COVID-19, many of which remain in place, have led to the development of alternative, more isolated, more dangerous, and more deadly routes.

Consequently, West and Central Africa witnessed an increase in migrant deaths and disappearances. In West and Central Africa and along the Western African Atlantic Route in 2021, 1,199 deaths and disappearances of migrant were recorded (involved in 83 incidents). This reflects a 41 per cent increase when compared to 2020, a significant growth which may be partly explained by the reduction in mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1,176 migrants died or disappeared along the West African Atlantic Route (WAAR), on their way to the Canary Islands, while. The number of deaths along the WAAR has grown dramatically since the reactivation of this route in 2019, witnessing an increase of 39 per cent between 2020 and 2021, thereby confirming the WAAR as being the most fatal route to Europe (one in fifteen migrants who embark this journey die en route to the Canary Islands).

In 2021, shipwrecks and other fatal maritime accidents affecting migrants took place along the West African Atlantic Route off the coast of Senegal (St-Louis) Mauritania (Nouadhibou), Morocco (Boujdour, Tan-Tan, Tarfaya), Western Sahara (Dakhla, Laâyoune). Shipwrecks also often occur off the coast of all islands in the Canaries (Gran Canaria, Lanzarote, Tenerife, El Hierro).

Apart from these shipwrecks, 23 deaths and disappearances were recorded in West and Central African, primarily deaths and disappearances recorded due to violence against road migrants in Nigeria. The Western and Central Mediterranean routes, all of which cross the Sahara Desert, continue to be dangerous routes.

FORCED RETURNS OF WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICAN NATIONALS



In 2021, close to 30,000 migrants were forcibly returned from Algeria and Libya to Mali, Chad and Niger

Mass expulsions, particularly from Northern African countries, intensified at the very start of the COVID-19 crisis, as governments realized borders would be sealed off and took the opportunity to crack down on irregular migration prior to the closure of borders. As international borders then shut down in the midst of the pandemic, mass expulsions were then suspended, before resuming in September 2020. In Algeria, these movements are conducted through both official convoys coordinated with the Nigerien government, by which Nigerien migrants are handed over to the Nigerien army, and unofficial movements, during which irregular foreign migrants are arrested, held in transit centres, and transferred by bus to *Point Zero*, a vast, remote and isolated zone at the border between Niger and Algeria, in often dangerous and inhumane conditions¹⁶¹. According to a report by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Algeria has reportedly organized the return of migrants from at least 20 nationalities to Niger, including many women and children¹⁶². Meanwhile, Libya regularly returns migrants from south-eastern Libya to Chad, while there have been accounts of forced returns of migrants from Algeria to Mali.

In 2021, close to 30,000 migrants were expelled from Algeria and Libya to Mali, Chad and Niger, representing a 30 per cent increase when compared to 2020. In Chad, over 2,000 migrants were forcibly returned from Libya to Ounianga Kébir, including close to 600 in 2021 alone¹⁶³. According to IOM Niger, 26 official convoys to Niger were organized from Algeria in 2021, returning 17,000 individuals (mainly Nigerien nationals)¹⁶⁴. In addition, in 2021, IOM Niger organized 33 Humanitarian Rescue Operations at *Point Zero*; these operations provided rescue and lifesaving assistance to 10,844 individuals.

The non-governmental organization *Alarme Phone Sahara* estimates that, in the context of the establishment of a new national strategy on irregular migration, close to 26,000 individuals were forcibly returned from Algeria to Niger in 2021¹⁶⁵.

In addition, according to the Spanish Ombudsman, Spain has reportedly pushed back several hundred West African nationals, mainly from Senegal, Guinea and Mali, from its enclaves in Ceuta, Melilla and Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera¹⁶⁶.

¹⁶¹ IOM, UNHCR, *Mass Expulsions from Algeria and Eastern Libya: Background Paper and Points for Discussion*, December 2020.

¹⁶² Mixed Migration Centre, *West Africa Quarterly Mixed Migration update: Quarter 2 2021*, June 2021.

¹⁶³ IOM Chad, *ETT Report 89*, January 2021.

¹⁶⁴ IOM Niger, *Algerian Official Convoys Dashboard*, January 2022.

¹⁶⁵ Mixed Migration Centre, *West Africa Quarterly Mixed Migration update: Quarter 4 2021*, March 2022.

¹⁶⁶ Mixed Migration Centre, *West Africa Quarterly Mixed Migration update: Quarter 3 2021*, November 2021.

VOLUNTARY RETURN IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM has resumed its activities to assist migrants benefiting from the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) /Voluntary Humanitarian Returns (VHR) programs. However, the return process was not as regular as in previous years, considering the COVID-19 restrictions still in place, such as the PCR test or quarantine period requirements. Nevertheless, IOM has responded to all those challenges by making sure that migrants returned safely to their country of origin.

Through its transit and reception centres, IOM ensured that migrants awaiting the end of their quarantine or their return to their country of origin were assisted, and that each individual's vulnerabilities were considered. In fact, assistances such as food, sanitation and hygiene products, shelter, or medical support were provided to stranded migrants. In addition, psychosocial support was offered to migrants that have suffered abuse or all types of violence and exploitation in their migratory route. IOM reported that in 2021, 7302 were assisted in their transit and reception centres in Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali, IOM reported that they continued to accept migrants who requested assistance for voluntary return, and that they were hosted in transit centres with all measures taken to ensure COVID-19 prevention measures. In this context, IOM successfully put in place humanitarian corridors in collaboration with governments in host countries and countries of origin to support stranded migrants with return assistance across the West and Central Africa region.

Returns from North Africa and Europe resumed in August 2020 with the partial borders opening in most West and Central Africa countries. In 2021, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) organized the voluntary return of more than 21,945 nationals of West and Central African countries. Two main countries of origin recorded 43 per cent of all AVRR and VHR towards West and Central Africa in 2021: Guinea (5144), and Mali (4451). In total, 21 country offices received migrants in their return. In 2017, Nigeria was the main of country of origin for AVRR and VHR assistances provided by IOM in the WCA region. Since 2018, this trend changed in favour of Mali which remained the main country of origin until 2020. Since 2021, Guinea is the main country of origin in West and Central Africa. Côte d'Ivoire is within the top 5 countries of origin since 2018.

In 2021, IOM organized the voluntary return of more than 21,000 nationals of West and Central African countries

58% of beneficiaries of voluntary return were

MAIN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN BY YEAR AND % OF AVRR/VHR DURING THIS YEAR									
2017	%	2018	%	2019	%	2020	%	2021	%
NIGERIA	25%	MALI	22%	MALI	23%	MALI	22%	Guinea	23%
GUINEA	16%	GUINEA	20%	NIGERIA	19%	GUINEA	21%	Mali	20%
NIGER	12%	NIGERIA	14%	GUINEA	15%	NIGERIA	10%	Nigeria	15%
SENEGAL	11%	CÔTE D'IVOIRE	9%	CÔTE D'IVOIRE	7%	SIERRA LEONE	8%	Sierra Leone	8%

assisted to return from another country in West and Central Africa

THE GAMBIA	9%	NIGER	7%	NIGER	7%	CÔTE D'IVOIRE	6%	Côte d'Ivoire	7%
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Table 13. Main countries of origin of migrant beneficiaries of AVRR/VHR, and proportion of all AVRR/VHR, by year (2017-2020)¹⁶⁷

Of the 21,945 individuals assisted in their return by IOM to their country of origin in WCA in 2021, 58 per cent (or 12,770) were assisted to return from another country in West and Central Africa (mainly Niger). North Africa was the second main region of return for WCA individuals assisted in their return (36%, or 7,948 individuals assisted from a country in the region), mainly Libya. Returns from Europe represent a bit more than 3% of the total returns. The trend of returns from host countries is changing over the years from North Africa to West and Central Africa with WCA being the region with the highest number of returns since 2019, a trend that has not changed in 2021. As a result of forced returns from Algeria, migrant favouring Niger as a transit country and scaling up of support programs, Niger became the main host countries for AVRR and VHR assistances in 2018 after Libya in 2017. This remained unchanged over years until 2021 with decreasing proportion of the total return assistance in the region over years: 2017 (9%), 2018 (41%), 2019 (55%), 2020 (60%), 2021 (47%). In contrast, the same proportions for Libya were decreasing over years, until 2021 where the proportion of returns has slightly increased in comparison to 2020.

MAIN HOST COUNTRIES BY YEAR AND % OF AVRR/VHR DURING THIS YEAR									
2017	%	2018	%	2019	%	2020	%	2021	%
LIBYA	69%	NIGER	41%	NIGER	55%	NIGER	60%	Niger	47%
NIGER	19%	LIBYA	40%	LIBYA	24%	LIBYA	11%	Libya	13%
MOROCCO	5%	MALI	5%	MALI	4%	MOROCCO	5%	Morocco	10%
TUNISIA	2%	ALGERIA	4%	MOROCCO	4%	ALGERIA	5%	Algeria	9%
GERMANY	1%	MOROCCO	4%	ALGERIA	3%	CHAD	3%	Chad	4%

Table 14. Main host countries of migrant beneficiaries of AVRR/VHR, and proportion of all AVRR/VHR, by year (2017-2021)¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ IOM WCA, *Assistance to Voluntary and Humanitarian Return 2017—2021: Profiles of migrants assisted to return to their country of origin in West and Central Africa*, April 2022.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*



DEFINITIONS

The West and Central Africa region, for IOM, is comprised of twenty-three countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, The Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo. The IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa is located in Dakar, Senegal.

Definitions¹⁶⁹

IOM defines a **migrant** as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.¹⁷⁰ An internally displaced person, or an IDP, is a persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.¹⁷¹

An **Internally Displaced Person (IDP)** is a person who has been forced or obliged to flee or to leave his or her home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who has not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

A **Returnee (formerly displaced person)** is a person who was forcibly displaced and has since returned to his or her place of origin or habitual residence. A distinction is made between **former IDP Returnees**, who were previously internally displaced and have since returned to their place of habitual residence, and **Returnees from abroad**, who were previously displaced in a country other than their country of origin or habitual residence and have since returned to their place of habitual residence. The definition of Returnees from abroad differs between countries, and in some contexts includes individuals who were previously displaced in a country other than their country of origin or habitual residence and have since returned to their country of origin or habitual residence (but may have settled in a region, location or place other than their region, location or place of origin or habitual residence).

IOM's **Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)** is a system to track and monitor population mobility, including migration and forced displacement. It is designed to regularly and systematically capture, process and disseminate information to provide a better understanding of the movements, profiles and needs of displaced populations, whether on site or *en route*.

¹⁶⁹ See IOM, *Glossary on Migration*, 2019.

¹⁷⁰ IOM, *Who is a migrant?*, 2019.

¹⁷¹ United Nations Commission on Human Rights, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (UN Doc E/ CN.4/1998/53/Add.2).

DEFINITION

Return migration is, in the context of international migration, the movement of persons returning to their country of origin after having moved away from their place of habitual residence and crossed an international border. In the context of internal migration, it is the movement of persons returning to their place of habitual residence after having moved away from it.

A **Point of Entry** is an international border crossing point (whether an airport, over land, or over a body of water) at which officials are stationed to oversee the entry and exit of people and merchandise.

A **Land Border Point** is an international border crossing point on land, including rail.

A **Blue Border Point** is an international border crossing point on a sea, river or lake.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse refers to any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another (sexual exploitation), or to the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions (sexual abuse).

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence refers to any act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. It includes physical, emotional or psychological and sexual violence, and denial of resources or access to services. Violence includes threats of violence and coercion. SGBV may affect women, girls, men and boys.

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration is the administrative, logistical or financial support, including reintegration assistance, to migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host country or country of transit and who decide to return to their country of origin.

Search and Rescue Operations are operations in Niger undertaken by IOM, in collaboration with Niger's General Directorate of Civil Protection (*Direction générale de la protection civile*, DGPC), to find and bring lost and stranded migrants to the nearest safe urban centre (Agadez, Arlit, Dirkou). Search and Rescue Operations are conducted both proactively (teams are dispatched along migration routes to search for migrants in distress) and reactively (in response to distress calls or information received) in the regions of Agadez, Arlit and Dirkou/Bilma.

Humanitarian Rescue Operations are operations conducted by IOM at *Point Zéro*, located at the border between Niger and Algeria, to provide lifesaving assistance to migrants transferred to *Point Zéro* by Algerian authorities, including transportation to Assamaka, emergency humanitarian first aid, water, food, and medical and psychosocial support.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVRR: Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

CAR: Central African Republic

CMP: Commission mouvements de populations

CMR : Central Mediterranean Route

CONASUR: Conseil national d'urgence et de réhabilitation

COVID-19: Coronavirus disease 2019

DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo

DTM: Displacement Tracking Matrix

ECCAS: Economic Community of Central African States

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

FMP: Flow Monitoring Point

HRO: Humanitarian Rescue Operation

IDP: Internally Displaced Person

IDMC: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

IOM: International Organization for Migration

LGA: Local Government Area

NSAG: Non-State Armed Groups

MMC: Mixed Migration Centre

OCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

PPE: Personal Protective Equipment

RBM: Réseau Billital Marobé **SARS-COV-2:** Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
Coronavirus 2

SAR: Search and Rescue Operation

UNDESA: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

VHR: Voluntary Humanitarian Return

WAAR: West African Atlantic Route

WCA: West and Central Africa

WHO: World Health Organization

WMR: Western Mediterranean Route

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METHODOLOGIES

FLOW MONITORING (IOM DTM)

COUNTRIES: BURKINA FASO, CAMEROON, CHAD, GUINEA, MALI, NIGER, NIGERIA, SENEGAL

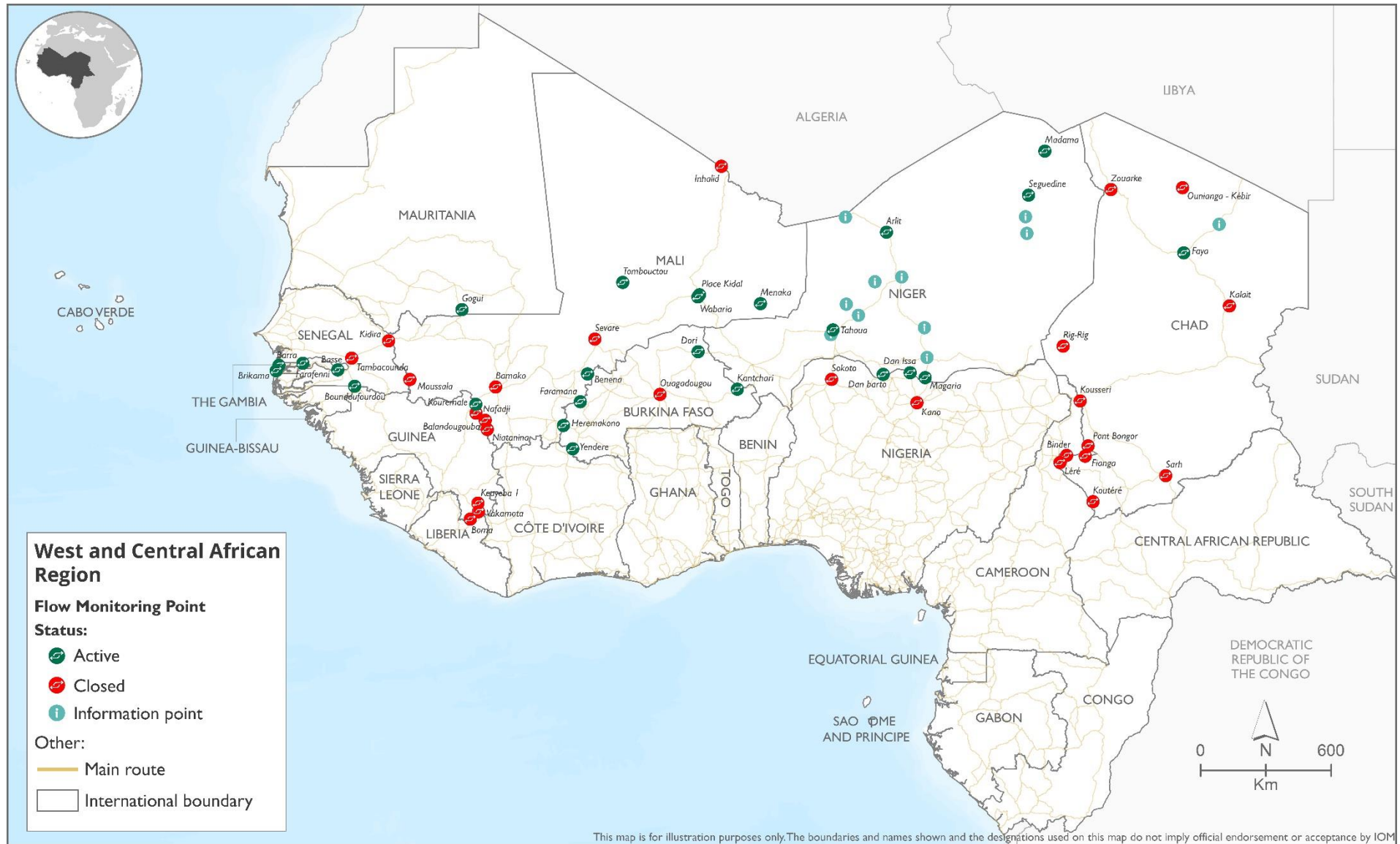
Methodology: The purpose of Flow Monitoring, a tool of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), is to provide regular and updated information mobility trends and flows and on the volume, profile, journey and intentions of mobile populations. The gathered information and analysis of data also contributes to improving and tailoring the provision of assistance to migrant populations.

Data is collected at Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs), key transit points, such as coach stations, rest stops and border crossing points, located in areas of high mobility. Consultations are first organized with national authorities to identify areas of high mobility. IOM, in coordination with local actors, then determine the locations at which to install FMPs. Data is collected at each FMP on a daily basis by a team of enumerators. Two sets of activities are conducted at FMPs:

- 1) **Flow Monitoring Registry (FMR):** The Flow Monitoring Registry (FMR) collects quantitative data about the number of migrants crossing FMPs daily and basic profiles of flows, migrants' nationalities, sex and age, countries and cities of departure and next destinations. Enumerators collect data through interviews with Key Informants, including local authorities, border patrol agents, bus drivers, or local staff.
- 2) **Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS):** The Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS) consists of individual interviews with a sample of migrants, chosen randomly amongst travellers crossing an FMP. FMS collects detailed information about the profile of migrants; their migration journeys; reasons and drivers of migration; intended final destination; challenges and obstacles faced; and future intentions aimed at capturing qualitative information about the profiles of migrants, migration drivers and migrants' needs.

In West and Central Africa, in the period 2017-2020, Flow Monitoring was conducted at 35 FMPs in 8 countries. During that time period, the Flow Monitoring Registry captured more than 6 million individual movements, while Flow Monitoring Surveys were conducted with over 170,000 travellers.

Limits: Flow Monitoring activities, conducted at a limited number of key transit points (FMPs), do not cover the entire West and Central Africa region. As such, the collected data only reflects the characteristics of flows crossing the FMPs; results are not indicative of movements in other non-monitored transit locations and cannot be generalized to the entire migrant and mobile populations in an area or country. Moreover, while data is collected on a daily basis, data collection only takes place during hours of peak activity, and some flows may therefore not be captured. Consequently, the combined results must be read as indicative of changes in flows and trends, rather than as an exact measurement of mobility.



Map 13. Location of Flow Monitoring Points in West and Central Africa, in 2021¹⁷²

¹⁷² Exact location and operational status may vary.

EMERGENCY TRACKING TOOL (IOM DTM)

COUNTRIES: CAMEROON, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, CHAD, NIGERIA

Methodology: IOM DTM's Emergency Tracking Tool (ETT) collects key data on events which provoke the displacement of populations, including number of people displaced, the location of displaced individuals, reason for displacement, intentions, priority needs and assistance received. When an event occurs, Key Informants contact DTM teams to share the available information. Data is collected as soon as possible after the occurrence of an event, so as to inform response.

Limits: The ETT is only activated once a threshold (i.e. minimum number of people displaced by an event) has been crossed and as such does not record every event. Because the data is provided by Key Informants, the information gathered may be inaccurate or incomplete. Furthermore, ETT assessments do not taken into account the longevity of displacement, and no follow-up assessment is conducted: individuals recorded as displaced during an ETT assessment may return home soon thereafter.

MISSING MIGRANTS PROJECT (IOM GMDAC)¹⁷³

COUNTRIES: BURKINA FASO, CHAD, MALI, MAURITANIA, NIGER, SENEGAL

Methodology: The Missing Migrants Project, a project of IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC), counts migrants who have died at the external borders of states, or in the process of migration towards an international destination, regardless of their legal status. The Project records only those migrants who die during their journey to a country different from their country of residence.

Missing Migrants Project data include the deaths of migrants who die in transportation accidents, shipwrecks, violent attacks, or due to medical complications during their journeys. It also includes the number of corpses found at border crossings that are categorized as the bodies of migrants, on the basis of belongings and/or the characteristics of the death.

The Missing Migrants Project currently gathers information from diverse sources such as official records – including from coast guards and medical examiners – and other sources such as media reports, NGOs, and surveys and interviews of migrants. In the Mediterranean region, data are relayed from relevant national authorities to IOM field missions, who then share it with the Missing Migrants Project team. Data are also obtained by IOM and other organizations that receive survivors at landing points in Italy and Greece. IOM and UNHCR also regularly coordinate to validate data on missing migrants in the Mediterranean.

Limits: There are some limitations to the data available on deaths and disappearances during migration in West and Central Africa. The information available is sparse and rarely contains information on sex, age, and places of disappearance or death. Moreover, there is no perfectly harmonized data on the number of migrants missing, nor information on the families who are still looking for those lost during their migration.

¹⁷³ Missing Migrant Project, Methodology ([link](#))

MOBILITY TRACKING (IOM DTM)¹⁷⁴

COUNTRIES: CAMEROON, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, CHAD, MALI, MAURITANIA (MIGRANTS), NIGERIA.

Methodology: Mobility tracking, a tool of IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), collects regular and updated information about the numbers, types, location, profiles, multisectoral needs and vulnerabilities of forcibly displaced populations, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), former IDP Returnees and Returnees from abroad. It is designed to capture displacement dynamics and trends. DTM teams consult national and local authorities to establish the regions, locations and displacement sites hosting displaced populations. In each location, DTM enumerators collect data through direct observation, focus group discussion, and interviews with several Key Informants with intricate knowledge of the displacement situation, such as IDP representatives, site management, local authorities or NGO staff, to determine the numbers and profiles of displaced people in each location and collect key information on displaced people’s access to basic goods and services, assistance received and multisectoral needs.

In West and Central Africa, Mobility Tracking is implemented in four crises: the Lake Chad Basin (Cameroon’s Far North, Chad’s Lac Province, Nigeria’s North East Zone), Nigeria’s North West/North Central crisis, the Central African Republic crisis, and the Central Sahel crisis (Mali).

Mobility Tracking is also utilized to ascertain the numbers, profiles, experiences and needs of migrant populations residing in a given area or city. Exercises of this sort are implemented in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou (Mauritania) as well as Kolenda (Guinea).

Limits: Numbers collected through Mobility Tracking should be read as estimates, and not exact figures. In addition, while the information collected is systematically triangulated and verified, data is mostly collected through interviews with Key Informants and may therefore be inaccurate or incomplete. Furthermore, logistical, security, physical access or political constraints sometimes restrict the coverage of Mobility Tracking exercises, limiting the completeness of data.

MONITORING OF DEPARTURE AREAS (IOM DTM)¹⁷⁵

COUNTRIES: SENEGAL

Methodology: IOM launched in 2020 in Senegal, a tool whose aim is to monitor the areas of departures in Senegal for migrants travelling along the Western African Atlantic Route (WAAR), to Mauritania, Morocco, or the Spanish Canary Islands. Data is collected on key events observed in departure areas, including departure of boats, shipwrecks, boat construction or enlisting of potential migrants, as well as the demographic profiles of departing migrants.

Trained community focal points provide enumerators with a variety of information, using a standard form on a smartphone, on events observed in departure areas along the Senegalese coastline. The methodology combines three tools:

¹⁷⁴ IOM, “Methodological Framework used in Displacement tracking matrix Operations for quantifying Displacement and Mobility”, 2017.

¹⁷⁵ IOM Senegal, “Monitoring of movements to the Canary Islands — Movements and Departures from Senegal (1—30 September 2020)”

- **Departure Monitoring:** The departure monitoring tool serves to document the organization and departure of boats along the West African Atlantic Route (WAAR), at specific locations along the West African coastline; to better quantify the migratory flows on this route; and to provide information on the frequency, number of travellers, types of boats and travel conditions.
- **Mapping of Departure Areas:** The purpose of this tool is to identify the main areas from which migrants depart when travelling along the Western African Atlantic Route (WAAR), to Mauritania, Morocco, or the Spanish Canary Islands. These areas are identified through consultations with national and local authorities as well as Community Focal Points (CFPs).
- **Counting:** This tool collects data on the numbers and profiles of migrants observed departing from Senegalese coasts, en route to Mauritania, Morocco, or the Spanish Canary Islands.

Limits: Data on departures from the West African coasts remain insufficient and lack consistency and a harmonized approach. The existing data relate to arrivals (and vessels intercepted) to the Canary Islands and are collected by the Spanish government. They do not provide enough information on departures given the number of breakdowns and unreported cases of boats leaving certain coasts of Morocco to Senegal.

POINT OF ENTRY ASSESSMENT (IOM DTM)¹⁷⁶

COUNTRIES: REGION-WIDE

Methodology: The outbreak of COVID-19 has affected global mobility in complex and unprecedented ways in the form of various travel restrictions, suspension of air travel and border closures. To better understand this, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has developed a global mobility database to map these impacts on human mobility, across global, regional and country levels. Furthermore, COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations in camps and camp-like settings as well as exacerbated the vulnerabilities of mobile populations who may now be stranded owing to COVID-19 related mobility restrictions. This data is particularly important when addressing specific needs faced by migrants and mobile populations.

The IOM have initiated the following main activities:

- **COVID-19 Travel Restriction Monitoring** - This database provides daily reporting on the rapidly changing travel restrictions being imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This platform maps and analyzes the different countries, territories and areas (C/T/A) that are imposing restrictions, as well as those that are receiving restrictions. This analysis is developed by categorizing the different types of restriction into 14 categories, including whether it is a total or partial restriction on entry. This workstream uses secondary data sources such as the International Air Transport Association (IATA), media reports and direct information from IOM country missions.

With global mobility at a near standstill, more stringent restrictions and new exceptions to mobility have also been issued by Governments and authorities, to reflect this, DTM has also incorporated the analysis of exceptions to mobility restrictions such as repatriations, the mobility of humanitarian and medical experts, airline crew and so on to capture the changing dynamics of the COVID-19 global mobility context.

¹⁷⁶ Taken from : <https://migration.iom.int/mobility-impacts-covid-19-methodology>

To effectively visualize this, drawing on the data from the COVID-19 Travel Restriction Monitoring database, the DTM team has developed an interactive travel restriction matrix to easily visualize the current status of travel restrictions that are imposed and received by all the countries, territories or areas simultaneously.

- **COVID-19 Country Points of Entry (PoE) Status Baseline Assessment** – IOM has developed a global mobility database mapping the status of different Points of Entry (PoE), globally. These include airports, land border crossing points (could be rail or road), blue border crossing points (sea, river or lake), internal transit points and areas of interest. For each point of entry, data is collected on the type of restriction, measures applied and the time frame, as well as the population category that may be affected by the restrictive measures. This workstream uses direct input from IOM missions and this dashboard displays regularly updated mobility restrictions at location level.
- **Stranded Migrant Mapping** - To better understand how COVID-19 related mobility restrictions affect migrants and mobile populations, DTM is tracking information to provide a comprehensive overview of the different categories of migrants in precarious situations through direct IOM country sources and extensive media searches. The population types are the following:

Stranded Migrants are individuals unable to return as a result of mobility restrictions related to COVID-19. This could include economic migrants, students, temporary visa/work permit holders, or tourists. These populations may be seeking repatriation or assistance while remaining abroad.

Migrants repatriated or who returned to their country of origins/resident country are organized into the following subcategories:

Repatriated Migrants repatriation/assistance includes individuals that have returned to their country of origin or country of residence through Government repatriation efforts.

Returning Migrants are previously stranded individuals who have returned to country of origin/resident country by their own means.

Camps, Detention Centers or Camp-like Settings include populations who have been residing in transit centres, detention centres or camp/camp-like settings that have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Other = categories that does not fall obviously into the three categories listed above, such as migrant laborers with work permits/visas.

STABILITY INDEX (IOM DTM)¹⁷⁷

COUNTRIES: CAMEROON, CHAD, NIGER, NIGERIA

Methodology:

¹⁷⁷ IOM, “West and Central Africa — Stability Index — Cameroon and Nigeria (September 2019)”, 2020

The Stability Index, launched in 2019 in the Lake Chad Basin, measures key indicators of stability, which are combined to estimate a single Stability Score for each surveyed locality. The data for the first round of the Stability Index was collected via Key Informant Interviews in over 2,000 displacement affected locations in the Lake Chad Basin. The survey covers three key themes that subject matter experts have determined are crucial to stability: safety and security, livelihoods and basic services, and social cohesion. Examples of safety and security questions include the presence of Non-State Armed Groups, the presence of state security forces like the police or army, and whether there have been recent security-related incidents. Questions on the livelihoods and basic services scale include topics such as the status of primary schools and local markets, while the social cohesion scale includes questions on access to identity documents and the illegal occupation of land. In addition to these questions about conditions in the locality, each key informant is asked a set of anchor questions about the feeling of stability in the locality.

The Stability Index is calculated using a dimensionality reduction technique called Principal Component Analysis (PCA), which essentially condenses the information from over 30 variables into a single, easily comparable Stability Score. PCA gives more weight to the factors that have a greater impact on the variability in the data, meaning that those factors make up a larger proportion of the Stability Score. In addition to the Stability Score, three separate sub-indexes are calculated using only the variables from each of the three themes in the survey: the Safety and Security scale, the Social Cohesion scale, and the Basic Services scale. This facilitates the identification of localities or areas that may need specific attention in one of these sectors. The Stability Index and the sub-scales are validated against the key questions on the perception of stability.

TRANSHUMANCE TRACKING TOOL (IOM DTM)¹⁷⁸

COUNTRIES: BENIN, BURKINA FASO, CAMEROON, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, CHAD, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, GHANA, MALI, MAURITANIA, NIGER, TOGO

Methodology: The Transhumance Tracking Tool (TTT), a tool of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), aims to support, strengthen and harmonize cross-border transhumance monitoring implemented by herder associations linked to the Bilital Maroobé Network (RBM). The TTT collects key data on transhumance movement dynamics in West and Central Africa, with the aim of providing the information needed for the implementation of support programs for populations involved in transhumance. The TTT provide information on flows, trends and profiles of transhumance flows and informs on events and risks of conflicts linked to transhumance. The TTT is implemented on a continuous basis, allowing for the identification of transhumance patterns and mobility dynamics over time. Data is collected through a network of Key Informants present at the Transhumance Tracking Points (TTPs).

The methodology used in the context of the TTT is based on five tools:

- **Mapping:** This tool involved participatory mapping exercise with national authorities and organizations involved in transhumance. This exercise seeks to map transhumance routes (both official and unofficial) used by transhumant herders and their cattle, as well as identify the locations of resources, such as water points and grazing lands, and key transhumant infrastructure, such as veterinary centres. The mapping tool also serves to identify key transit points which transhumant cattle cross, at which Transhumant Tracking Points (TTPs) will be installed.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

- **Counting:** The counting tool collects data on the numbers and types of animals, as well as the numbers and profiles of herders crossing TTPs. The counting tool also collects data on the direction, provenance and destination of transhumance flows. Enumerators posted at TTPs collect data through direct observation and interviews with heads of the herds.
- **Event tracking/Early warning:** The TTT established an early warning system, by which Key Informants alert DTM teams about notable events, including agropastoralist and communal conflicts, natural disasters and mass, sudden or unexpected movements of transhumant cattle. The purpose of the early warning system is to inform actions to mitigate or prevent adverse impacts of events related to transhumance. Information collected includes the type of event, actors involved, consequences of the event, for conflicts, whether the conflict was resolved and through which means, and possible steps to take to prevent and mitigate the effects of the event.
- **Surveys:** Surveys are implemented at individuals and household levels. They are conducted to obtain detailed information on a specific subject or theme. Through dedicated questionnaires, after simple random sampling, surveys are conducted with individuals or households in order to obtain more in-depth information on a specific subject, to establish a detailed profile of transhumant populations or to gather data on access. to services during periods of transhumance.
- **Mapping of transhumance presence:** The mapping of transhumance presence tool makes it possible to locate, characterize and count herders and animals present in a specific area. This tool methodology is two-pronged: 1) regional workshops to map the regions of interest and gather information at the regional level and 2) data collection at the locality level from key informants including representatives of herders, local NGO workers, state workers or officials.

In West and Central Africa, the TTT is implemented along the border areas separating Sahelian countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania) from coastal countries (Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo), as well as Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

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