

Key figures:

17 countries concerned

> 6.5 million people of concern

>1.2 million refugees

>26,000 asylum seekers

> 4 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

4 situations: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Mali and Nigeria

Mali situation:

138,985 Malian refugees in Mauritania (56,923), Niger (56,343) and Burkina Faso (25,719).

534,143 IDPs in Burkina Faso (288,994), Mali (168,515) and Niger (76,634)

Nigeria situation:

242,707 Nigerian refugees in Niger (118,868), Cameroon (107,840) and Chad (15,999)

2,480,493 IDPs in Nigeria (1,980,036), Cameroon (262,831), Chad (133,338) and Niger (104,288)

Cameroon situation:

42,887 Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria

530,806 IDPs

Central African Republic situation:

606,875 Central African refugees in Cameroon (287,467) in Chad (103,562) in the DRC (172,809) and in the Republic of Congo (31,688)

613,031 IDPs

Voluntary repatriation – Cote d'Ivoire:

A total of **1,518** Ivorian refugees have repatriated between January-August 2019.

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

Political and security developments

- In the **Sahel region**, since the beginning of the year, security incidents continue to be recorded on an almost daily basis, primarily against state institutions, security services, schools and health centers. Insecurity continues to thrive and spread beyond the Sahel region, targeting more and more civilians while exploiting underlying social tensions. Displacement patterns in the sub-region are becoming more and more complex.
- **Burkina Faso**, **Niger** and **Mali** have reported an increased number of security incidents during the first semester of 2019. This situation is impacting negatively on the protection environment for civilians and limiting activities of humanitarian actors as they have in recent months become significant targets. Despite the presence of Malian forces and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the central region of Mali continues to be the subject of a disturbing combination of inter-communal conflict, criminality and attacks by armed groups. The number of persons of concern has increased by 31% since the beginning of the year.
- In Mali, we saw the conclusion of the **Regional Dialogue on Protection and Solutions in the context of forced-displacements in the Sahel region**. The Dialogue, hosted by the Government of Mali and UNHCR, and including Government officials and partners from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and Niger, reconfirmed the need to search for durable solutions for persons forced to flee while ensuring that protection of civilians remains at the core of our interventions.
- The **Lake Chad Basin** is facing a severe protection crisis due to armed violence that has affected large parts of the region. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have lived in displacement sites in **Nigeria** and refugee camps for years in **Cameroon**, **Chad** and **Niger**, grappling with extreme hardship and deprivation. Many civilians have suffered abuse and rights violations and are deeply traumatized by the violence. Armed attacks have also persisted and in some cases escalated in recent months across all neighbouring countries. Several localities in Chad's western Lac region and in Niger's south-eastern Diffa region have suffered a spate of attacks since the beginning of the year. Cameroon, the second most affected country by the Lake Chad crisis, continues to be affected by cross-border attacks on an almost weekly basis.
- The general security situation in the North West and South West Regions of **Cameroon** has for several years now been characterized by high levels of violence, including kidnappings, killings and burning of houses as fighting continues between government forces and non-state armed groups. Civilians and basic facilities have been repeatedly targeted. Humanitarian access remains a key challenge for the humanitarian community, primarily due to the unpredictable security situation, ongoing conflict, international humanitarian law violations, and administrative impediments. The beginning of the school year saw yet again all schools shut in the two regions.
- Following the Khartoum dialogue held earlier this year, a peace agreement was signed between the Government of the **Central African Republic** and 14 armed groups on 6 February 2019. Despite this agreement, and signs of a few refugees returning, thousands remain in need of humanitarian assistance and protection within CAR and in neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo.
- On 29 June, the **Governments of Cameroon, the Central African Republic** and **UNHCR** jointly signed a Tripartite Agreement for the voluntary repatriation of Central African refugees living in Cameroon. The document defines the legal framework and sets out the modalities for the voluntary return of the about 280,000 refugees from CAR currently in Cameroon. Conditions for comprehensive and sustainable returns are still precarious due to continued conflict and insecurity. The main impediments to a sustainable return of IDPs and refugees remain insecurity and protection, as well as access to basic services and legal support, including housing, land and property.

Population movements

- **Mali situation:** There are some 140,000 Malian refugees in neighbouring Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. Even though the situation on the Mauritanian border remains quite stable, as of 30 June, UNHCR had registered 3,673 new arrivals from Mali since the beginning of the year and close to 1,000 have arrived in Burkina Faso and Niger respectively. The impact on population displacement of the Sahel crisis has been dramatic in Burkina Faso, where the number of IDPs has risen from some 50,000 at the beginning of the year to close to 300,000 by end August 2019 due to recurring security incidents. The neighbouring countries of Ghana, Niger and Togo have also seen the steady arrival of Burkinabe individuals.
- **Nigeria situation:** The humanitarian and protection situation in Nigeria, as well as in the border areas of Cameroon, Chad and Niger, remains concerning. As Boko Haram increased attacks in north east, a deadly wave of bandit violence continued to escalate in north west. Meanwhile, herder-farmer tensions rose in centre and south. In the Lake Chad Basin as a whole, the violence has uprooted nearly 2.5 million civilians within their own countries, including nearly 2 million IDPs in Nigeria alone. In addition, some 240,000 Nigerian refugees have fled to neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger.
- **Voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees:** On 22 August, 134 Nigerian refugees were successfully repatriated from Minawao camp in neighbouring Cameroon. The voluntary return was based on a tripartite agreement, signed on 2 March 2017, between the Governments of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Republic of Cameroon and UNHCR. On 26 August, a total of 119 returnees were transported safely from the transit centre in Yola to the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Mubi, Michika and Madagali, accompanied by staff from UNHCR, the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced (NCFRMI) and the Adamawa State Emergency Management Agency (ADSEMA).
- **Niger:** The operation in Niger continues to witness an unfolding emergency in Maradi region due to increasing insecurity in Nigeria's northwest region. Over 35,000 Nigerians have been forced to seek asylum in Niger since May 2019. Nearly half of the refugee population has been displaced in the past three months. The current trends of new arrivals, approximately 6,000 per month, are likely to continue as the record increase in violence in the north-western states of Nigeria, mainly Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina states, persists. This new situation is a result of a dramatic increase in structural tensions between farmers and pastoralists (Haoussa and Fulani) combined with a rapid rise in criminality, notably gang violence, banditry and cattle theft.
- **Cameroon situation:** There are over 40,000 Cameroonian refugees registered in Akwa-Ibom, Benue, Cross River and Taraba States in Nigeria – some 3,500 refugees were registered in May and June alone. In addition, there are some 530,000 IDPs. More than 50% of the IDP population have sought refuge in rural areas.
- **Central African Republic situation:** Following the signing of a peace agreement in February between the government and some 14 armed groups, the situation in CAR has improved. UNHCR has facilitated the signing of two Tripartite Agreements on the Return of CAR refugees, between CAR and Cameroon in June, and between CAR and DRC in July. A similar agreement will follow in the case of the Republic of Congo and Chad. UNHCR plans to repatriate up to 20,000 by the end of the year. Meanwhile, at least 10,000 CAR refugees in the Republic of Congo (2,000), Cameroon (4,000) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (4,000) have expressed interest to return to CAR.
- **Voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees:** As of 31 August 2019, a total of 1,518 Ivorian refugees had been repatriated with the support of UNHCR. On 19 June, a convoy of 79 Ivorian refugees from Liberia was welcomed in Toulepleu, marking the return of the 1,000th returnee since the beginning of the year. They are returning essentially from Liberia, Ghana, Guinea and Togo.
- **Mixed movements:** The scope, magnitude and complexity of mixed movements in West Africa continued to increase significantly, as intensifying conflicts, violent extremism and large-scale violence engendered unprecedented secondary movements. In West Africa, persons of concern to UNHCR, including refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness, remain largely invisible among people moving within mixed flows, both within West Africa and en route to Europe. Niger has developed into a major hub for mixed movements northwards to Libya, Algeria and the Mediterranean, but it is also receiving southward movements with people fleeing Libya or being deported from Algeria. In Agadez, UNHCR has invested in strengthening the national RSD system.



A Nigerian refugee and child about to return home to Nigeria.
UNHCR, X. Bourgois

CONTACTS

Romain Desclous, Senior Regional Public Information Officer
desclous@unhcr.org, Tel: +221 78 639 6385

Kabami Kalumiya, Regional Reporting Officer
kalumiya@unhcr.org, Tel: +221 77 332 2515

LINKS : Twitter : [@UNHCRWestAfrica](https://twitter.com/UNHCRWestAfrica) – Facebook : [UNHCR West Africa](https://www.facebook.com/UNHCRWestAfrica) – UNHCR Kora – Voices of refugees in West and Central Africa: <http://kora.unhcr.org/>