

West and Central Africa

Malian refugee students at school in Goudoubo camp, Burkina Faso. Because of rising insecurity, teachers have not shown up for class since before the Christmas break. Students come to class nonetheless and teach each other lessons, without teachers, books or chalk.

© UNHCR/Sylvain Cherkaoui

WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Providing life-saving humanitarian assistance

In light of the ongoing crises and displacement in the region, especially in the central Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, and given the volatile political situation in the Central African Republic and Côte d'Ivoire, UNHCR will step up its emergency preparedness and response capacity to provide timely life-saving humanitarian assistance to over 8.5 million people forced to flee and the communities that host them.

In context of internal displacement, UNHCR will lead the protection,

shelter/non-food item and camp coordination and camp management clusters, provide direct assistance to IDPs, ensure that protection is placed at the centre of the multi-stakeholder humanitarian response and pursue solutions in coordination with all partners, including key development actors. In line with its IDP Initiative, UNHCR will aim for a more consistent application of area-based approaches and integrated programming in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria to increase opportunities and resources in support of displaced populations and local communities.

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Consequences of COVID-19 on planning, preparedness and response

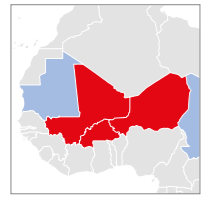
In West and Central Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic represents an additional burden for a region grappling with climate change, poverty and vulnerabilities such as fragile national health-care systems, limited access to water and sanitation facilities, and precarious living conditions in most areas hosting displaced populations.

With humanitarian access already hindered by violence and insecurity in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, UNHCR's operations were further constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing restrictions on movement imposed by governments across the region.

Education was particularly disrupted by the pandemic, especially in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel, where it was already jeopardized by ongoing violence. The negative consequences of prolonged school closures significantly impacted displaced children, especially girls who are more at risk of permanently dropping out, exposing them to protection risks such as forced marriage.

In this difficult regional context, UNHCR is adapting its processes and programmes to ensure continuity of assistance and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on displaced populations. The Office will advocate to preserve access to asylum and international protection; support inclusive national health responses; strengthen shelter interventions to improve living conditions, including in host communities; ensure continuity of education; strengthen community-based protection mechanisms; increase livelihood interventions to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic; and seek durable solutions.

MAJOR SITUATIONS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA IN 2021



THE SAHEL

In August 2020, the number of IDPs in Burkina Faso surpassed 1 million. This reflects rising violence and instability in the Sahel, which has forced a growing number of families to flee while exacerbating social and political tension within the region. The conflict has also expanded southwards, with populations in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana increasingly targeted by armed groups. As the security situation is likely to further deteriorate, it is expected that up to an additional 2 million people may be displaced in the Sahel in 2021.

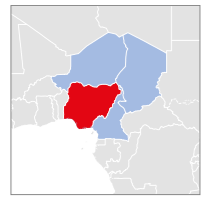
UNHCR will continue to provide humanitarian assistance and seek solutions for displaced populations and their hosts. In line with the regional strategy issued in June 2020, UNHCR's response will be focused on shelter interventions, distribution of core relief items, prevention of and response to gender-based violence, education and environmental protection. Should the conflict, violence and forced displacement spill over into Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo, UNHCR will sustain its support to these countries in their emergency preparedness and contingency planning.

The Office will ensure that the humanitarian response is complemented by more long-term development and peacebuilding interventions to address the deep-seated and intertwined root causes of the Sahel crisis. UNHCR will also engage and coordinate with the Governments of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger and other relevant actors. To facilitate and structure this cooperation, the five Governments have established, with UNHCR's support, the Bamako Process, an intergovernmental process to implement the conclusions of the 2019 Bamako Declaration.

189,800
MALIAN REFUGEES IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

2 million
IDPs IN BURKINA FASO, MALI AND WESTERN NIGER

71,000
REFUGEE AND IDP RETURNÉES



NIGERIA

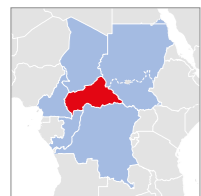
The security situation in and around Nigeria, notably across the Lake Chad Basin, will remain volatile in 2021, negatively impacting the protection environment in the border areas between Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria and leading to further displacement in the region.

The Lake Chad Basin—particularly the border areas between Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria that are critically exposed to the Boko Haram insurgency—will remain among the most dangerous areas in the world for civilians. Violence and insecurity in the states of Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara in Nigeria's North West show no signs of abating, limiting options to return for over 40,000 refugees who have been forced to flee to the Maradi region of southern Niger since 2019. Despite shrinking humanitarian access due to insecurity, UNHCR will focus on maintaining emergency response capacity and will also place greater emphasis on medium-term responses, including solutions, support to governments to improve identification of people of concern, building resilience, and gender and youth. UNHCR will also continue its support to national health systems to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and to mitigate the spread of the virus in hosting areas around the Lake Chad Basin, characterized by a high population density and overstretched health systems.

307,000
REFUGEES IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN

3.3 million
IDPs IN FAR-NORTH CAMEROON, SOUTH-WEST CHAD AND NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA

179,000
REFUGEE AND IDP RETURNÉES



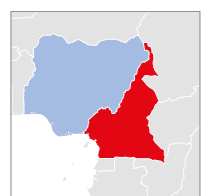
THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The political and security situation in the Central African Republic continues to improve, albeit with pockets of instability. Building on the tripartite agreements that were concluded with Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Congo in 2019, UNHCR will collaborate with governments as well as humanitarian and development actors to facilitate the safe and dignified return of Central African refugees and IDPs in 2021 and to ensure their successful and sustainable reintegration. While strengthening its presence in key return areas, UNHCR will also lead the protection, shelter/non-food items and camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) clusters in the Central African Republic. UNHCR will establish a support platform to advocate and mobilize political and financial commitments for protection, inclusion and solutions for all affected populations in the Central African Republic and key host countries.

591,000
CENTRAL AFRICAN REFUGEES IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

500,000
IDPs

130,000
REFUGEE AND IDP RETURNÉES



CAMEROON

The crises in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon are expected to persist in 2021, triggering both internal displacement within the country and refugee outflows to Nigeria. UNHCR will maintain its support to the Government of Nigeria by providing protection and strengthening the resilience of refugees and their hosts through a combination of targeted interventions for refugees living in settlements, and out-of-camp approaches in coordination with national services and local authorities. UNHCR will also lead the protection, shelter/non-food item and CCCM clusters. This leadership will be informed by quality protection data and analysis, in support of the multisectoral IDP response. UNHCR will further support efforts by the Government of Cameroon to provide documentation to IDPs and returning populations.

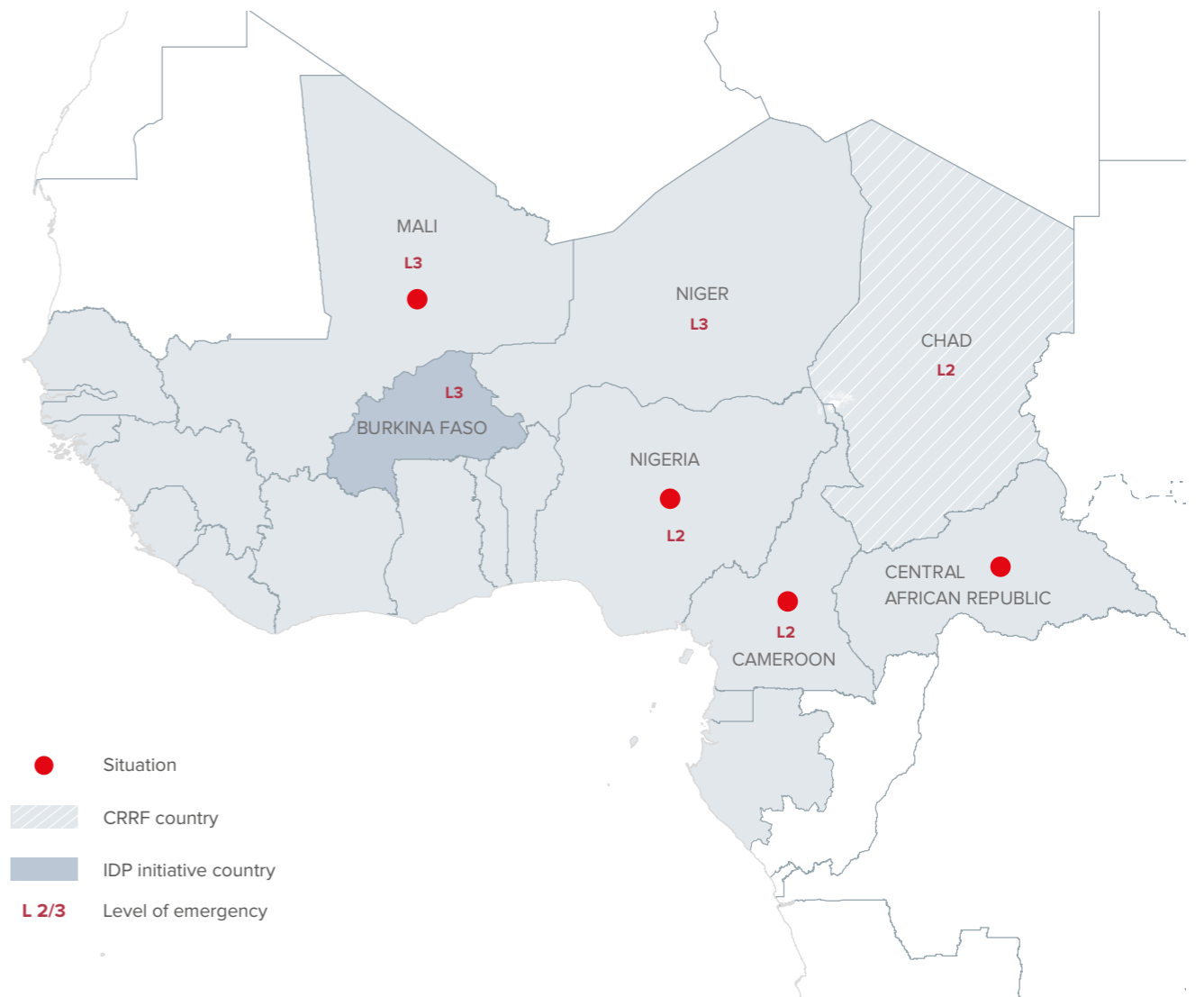
* Government estimate: 152,000 people

75,000
CAMEROONIAN REFUGEES IN NIGERIA

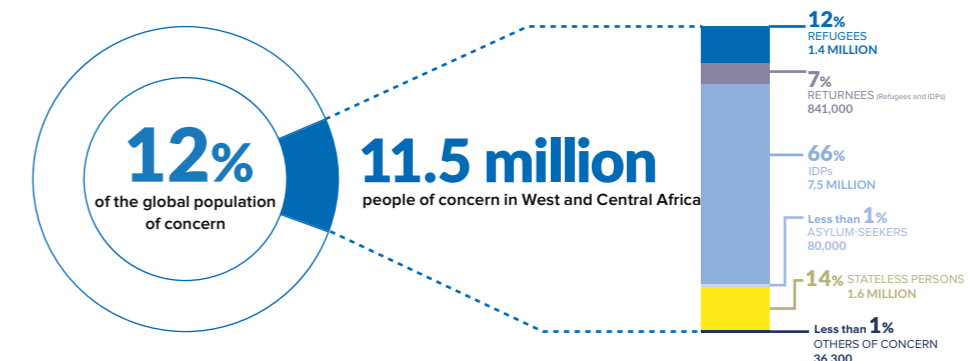
802,000*
IDPs IN NORTH-WEST AND SOUTH-WEST CAMEROON

431,000
IDP RETURNÉES

With five major displacement crises underway across the region and with the potential for instability, exacerbated by the effects of climate change in the Sahel, to spill over into coastal countries, West and Central Africa will face major protection concerns and rising displacement in 2021 and beyond.



2021 PLANNING FIGURES FOR PEOPLE OF CONCERN in West and Central Africa



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Strengthening protection and access to quality services for the displaced and those at risk of statelessness

UNHCR will focus on preserving access to territory and the right to seek asylum for refugees across West and Central Africa, as well as reducing the risk of statelessness, particularly in Côte d'Ivoire. UNHCR will support inclusive national health responses, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; strengthen education and self-reliance opportunities to foster the socioeconomic inclusion of people forced to flee; and reinforce social cohesion and peaceful coexistence with host communities.

UNHCR will also focus on preventing and responding to gender-based violence, specifically in conflict areas such as the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin where women and girls are often targeted and disproportionately impacted by violence.

The Office will also strive to secure humanitarian access to people of concern and civilians, and work with partners to improve civil-military coordination, including through support for existing civil-military platforms and the establishment of a regional civil-military coordination platform. UNHCR will continue to improve and scale up coordinated protection monitoring to inform its programming and advocacy, with the development and roll out of new tools across the region in 2021.

Reducing protection risks for refugees and asylum-seekers traveling as part of mixed movements in West and Central Africa will also remain a priority. In coordination with governments, UNHCR will further invest in

programmes aimed at sensitizing the public on the dangers of attempting to cross both the Sahara and the Mediterranean, and provide people of concern with viable alternatives to onward movements by ensuring protection and livelihood opportunities in countries of asylum.

UNHCR will support national asylum authorities in their efforts to prevent human trafficking and protect victims, and strengthen collaboration in this area as relevant in accordance with its mandate. The joint UNHCR and IOM "Framework document on developing standard operating procedures to facilitate the identification and protection of victims of trafficking" will be used as a reference.

Working towards durable solutions

UNHCR will work with partners such as governments, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), development actors and local communities to support refugees' socioeconomic inclusion and, where possible, their local integration.

In 2021, UNHCR will support the naturalization process for over 3,000 targeted refugees across the region and will advocate other forms of local integration, such as resident permits for Ivorian refugees living in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Mauritanian refugees in Senegal, Senegalese refugees in the Gambia and Guinea Bissau and Togolese refugees in Ghana. UNHCR will also work to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 through activities that strengthen livelihoods, self-reliance and peaceful coexistence between refugees and their hosts.

UNHCR will seek to maximize opportunities for resettlement and complementary pathways for refugees in West and Central Africa as travel restrictions are progressively lifted. Despite the suspension of resettlement programmes since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, UNHCR is planning to resettle over 2,800 refugees and will continue to advocate more resettlement opportunities and alternative pathways, including family reunification, study and work permits and evacuation to the Emergency Transit Mechanism in Niger. Where it is possible to do so in safety and dignity, UNHCR is planning to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of an estimated 170,000 refugees wishing to return, especially to the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Nigeria.

Enhancing regional partnerships

In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR will continue to engage with a wide range of partners, including development agencies and international

financial institutions, to support more comprehensive and coordinated responses to displacement in West and Central Africa. The World Bank's International Development Association regional sub-window for refugees and host communities (IDA18) will continue to be a key strategic partnership, particularly in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad and Niger. UNHCR will also strengthen its engagement with key regional organizations such as the African Development Bank in the Sahel, the African Union, ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States, and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, facilitating dialogue and promoting a coordinated regional approach.

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International community must act with "urgency" to end the crisis in the central Sahel.

Escalating insecurity has made it almost impossible for aid workers to reach those in need in a region where "unspeakable violence" perpetrated against civilians has forced nearly two million people to flee their homes.



FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Implications of underfunding

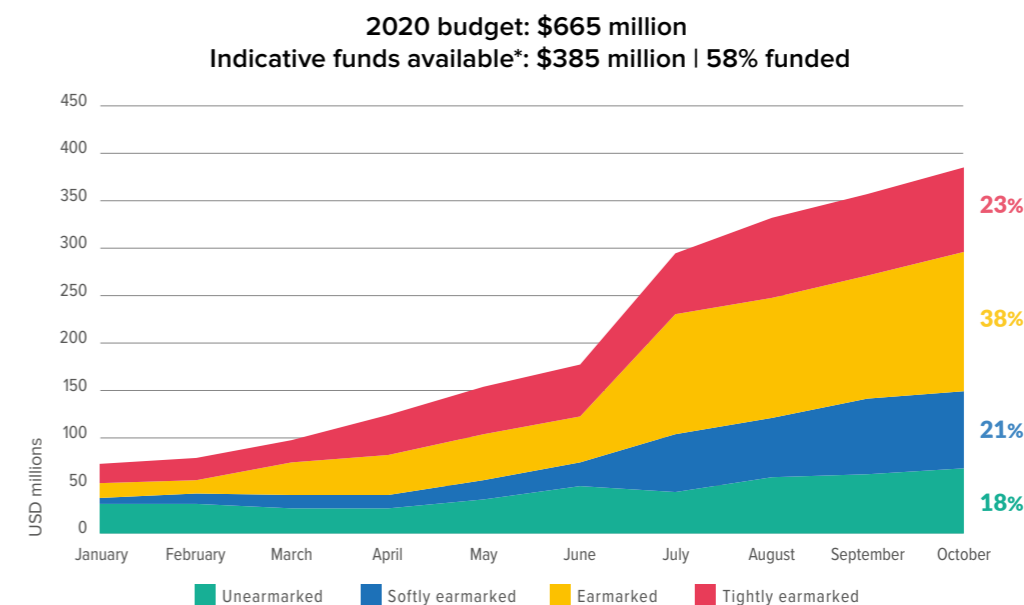
Refugees in protracted situations in the region, including Mauritanian refugees in Senegal and Ivorian and Togolese refugees in Ghana, risk being among the most severely impacted by underfunding in 2021. Limited funding will also jeopardize the response to the region’s major humanitarian crises, leading to the potential scaling down or suspension of strategic programmes, including those linked to UNHCR’s IDP Initiative, the Emergency Transit Mechanism in Niger, or the Central African Republic voluntary repatriation programme.

UNHCR is depending on further resources and staffing to continue to step up its leadership role in coordinating the protection, shelter and camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) clusters in emergencies across the region, particularly in situations where the number of IDPs is expected to grow in 2021, such as in Burkina Faso. In the North West zone of Nigeria, there is an urgent need to increase both operational and coordination responses for IDPs. In Chad, the development of an operational CCCM response is vital, while in Cameroon and Mali further resources are also needed to sustain operational and coordination responses in CCCM.

In Niger, given the growing insecurity and displacement, without sufficient funding the Office will not be able to maintain the current level of services provided through the Emergency Transit Mechanism—a programme which has proven its value in evacuating vulnerable individuals to safety, while also providing psychosocial and mental health support and strengthening social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between displaced and host communities around Agadez through joint livelihood activities. Insufficient funding will reduce UNHCR’s capacity to monitor and respond to the protection needs of over 2,500 refugees and asylum-seekers expected to be assisted in the transit centre and the surrounding host areas.

With the Central African Republic situation already one of the most underfunded in the world, the country experienced a new influx of some 3,000 Congolese refugees in Waka Prefecture in May 2020. In the absence of additional funding, the critical needs of these refugees will not be met adequately. Further, UNHCR will not be in a position to support voluntary repatriation and reintegration projects for refugee and IDP returnees to the Central African Republic, whose numbers are expected to increase in 2021.

2020 EARMARKING AND TIMELINESS OF FUNDING FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA | As of 1 October 2020



* Indicative funds available include carry-over from prior years and an indicative allocation of unearmarked and softly earmarked funds based on the prioritized budget.

BUDGETS FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA | USD

OPERATION	ALL PILLARS	PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	TOTAL
	2020 Current budget (as of 30 June 2020)	Refugee programme	Stateless programme	Reintegration projects	IDP projects	
Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa¹	13,679,130	14,477,736	-	-	-	14,477,736
Regional activities for West and Central Africa¹	3,140,200	4,000,000	-	-	-	4,000,000
Burkina Faso	75,660,739	49,875,060	1,000,135	-	32,005,398	82,880,594
Cameroon Multi-Country Office²	99,761,775	69,088,564	890,699	-	22,223,312	92,202,575
Central African Republic	47,362,639	14,515,584	841,245	16,853,566	11,001,032	43,211,428
Chad	135,390,747	136,465,978	909,076	-	2,089,454	139,464,509
Côte d'Ivoire	13,869,959	5,584,644	9,485,500	2,973,891	-	18,044,035
Ghana	7,886,819	7,249,894	-	-	-	7,249,894
Liberia	10,904,737	10,250,535	-	-	-	10,250,535
Mali	47,501,614	26,934,893	800,000	13,594,457	13,410,681	54,740,031
Niger	100,717,094	84,877,149	1,266,100	-	20,736,215	106,879,464
Nigeria	89,730,440	41,396,925	-	19,562,434	35,436,015	96,395,375
Senegal Multi-Country Office³	19,401,527	18,761,418	626,513	-	-	19,387,931
TOTAL	665,007,421	483,478,381	15,819,268	52,984,349	136,902,108	689,184,106

¹ Regional Bureau and regional activities cover the whole West and Central Africa region.

² Coordinates activities in Cameroon and Gabon and also covers Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome Principe.

³ Includes activities in Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Togo and also covers Benin, Cape Verde, Gambia and Sierra Leone.

* Note: budget appropriations are those approved by the UNHCR Executive Committee at its 71st session in October 2020. They are based on a budget cut-off date of 15 June 2020. Any subsequent revisions to budgets will be reflected as they are processed. Updated budget information is made available to Member States through regular updates on budgets and funding to the UNHCR Standing Committee. Information on the 2021 budgets will also be updated online on a monthly basis on Global Focus (<https://reporting.unhcr.org>).