



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



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LIVE, LEARN & PARTICIPATE (LLP):

ENHANCING ACCESS TO PROTECTION, EDUCATIONAL & LIVELIHOODS OPPORTUNITIES, AND STRENGTHENING NATIONAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ON THE MOVE IN WESTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA (2021-2023)

KEY STATISTICS – MIXED MOVEMENT & CHILD PROTECTION IN WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA

At least
1,825

people believed to have died along land routes from East and West Africa to Libya and Egypt between 2018 and Oct 2020¹

25%

increase in persons of concern to UNHCR in the West and Central Africa region in 2020

23,023

arrivals in Canary Islands, Spain, in 2020, representing a **753%** increase as compared to 2019

58%

of displaced families surveyed in the Sahel Protection Monitoring Project reported that their children did not regularly attend school²

54%

of respondents in the Sahel Protection Monitoring Project reported either forced labor (32%) or child marriage (22%) as the most common protection risks in their community³

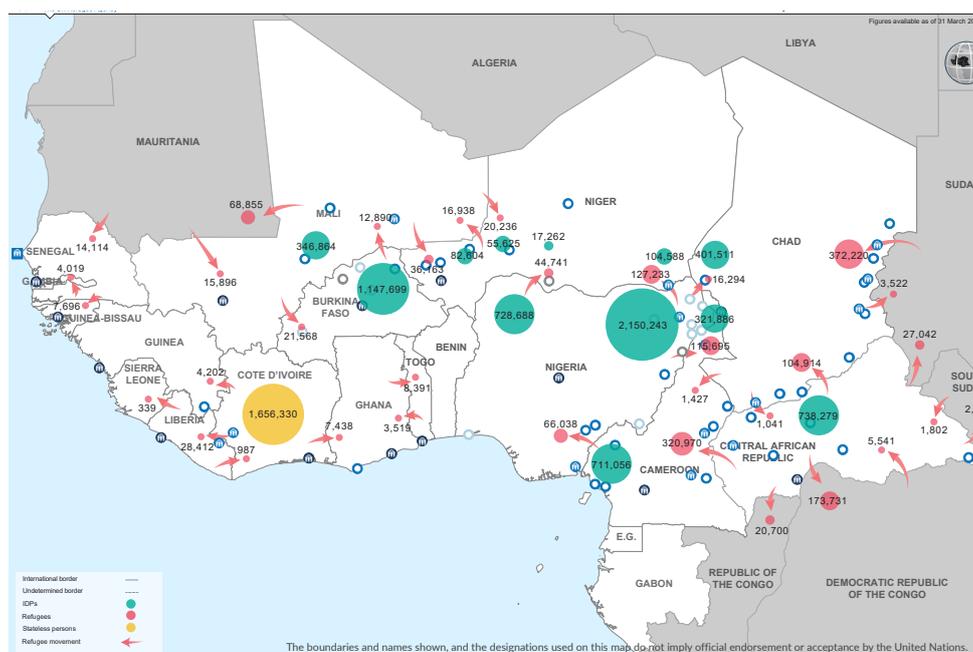
230

documented cases of child recruitment in Mali during the first half of 2020, more than in the whole of 2019 and double the number of cases detected in 2018⁴

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

Thousands of refugees and migrants leave their homes or countries of origin and undertake dangerous journeys across the West and Central African region as they seek to reach other countries within the region, North Africa or Europe. In doing so, they risk their lives, physical safety and dignity at the hands of traffickers and smugglers, and are exposed to extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, arbitrary and prolonged detention, starvation and extortion. Many are abandoned and left to die in the desert, or forced into exploitative labour.

WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA: PRINCIPAL REFUGEES, IDPS AND STATELESS PERSONS as of 31 March 2021



The West and Central Africa region currently hosts 11.3 million persons of concern to UNHCR. This is a 23% increase compared to the beginning of 2020, mainly due to the surge of displacement in the central Sahel region (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger). Other major drivers of displacement in the region are the Lake Chad Basin crisis, the continued instability in Central African Republic, the North-West and South-West crisis in Cameroon, and conflict in Darfur, giving rise to an influx of Sudanese refugees into Chad. In addition, the region is host to several smaller refugee populations, often in protracted situations.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH ON THE MOVE IN WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA

Countries in the region are simultaneously countries of origin, transit and destination particularly for children and youth on the move. Conflict and instability, combined with economic factors, climate change-induced natural disasters, and traditional practices – including child marriage and child labour – prompt girls, boys, and young women and men to leave their countries of origin. Children on the move include those separated from their parents or customary caregivers, and they often are at heightened risk of abuse, violence, exploitation and lack of appropriate care in their best interest. Girls and young women, but also boys and young men, are exposed to sexual violence and torture *en route* and in the destination countries. Those opting to end their journey and return to their countries of origin often face stigma and further abuse, and usually do not have access to appropriate counselling and protection services to address trauma arising from their experience. In addition, they often find it difficult to return to dignified and productive life due to lack of educational opportunities, qualifications, vocational skills, and employment options.

UNHCR's Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa, in partnership with UNHCR's Office of the Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean Situation, are responding to heightened protection risks for children and youth in the region with a specialized three year (2021-2023) appeal, **Live, Learn & Participate**, targeting **three key countries of asylum, destination and transit** as well as coordination resources within the UNHCR Regional Bureau in Senegal. A total of **52,000** target children and youth are projected to benefit across Chad (25,000), Cote d'Ivoire (15,000) and Mali (12,000).

COUNTRY PROFILES: CHAD, COTE D'IVOIRE AND MALI

With nearly 505,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers as of April 2021, **CHAD** is simultaneously a country of origin, a zone for transit, as well as a country of asylum and destination for thousands of children and young people from different backgrounds. Over 52% of the population registered with UNHCR is comprised of children, 73% are under the age of 12. In addition, Chad hosts over 401,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) linked to the conflict in the Lake Chad Basin. Movements in Chad are both voluntary and forced – linked to armed conflict in neighbouring countries. Both children of host communities as well as migrant and refugee children are at risk of being subjected to forced labor in the agricultural sector or street labor in urban areas. Many are sexually exploited and at risk of child trafficking.

COTE D'IVOIRE is home to a population of refugees, returnees and asylum-seekers. Over 2,500 refugees and asylum-seekers are registered in Côte d'Ivoire. There are also 1.66 million adults and children at risk of statelessness, while the voluntary return of Ivorian refugees from abroad continues. Returnees, refugees and asylum seekers face integration challenges and additional protection risks. Seventy percent of children aged 5 to 17 in Côte d'Ivoire are economically active, and the agricultural sector alone employs 71% of these children. In the cocoa fields alone, it is estimated that 300,000 to 1 million children are working under conditions considered to be among the worst forms of child labour.⁵ In urban areas, girls are often employed in under-paid domestic arrangements and boys in carpentry or assisting taxi drivers.

As a country of asylum, **MALI** has received over 48,000 refugees and asylum-seekers from Burkina Faso, Niger and Mauritania, out of which 60% are children. A significant increase in the refugee population has been noted in recent months, mainly in the border areas of northern and central Mali following the deterioration of the security situation in neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger. Additionally, Mali also has close to 350,000 IDPs within the country. Many children and youth do not have access to government-sponsored integration projects due to several factors, including issues with identification of individual needs, remoteness of localities of return and an emphasis on group assistance. These children and youth at-risk often resort to returning to migration routes in search of opportunities, as smuggling networks from the capital to the border regions in the north of the country are widespread. Unaccompanied or orphaned children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation, including sexual exploitation, forced begging or selling goods on the streets, and other dangerous forms of child labour.



An internally displaced Malian girl listens to classes on her solar-powered radio, donated by UNHCR to facilitate distance learning during COVID-19.

OVERARCHING PROJECT OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

While interventions will vary at the country level, this three-year initiative is divided into five key protection objectives:

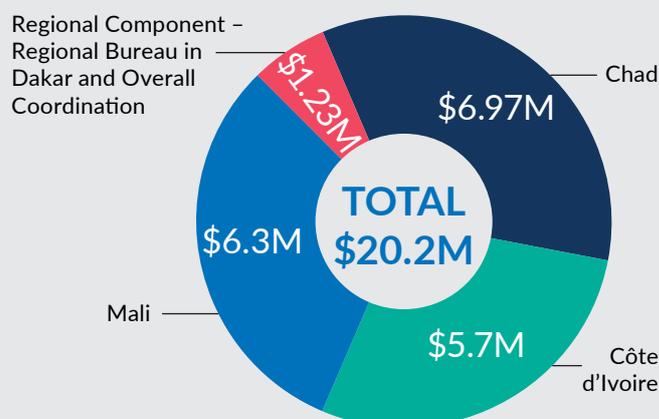
1. Protection of children & youth strengthened against the risks associated with onward movement through:

- Building capacity for national actors including frontline actors at border points;
- Mapping gaps and needed interventions with key partners;
- Creating Child Protection and Youth Units within country and field offices where needed to respond to the highest-risk caseloads.

2. Alternative care and support structures for children and youth strengthened through:

- Targeted scale up of identification, training and monitoring of foster care families across the locations so that more unaccompanied children can benefit from high-quality family-based care;
- Increasing provision of cash support to foster families and engagement of community members such as clergy, cultural leaders, and para-social workers on good foster care practices.

REGIONAL LLP BUDGET (Million USD, 2021–2023)



3. Access of children and youth to education, professional training and livelihood opportunities improved through:

- Construction and rehabilitation of child-friendly spaces to enhance Sports-for-Protection, educational and developmental activities;
- Supporting youth-led livelihood activities for young entrepreneurs and ensure that market-based vocational training is available for youth aged 18-24 years, a key group at risk of irregular movements.

4. Access to family tracing and reunification and other durable solutions strengthened, including:

- Supporting identification, documentation and reintegration of returning children into their families after they return from migration journeys;
- Strengthening family tracing services to provide better in-country, cross-border and third country reunifications when in the child's best interest.

5. Regional and country-level coordination strengthened leading to better outcomes for children and youth, including:

- Operationalizing regional inter-agency collaboration through strengthened referral, case management and follow-up monitoring mechanisms between key UN agencies, governments and NGOs to ensure better outcomes for refugee, asylum-seeker, returnee and migrant children in the region.



Central African refugees and Chadian children from the host community play football against other young Central African refugees in the Dosseye refugee site, southern Chad.

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ENDNOTES

1. Based on 4Mi survey data in 2018 and 2019, as well as additional open sources. See UNHCR and MMC, *On this journey, no one cares if you live or die*, July 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/operations/5f2129fb4/journey-cares-live-die-abuse-protection-justice-along-routes-east-west.html>.
2. UNHCR Project 21 Sahel Protection Monitoring Dashboard: <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrjoiNzc4Y2MOYjltZTA5Mi00MzI3LTJOTitNDRmNzNkMTk3N2QyIiwidCI6ImU1YzM3OTgxLTY2NjQjInRlc04YTBjLTlY1NDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOjIj>
3. *Ibid.*
4. This statistic is only based on reported cases. It is likely that actual cases of child recruitment in Mali are indeed much higher. Global Protection Cluster Report: AFTERSHOCK. Abuse, exploitation & human trafficking in the wake of COVID-19, pg 6, available at: https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/Global-Protection-Update_191120.pdf?utm_source=Test&utm_campaign=1206f25469-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_04_21_12_50_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_31b0ba1067-1206f25469-
5. Tulane Report Focuses Attention on Child Labor in Cocoa Industry – stopchildlabor. [FINAL REPORT 2013/14 \(dol.gov\)](https://www.stopchildlabor.org/final-report-2013-14). [Child labour rising in Ghana and Ivory Coast's cocoa farms: Study | Child Rights News | Al Jazeera](https://www.stopchildlabor.org/child-labour-rising-in-ghana-and-ivory-coast-s-cocoa-farms-study).