

Context and Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic reached Africa in February 2020 with the first case detected in Egypt. In West and Central Africa (WCA), Nigeria registered the first confirmed case at the end of February. By March 2020, COVID-19 cases had been declared in every country in the region. As of 31 December 2021, over 900,000 cases of COVID-19 had been reported in West and Central Africa, of which 14,122 COVID-19 related deaths were reported. The case fatality ratio was at 1.4 per cent. The top three countries with the highest number of reported COVID-19 cases were Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon which accounted for 50 per cent of all the cases in the region. Liberia (4.6%), Niger (3.7%) and Gambia (3.4%) had the highest case fatality rates.

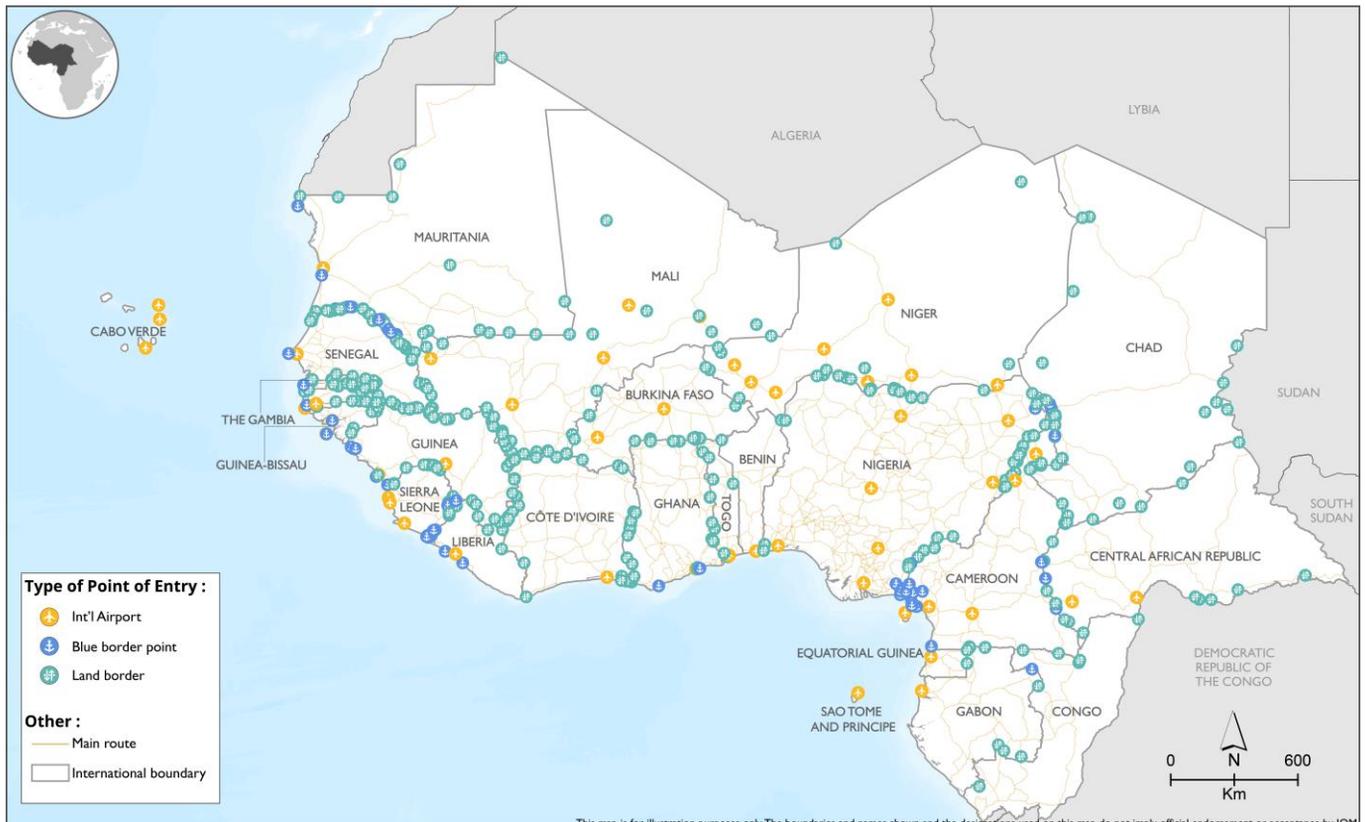
Similarly to countries across the globe, governments in West and Central Africa adopted measures to limit the spread of the virus, including the closure of maritime, air and land borders; restrictions on internal mobility such as curfews, lockdowns and quarantining of cities or regions; states of emergencies; mandatory isolation of travellers; closures of schools, non-essential businesses and public spaces; and restrictions on social, educational, and economic activities.

To better understand and capture how COVID-19 has been affecting global mobility, IOM developed a global database (the Mobility Restriction Monitoring, MRM) which maps, tracks, and analyses the changes and trends in operational status of and mobility restrictions at Points of Entry (PoEs) including airports, blue border crossing points (such as seaports and river crossings), land border crossing points and other key transit points and locations of internal mobility. Outside of operational status for key locations of internal mobility, MRM collects data on border management and public health measures adopted at PoEs, as well as coordination systems and referral mechanisms in place at Points of Entry and some internal mobility points, as well as populations impacted by COVID-19 mobility restrictions.

Such information is meant to serve IOM member states, IOM, and its UN partner agencies in responding adequately, and in a targeted manner, to the current and evolving crisis period. In West and Central Africa, IOM missions were involved in providing information on the situation at the PoEs in their respective countries.

This report presents the findings from data collected on the operational status of PoEs as of 31 December 2021 (and compared with similar data collected in March 2021 and April 2020), at 670 Points of Entry across the region, including 431 land border crossings points, 54 airports, 83 blue border crossing points (maritime borders) and 102 internal transit points (analysis focuses on the 568 cross border points).

Map 1: POEs assessed in West and Central Africa, by type of PoE

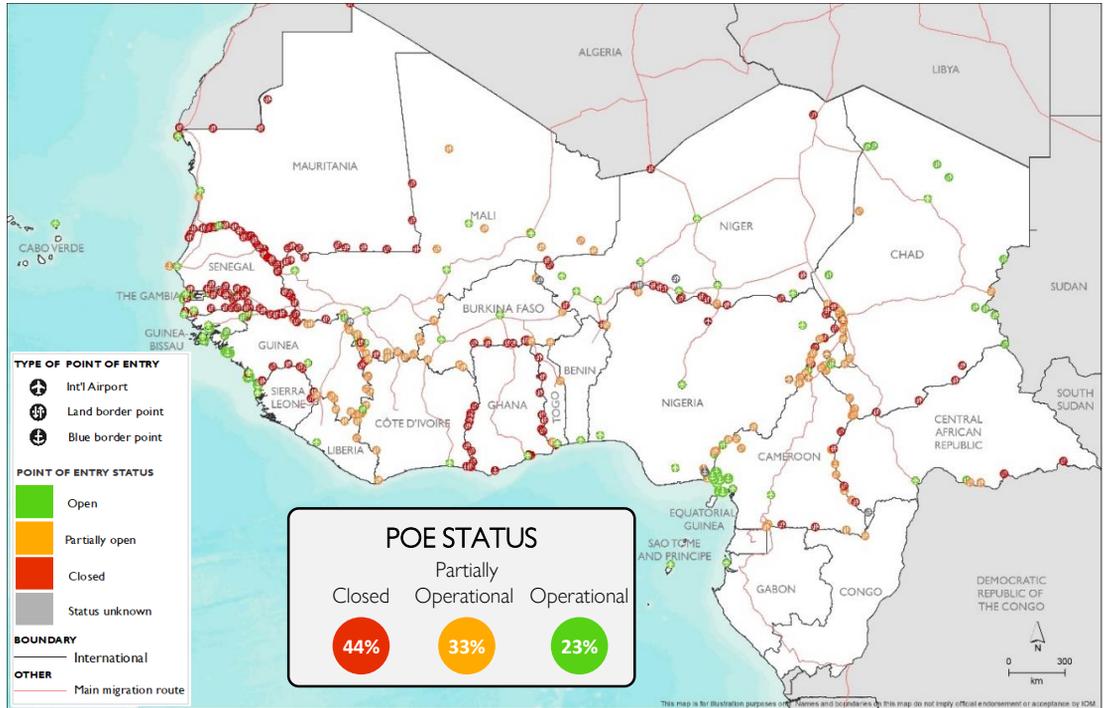


I. INTERNATIONAL BORDER ANALYSIS: OPERATIONAL STATUS OF POINTS OF ENTRY

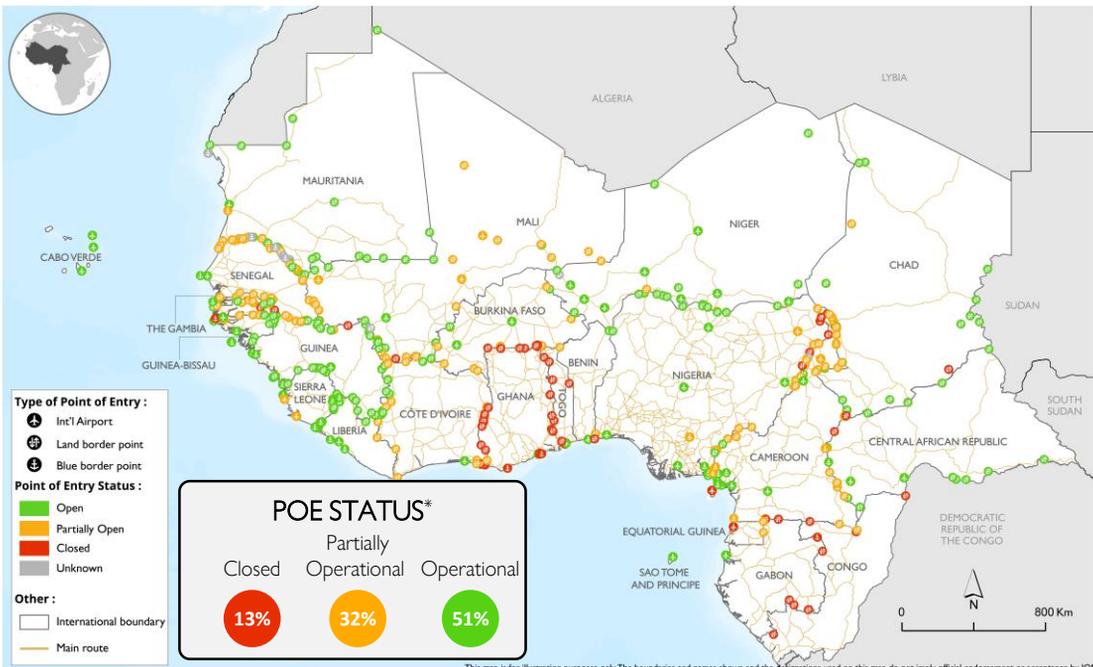
In response to the first COVID-19 cases in West and Central Africa, in March 2020, the initial measures taken by governments were the closure of borders. Some points were partially opened for the transportation of goods, for the passage of nationals stranded at borders, the return of nationals abroad, and humanitarian flights and convoys. However, they issued health measures at such points to ensure the prevention and isolation of potential cases. From July 2020, governments began easing restrictions at country borders and reopening Points of Entry, in particular international airports and seaports. although entry was often restricted to select travellers. However, most land border posts remained closed.

Map 2: Operational Status of PoEs – March 2021

In **April 2020** IOM found that of the assessed PoEs in the region, 60 per cent were reported to be fully shut, closed for both entry and exit. In **March 2021**, one year after the first case of COVID-19 was reported in West and Central Africa, 56 per cent of assessed PoEs were either **fully operational (23%) or partially operational (33%)**. The vast majority of airports (91%) and blue points (76%) were fully operational.



Map 3: Operational Status of PoEs - December 2021



In **December 2021**, IOM found that of the assessed PoEs in the region, 51 per cent were reported to be fully operational, for both entry and exit while **32 per cent were partially operational** for the transportation of goods, the passage of nationals and residents and humanitarian flights and convoys. And **13 per cent were reported to be fully closed**.

* The status of 4 per cent of POE is unknown

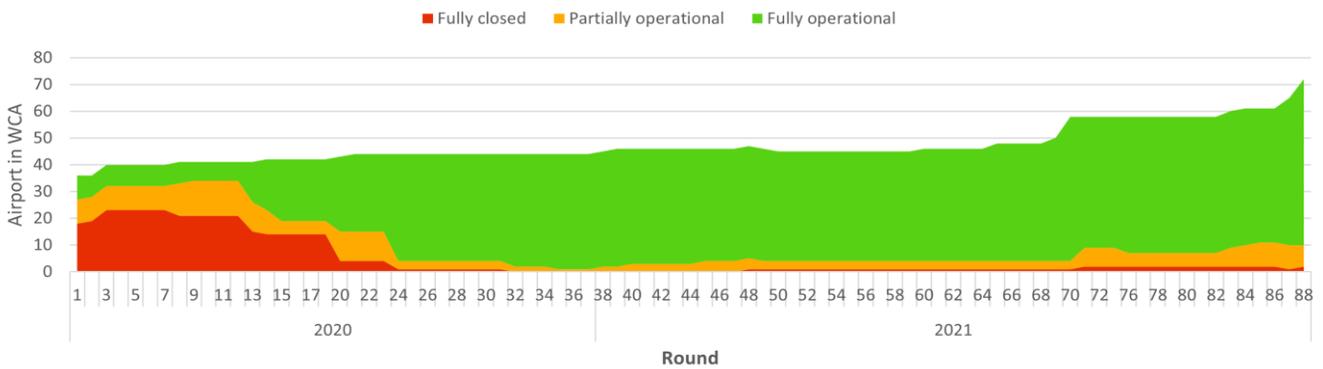
1. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS

From the beginning of the pandemic, countries started implementing restrictions at international airports, including temperature checks and other health and screening measures. In March 2020, when the number of imported cases of COVID-19 in the region started to grow, many countries shut their airports, taking the decision to ban international as well as domestic flights. While some countries completely closed their airports to international flights, others had partial restrictions allowing for some movement via airports under certain conditions including health screening of passengers and other health measures, or only allowing specific flights for the return of nationals and residents as well as humanitarian flights.

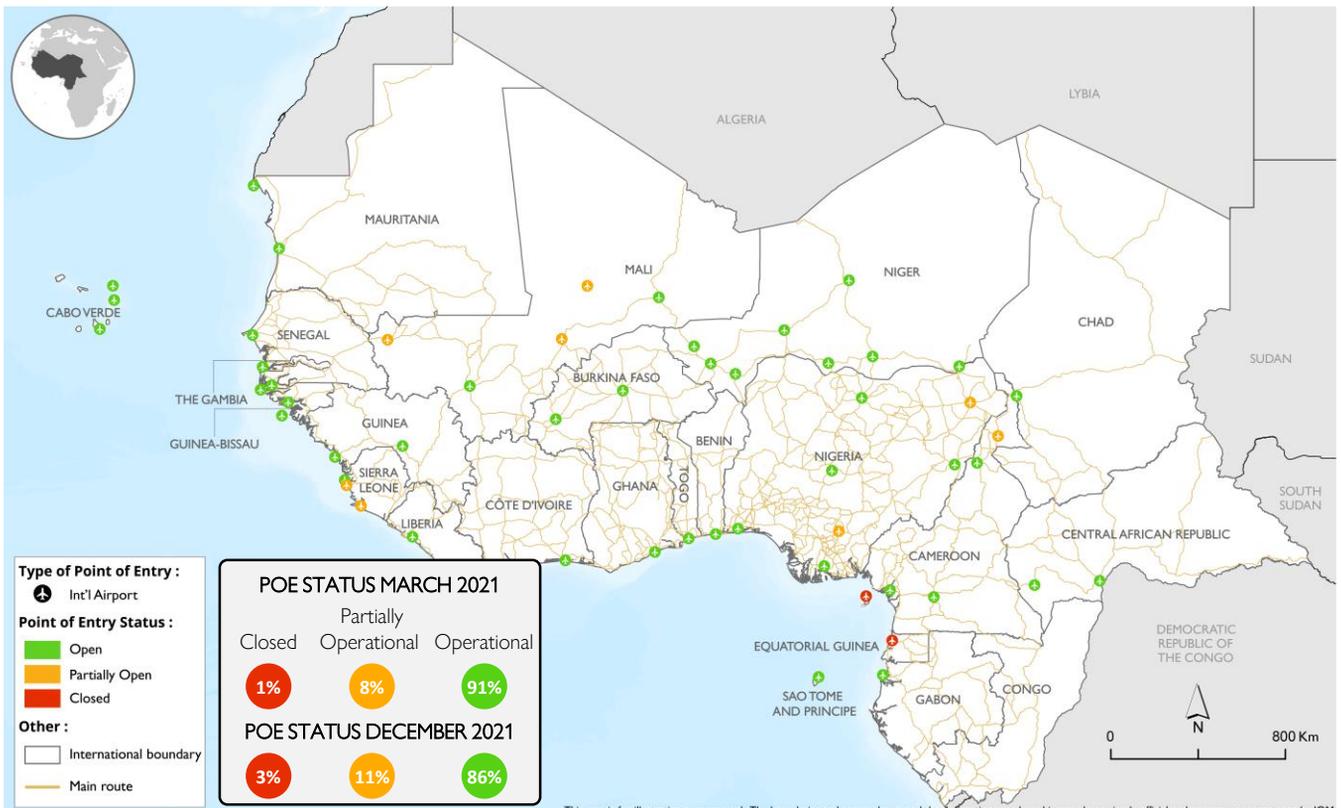
These restrictions remained active until June 2020 in most of the countries across the region. Starting from July 2020, most countries in the region reopened their airports to domestic and out-of-country flights but imposed health measures such as mandatory negative COVID-19 test, mandatory quarantine, filling out of health forms and social distancing for incoming travellers. In addition to these measures, other countries such as Gabon and Senegal, did not allow flights from countries with high incidence of cases. By September 2020, most airports in the region had reopened.

As of December 2021, 86 per cent of airports in West and Central Africa have fully reopened to all traffic, including commercial flights.

Figure 1: Operational status of airports in West and Central Africa, by week of assessment



Map 4: Operational status of airports in West and Central Africa – December 2021



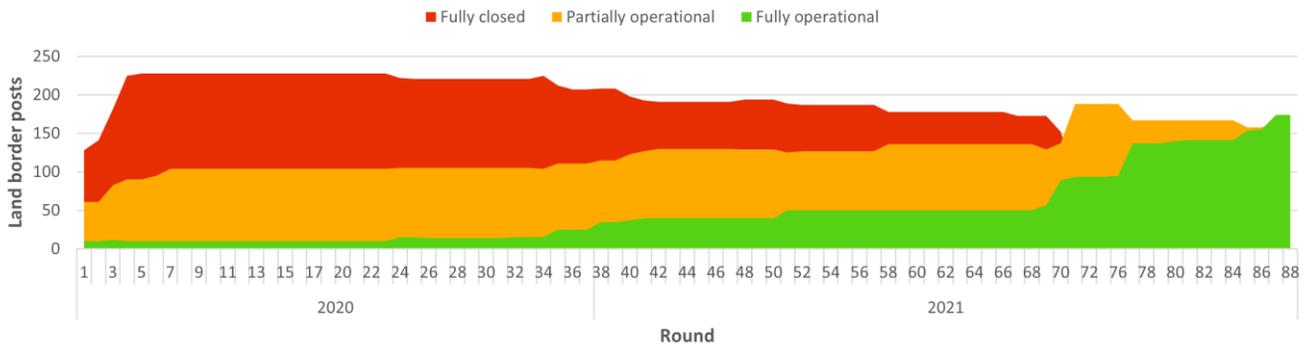
This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

2. INTERNATIONAL LAND BORDERS

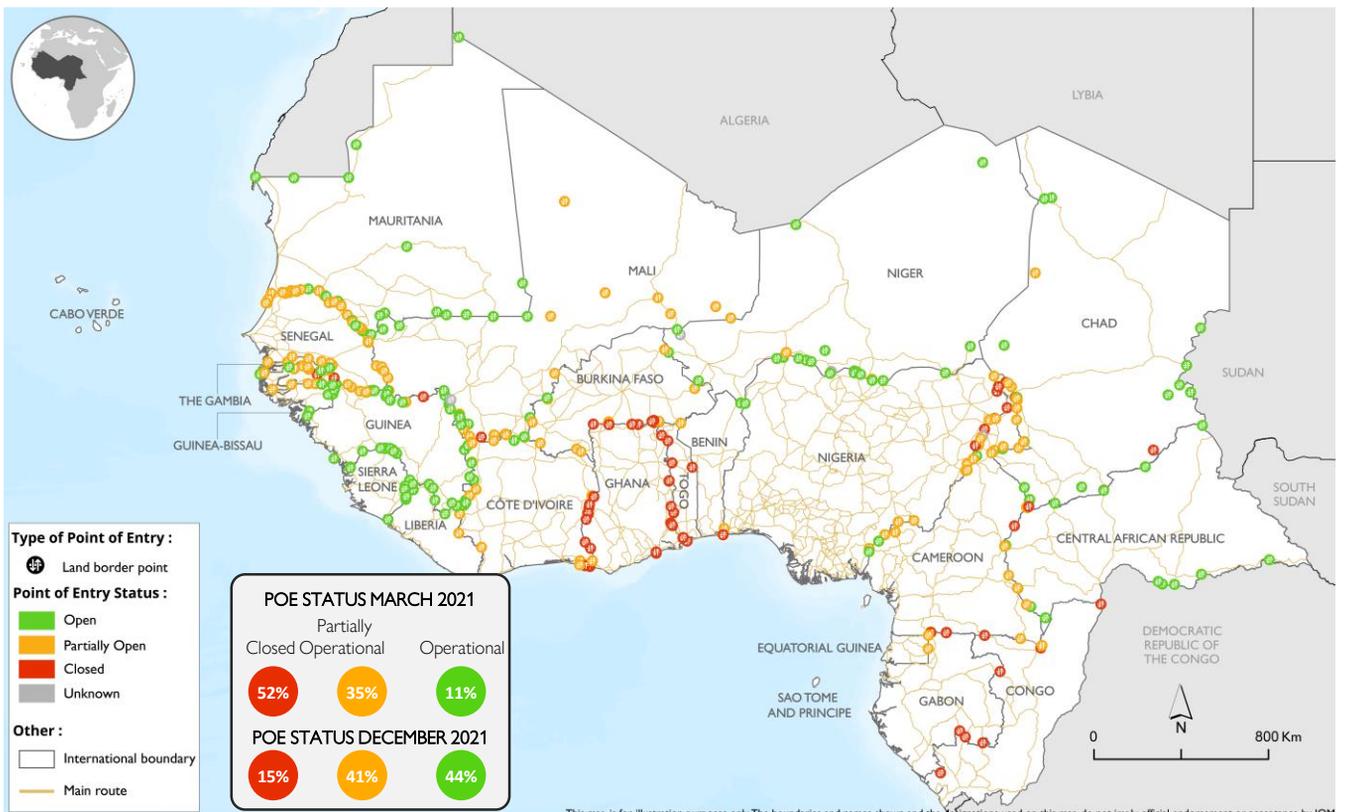
In 2020, every country in the region completely closed most land border points, with the exception of strategic entry points or to allow freight transport (particularly to allow the transport of goods to landlocked countries such as Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic). In addition, several countries, with the support of IOM, created humanitarian corridors to allow the safe passage of migrants stranded in third-countries. Finally, some countries concluded agreements for the temporary exceptions to border closures : Chad and Cameroon, for instance, signed an agreement to allow the passage of students to sit the *baccalauréat* (end-of-schooling exam). **Assessments conducted in April 2020 found that 49 per cent of land borders evaluated throughout the West and Central Africa region were completely shut off to all traffic, while 27 per cent were partially open**, only allowing the passage of freight transport, returning nationals or humanitarian convoys. Only 4 per cent of PoE's were fully open to travellers (17% unknown status). This situation generated an estimated 50,000 migrants, as well as 70,000 transhumant herders and 1.5 million cattle left stranded at borders across the region.

Almost two years after the COVID-19 pandemic reached the region West and Central Africa, the majority of land borders across the region have re-opened, controls at border points are looser and border closure measures have been eased. Health measures, including health screening of travellers, setup of isolation wards, the requirement to show a negative COVID-19 test or a vaccination card, and installation of handwashing stations, were also put in place at borders. **Assessments conducted in December 2021 identified 44 per cent of land borders evaluated throughout the West and Central Africa region were fully operational, while 41 per cent were partially operational. Only 16 per cent of PoE's evaluated were completely closed.**

Figure 2: Operational status of land borders in West and Central Africa, by week of assessment



Map 5: Operational status of land border points in West and Central Africa – December 2021



V. METHODOLOGY

To better understand how COVID-19 affects global mobility, the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) has developed a global mobility database mapping the locations, status, and different restrictions in place at Points of Entry (PoE) by country or territory, globally. These points include airports, land border crossing points, blue border crossing points (including sea, river, and lake ports), internal transit. Data is collected by utilizing DTM's local expertise from IOM offices globally who adhere to a systematic and structured approach to data collection.

Information collected include: (1) Movement restrictions on entry and/or exit (1) closed for entry and exit, (2) closed for entry (3) closed for exit (4) open for commercial traffic only (5) open only to returning nationals and residents (6) open for entry and exit (7) other and (8) unknown (5) Medical measures applied such as Health Staffing/Medical Personnel, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), Infection prevention and control (IPC).

Data collected by DTM includes information on types of restrictions, measures applied, and the population category affected by such measures. This information is collected for each

type of observation point, which includes points of entry, transit points, and areas.

Limitations of this analysis and data collection mechanism are related to the extremely time sensitive nature of the data being collected.

Restrictions, and who they affect, are continually changing, and it is often difficult to collect accurate information in real time. Considering this, all DTM data made available is timestamped in order to reflect the reality of the situation at the specified time. In this report we cover the entire region regardless in the country is or not part of DTM. This report does not include the analysis of internal transit locations.



A border agent describes measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in place at the Abuja airport to members of the Nigerian Ministry of the Interior © IOM/Jorge Galindo 2020