

Mixed movements in West and Central Africa

January – March 2022



In February 2022, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, visited UNHCR's humanitarian centre in the town of Agadez, central Niger, a crossroad of mixed movements for the region and beyond © UNHCR/Colin Delfosse

This update provides a brief overview of **trends** and **programming** by UNHCR and partners in West and Central Africa in relation to mixed movements. Covering the period from January to March 2022, this issue includes contributions from **Burkina Faso**, **Chad**, **Gabon**, **The Gambia**, **Mali**, **Niger**, **Nigeria** and **Senegal**.

Mixed movements refer to situations in which individuals are moving together using the **same** routes and means of transportation, but for **different** reasons. Find out more in *UNHCR's 10-Point Plan in Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Movements* available [online](#).

Monitoring of mixed movements

To inform programming by collecting data on the profiles of persons on the move and strengthen access to protection services *en route* through referrals, UNHCR, together with partners, monitors mixed movements along key routes, relying on a network of local monitors.

In the framework of a partnership between the International Committee for Emergency Aid and Development (Comité International pour l'Aide d'Urgence et le Développement, CIAUD) and UNHCR in **Burkina Faso**, 137 persons on the move (heads of household) were profiled, including 45 asylum-seekers, 16 internally displaced persons (IDPs), 1 person at risk of statelessness in cross-border onward movements and 73 migrants. Overall, 32% stated that they were moving for fear of persecutions and armed conflict. 41% were nationals from Niger, followed by Mali (12%), Burkina Faso (11%) and Cote d'Ivoire (10%). Host to over 1.8

million IDPs due to the Sahel crisis, Burkina Faso is also a long-standing country of origin of migrants in the region.

Partnering with UNHCR, the national Red Cross society in **Chad** identified 3,445 persons in mixed movements across the country, including 171 refugees and 215 asylum-seekers. In the North of the country, 180 persons on the move, including 64 refugees, were intercepted by the authorities at Kalaït. The refugees were eventually released and referred to the Red Cross for support and readmission to their respective camps. Overall, a million of individuals are forcibly displaced in Chad, a country of origin of mixed movements, including to Libya and Niger.

Under a CIAUD-UNHCR collaboration, a network of 82 community-based focal points and 34 monitors deployed in the regions of Gao, Kayes, Kidal, Menaka, Mopti, Niore, Segou and Timbuktu in **Mali**

identified and profiled 1,325 persons in mixed flows, including 377 individuals moving for fear of persecutions and armed conflict. 33% claimed to have suffered from violence *en route*. As many other countries in West and Central Africa, Mali is an area of origin, transit and return of mixed flows, including to Europe.

In [Niger](#), 386 new asylum-seekers, including 111 children, were registered in Agadez, where mixed movements from North Africa, West Africa and Sudan meet. As an emerging trend, families seek asylum in increasing numbers.

In [Nigeria](#), border monitoring found that Cameroonian refugees in Akwa Ibom, Benue, Cross River and Taraba States joined mixed flows for business and family purposes. From Borno State,

victims and survivors of trafficking in persons, including men and adolescent boys *en route* to Algeria and Mali for forced labour and organ harvesting and women and adolescent girls on their way to Libya for domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and forced labour, were also detected. Within the national borders, monitors reported internal trafficking, impacting children, primarily girls, from the North-East to the South-East of the country.

In [Europe](#), according to provisional [data shared by the authorities](#), 6% of sea arrivals to Italy were Ivoirians, making it the 5th most common country of origin, a decrease compared to the same period in 2021, where Cote d'Ivoire was the first most common country of origin with 16% of all arrivals.

Programming in the context of mixed movements

UNHCR seeks to strengthen the protection environment along West and Central African routes, including for unaccompanied children and victims and survivors of trafficking in person, as well as enhance access to durable solutions for refugees, stateless persons and IDPs as a meaningful alternative to risky onward movements.

Identification and referral

In [Burkina Faso](#), under the CIAUD-UNHCR partnership, 5 children at risk of trafficking in persons were identified and referred to the relevant services.

On 16-20 February 2022, the [Gambia](#) Commission for Refugees participated in border monitoring missions to assess the latest mixed movements trends and engage with border officials on access to territory and asylum with a view to enhancing referrals to asylum authorities. In addition, the Commission facilitated a training on international protection for border officials, reaching a total of 40 participants deployed along various border entry points, including staff from the Drug Law Enforcement Agency, the Gambia Revenue Authority, the Immigration Department, the Police Force, and the State Intelligence service.

In [Mali](#), CIAUD-UNHCR monitors referred a total of 45 persons with specific needs to the relevant services. 10 unaccompanied children were also identified but rejected any referral to resume their journey.

In Cross River State, on the border with Cameroon, UNHCR [Nigeria](#) facilitated a training on international protection for security agents and staff of the Nigerian Immigration Service, touching upon a range of issues, including the freedom of movement of refugees, the out-of-camp policy in Nigeria, refugee protection and documentation.



Border officials attend a training on international protection in The Gambia. © UNHCR

After 1,000 to 1,500 nationals from Niger, primarily women and children, were identified in the streets of Dakar, **Senegal**, UNHCR provided support to the authorities with screening operations. No asylum-seekers were eventually detected. Several hundreds were eventually returned to Niger.

Protection frameworks and systems

On 5 April 2022, after more than a decade of discussions, the **Senegalese** parliament adopted a new legal framework regulating the status of refugees and stateless persons, revising a 1968 asylum law and strengthening the national asylum system, including by ensuring the right to appeal first-instance decisions and implementing the right to family reunification for refugees. In a country of origin, transit and destination of mixed movements, a robust national asylum system offers a meaningful alternative to risky onward movements for persons in need of international protection.

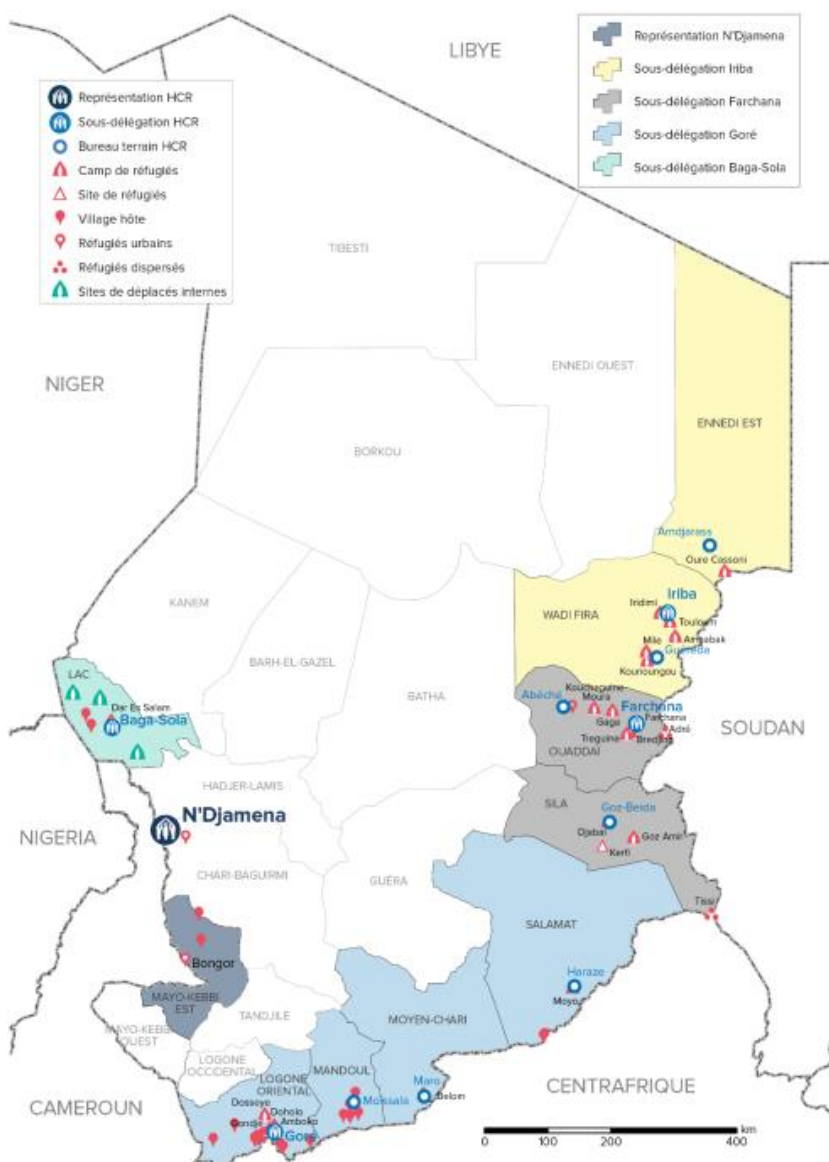
Communication with communities

In **Chad**, UNHCR and the national Red Cross society maintained a dialogue on protection risks *en route* and alternatives to risky onward movements with more than 3,800 persons on the move. A group discussion was organised in a Red Cross kiosk located in a bus station in N'Djamena, reaching a total of 80 persons on the move. Similar sessions targeted 348 new refugees from Cameroon based in the capital and 1,606 new refugees from Sudan in Adre and Hilleket (Ouaddaï). With a focus on youth, a debate was held on the same topics in the National Institute of Science and Technology of Abeche (Ouaddai), bringing together a total of 124 students, including 33 women and girls. Similar exchanges took place in various parts of the country and in different contexts, including in Gore (Logone Oriental), in the Moyo camp (Salamat), in Goz-Beida (Sila), in Guereda (Wadi Fira) and in Faya-Largeau (Borkou), reaching more than 1,800 students, including

women and girls. Two interactive programs addressing mixed movements were broadcast on two local radio stations, FM Alnadjah in Ati and FM La Voix du Ouaddaï in Abéché, accessible to more than 100,000 listeners.

In the regions of Gao, Kayes, Menaka, Mopti, Segou and Timbuktu of **Mali**, 83 focus group discussions brought together asylum-seekers, community leaders, persons on the move and returnees to discuss mixed movements, protection risks *en route* and alternatives to risky movements.

Under a partnership with Caritas, UNHCR **Nigeria** identified community volunteers and organised



Snapshot of refugees and IDPs in Chad as of March 2022 – UNHCR is facilitating several activities across the country to ensure populations of concern to UNHCR have access to reliable information on protection risks in the context of mixed flows and alternatives to risky movements. / Source of population data: CNARR, UNHCR, Cluster CCCM, IOM DTM ([link](#) to full dashboard)

community entry meetings on trafficking in persons. Plans and tools intended to support a baseline assessment of community knowledge, attitudes, and practices on trafficking in persons were developed and will be rolled out in April.

Response to specific needs

In [Gabon](#), statelessness is a serious risk affecting people on the move and children born in Gabon from non-nationals. To discuss obstacles to the prevention and reduction of statelessness, UNHCR organized a symposium bringing together key ministerial staff and academics. The recommendations stemming from the discussion will feed into a joint UN project on mixed movements, in the context of which UNHCR plans to implement a series of activities seeking to strengthen the identification and protection of stateless persons in mixed movements.

In Edo State, a key area of origin of trafficking in persons, UNHCR [Nigeria](#) built the capacities of 50 stakeholders involved in the response to improve the identification, protection, and assistance to victims and survivors of trafficking in persons, including those who may need international protection. In the North, in Borno and Yobe States, traditional community structures, such as religious and traditional leaders, including in refugee and IDP communities, were strengthened through community engagement with a view to communicate on and prevent trafficking in persons.

Solutions

In [Niger](#), a new memorandum of understanding governing the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) is currently under discussion between the authorities and UNHCR to replace a 2020-2022 agreement. Since 2017, the ETM led to the evacuation of 3,710 vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers from detention in Libya, where they had arrived within mixed movements, to Niger. Between 1 January 2022 and 31 March 2022, 114 refugees departed on resettlement from Niger, including 78 evacuees through the ETM.

In Dagana, on the border between [Senegal](#) and Mauritania, UNHCR supported the launch of a new

kiosk seeking to strengthen peaceful coexistence in border areas. Dagana is located in the Saint Louis region, where 1,100 Mauritanian refugees have been displaced for more than thirty years. The national Emergency Programme for the Modernisation of Axes and Territories (*Programme d'Urgence de Modernisation des Axes et Territoires*) is supporting the initiative with livelihood activities. Access to durable solutions for refugees is crucial in Senegal, a country of origin of mixed flows, including dangerous sea movements.



A new peaceful coexistence kiosk was launched in Dagana, Senegal, on the border with Mauritania. © UNHCR

Coordination

In [Burkina Faso](#), UNHCR participated in two meetings of the Working Group on Mixed Movements, established to enhance coordination between relevant local stakeholders. The Government was invited to take the lead of the Group.

The UN Country Team (UNCT) in [Gabon](#) endorsed the terms of reference of the UN Thematic Group on Mixed Movements of Populations, bringing together UNHCR, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Chaired by UNHCR for six months, the Group has produced a Mixed Movements Glossary of Terms to sensitize UNCT members, the authorities and other relevant stakeholders on key definitions and concepts related

to mixed movements.



A joint high-level IOM-UNHCR mission took place in Niger in February 2022.
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In [Mali](#), local cooperation frameworks were established in the regions of Kayes, Timbuktu and Segou to address mixed movements under the leadership of the local authorities.

During a joint three-day visit to [Niger](#), the Director General of IOM, António Vitorino, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, participated in a high-level roundtable on mixed movements in Niamey. Chaired by Niger's Prime Minister, Ouhoumoudou Mahamadou, the event provided an opportunity for key stakeholders, including Government ministers, the UN Resident Coordinator, senior diplomats, and UN agencies to discuss ways to better support Niger in the management of challenges of complex movements of refugees and migrants.

UNHCR Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa

Twitter: [@UNHCRWestAfrica](#) – Facebook: [UNHCR West & Central Africa](#)

In case of questions, please contact: ecollan@unhcr.org

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