REGIONAL MOBILITY MAPPING
WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA
JUNE 2022

International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency
INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The development and implementation of policies and programmes in West and Central Africa promoting safe, orderly and humane migration require a better understanding of human mobility in the region.

Human mobility in the region take many different forms. Transhumance, seasonal migration conducted during the harvesting season, travel during religious festivities, tourism, economic migration to North Africa and Europe, the search for employment in the mining industry, forced displacements due to conflict, natural disasters or climate-related migration, rural exodus, are all examples of movements observed in West and Central Africa and show the many faceted nature of mobility in the region.

This document is an attempt to provide a dynamic and regularly updated portrait of mobility within, from and to West and Central Africa region for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The maps contained in this document are not only meant to inform on ongoing mobility patterns, but also provide information to support direct programming (protection of migrants, management of transhumance flows, support to safe returns of displaced people) and policy.

DATA SOURCES

Data sources for the information displayed in this document are provided at the bottom of each page. When reference is made to IOM data, the data was collected from: 1) Flow Monitoring, 2) Mobility Tracking, 3) Interviews with individuals who benefited from voluntary returns and reintegration programs (AVRR), 4) Search and Rescue operations, 5) Missing Migrants Project, 6) Transhumance Tracking Tool

Further information on the data collection methodologies and on the activities referenced throughout the report is available in the following documents:

- Regional Data Hub Factsheet
- Displacement Factsheet
- Migration Factsheet
- Transhumance Factsheet
- Missing Migrants Project Factsheet
- Migrant Protection and Assistance/Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Factsheet
- COVID-19 Mobility Restriction Monitoring Factsheet
- Data Protection Factsheet

Other data presented in this document is provided by the Ministries of the Interior of Spain, Italy and Greece, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).

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An estimated 9.8 million migrants live in the WCA region. The largest registered migrant communities in the region are currently living in Côte d’Ivoire (2.6 million) and Nigeria (1.3 million) (UNDESA).

83% of immigrants living in West and Central Africa are from another country in the region.

Details: This map presents the volume of immigrants registered in each country of the region.
Sources: (1) Region as covered by IOM Regional Office. (2) UNDESA Migrant Database 2020.
An estimated 12.5 million individuals from West and Central Africa currently live outside their country of origin. The countries with the largest numbers of emigrants (or diasporas, nationals living abroad) are from Burkina Faso (1.6 M), Nigeria (1.6 M), Mali (1.3 M).

65% of emigrants from WCA countries live in another WCA country.
Madama DETAILS: THIS MAP PRESENTS THE MAIN MIGRATION ROUTES IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA. SOURCES: (1) REGION AS COVERED BY IOM REGIONAL OFFICE. (2) ROUTES DRAWN BASED ON DISCUSSIONS WITH MIGRANTS AND KEY INFORMANTS SURVEYS CONDUCTED WITH NATIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES OF THE REGION. (3) ESTIMATES BASED ON UNDESA 2020, FLOW MONITORING DATA 2021 AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA, REPORT 2018 FROM UNCTAD. (4) FLOW MONITORING DATA 2021. An estimated 88% of migration flows in West and Central Africa in 2022 were internal to the region.
Intraregional mobility mainly takes place along two main east-west axes and are then distributed over ancillary routes.

LEGEND
- COUNTRY BORDER
- WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGION
- MAIN ROAD
- MAIN AXIS
- OTHER AXIS
- CAPITAL CITY
- OTHER CITY

DETAILS: THIS MAP PRESENTS THE MAIN MIGRATION ROUTES AND AXES IN THE WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGION.

SOURCES: (1) REGION AS COVERED BY IOM REGIONAL OFFICE. (2) ROUTES DRAWN BASED ON DIRECT DISCUSSIONS WITH MIGRANTS AND KEY INFORMANT SURVEYS CONDUCTED WITH NATIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES OF THE REGION.
78% of all individuals surveyed at IOM Flow Monitoring Points in 2022 (72% of individuals moving within West and Central Africa) were travelling for labour or economic reasons.

Mobility patterns are largely driven by employment and economic opportunities in labour intensive areas. Favoured destinations for labour migration vary depending on the season.

Details: This map presents the main migration routes in West and Central Africa and labour intensive areas attracting large migration flows.

Sources: 1. Region as covered by IOM Regional Office. 2. Based on discussions with IOM offices and secondary data review. 3. Direct discussions with migrants and key informant surveys conducted with national and local authorities in various countries of the region. 4. FMP data January-June 2022: main reason for travel provided by migrants surveyed during DTM’s flow monitoring survey data collection.
Transhumance, a form of pastoralism which sees herders and their livestock migrate on a seasonal basis between complementary ecological areas from areas with scarce grazing lands and water sources to areas with more abundant pastures and water, is a common occupation across West and Central Africa. It contributes significantly to human mobility in the region. The main transhumance routes link Sahelian and coastal countries.
In recent years, climate change, environmental degradation and sometimes disasters, exponential population growth, urbanization, land privatization, changes in farming practices, and insecurity have affected transhumance patterns, routes and periods as well as relations with other communities. These changes have resulted in increasing competition over natural resources and have exacerbated tensions, generating at times intense conflicts between transhumant herders and farmers.
Inter-regional migration routes taken by migrants regularly shift according to changes in migration legislation, policies and controls. However, the routes themselves do not evolve much.

Migrants heading to North Africa or Europe travel along three main migration routes:

1. Western African
2. Western Mediterranean
3. Central Mediterranean
Between January and June 2022, an estimated 57,050 migrants arrived in Italy, Spain, Greece and other countries (Malta, Cyprus) by sea and land irregularly. In the 1st semester of 2021, 51,531 individuals arrived in Europe.
*2022 data only takes into account the period of Jan to June. Migrant and refugee arrivals to Europe have changed significantly between 2015 and 2022. In 2015, an estimated 857,363 migrants and refugees reached Greece, with only 1% originating from West and Central Africa (WCA). The share of migrants from WCA amongst arrivals to Greece then steadily increased, reaching 6% in 2020, and decreased to 3% in 2022 so far. Arrivals of WCA nationals in Italy decreased in 2022 so far to 13%. The share of WCA nationals amongst migrant and refugee arrivals to Spain witnessed large fluctuations between 2015 and 2022, and witnessed a sharp decrease between 2016 (60% of all arrivals in Spain, the highest observed in the 2015-2022 time period) and 2020 (18%), before bouncing back in 2021 and 2022 (32%). The drop in the share of WCA nationals arriving in Spain between 2019 and 2020 is partially explained by the lack of nationality data for October-December 2020. For January-June 2022, irregular arrivals in Spain saw a significant increase compared to Jan-June 2021. At the same time, the number of irregular migrant arrivals to Italy in Jan-June 2022 more than doubled when compared to the same period in 2021.
Travellers moving within West and Central Africa, headed for North Africa, and migrating to Europe showcase significant differences in age, marital status, education level and employment status prior to travel (in their country of habitual residence). The unemployment rate of travellers also varies according to the nature of the movements and the intended destination: migration to a country in West and Central Africa is more likely to be conducted in response to concrete job opportunities than migration to Europe or North Africa.

The profile of travellers (individuals crossing IOM Flow Monitoring Points) by intended destination presented on this page is based on data collected during Flow Monitoring Surveys conducted with over 18,034 travellers across the region between January and June 2022. Further information on methodology is available at the end of this document.
Between January and June 2022, the number of migrants who died or disappeared along the Central Mediterranean, Western Mediterranean, West African Atlantic and Eastern Mediterranean routes (1,226) dropped compared to the same period in 2021 (1,149).

DETAILS: This visual presents the numbers of dead and missing migrants recorded along the four main migrations routes in January – June 2022 and compared with the same period in 2021.

* 2022 data only takes into account months Jan-Jun.

SOURCES: (1) MISSING MIGRANT PROJECT DATA FOR 2021 AND 2022, GLOBAL MIGRATION DATA AND ANALYSIS CENTER, IOM.
Travel disruptions, restrictions and bans in West and Central Africa adopted by governments to stem the spread of COVID-19, had profound effects on regional mobility. In 2021, regional migration flows returned to their regular seasonal patterns. As of June 2022, 23% of all Points of Entry (land, sea and airports) in WCA were still closed. *The high percentage (96%) of partially operational airports is due to the covid-19 vaccine requirements.*
The main regions of origin of irregular migrants heading to North Africa (Libya, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia) and assisted in their return by IOM is displayed on this map. A large part of migrants assisted to return by IOM are from Edo State (Nigeria), Kayes and Bamako (Mali) and Conakry (Guinea).
8 million Internally Displaced Persons due to conflict and violence in West and Central Africa, as of June 2022.

CONFLICT & INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT
Regional Mobility Mapping in West and Central Africa • June 2022

LEGEND
- COUNTRY BORDER
- WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGION
- MAIN ROAD
- CAPITAL CITY
- OTHER CITY
- CONFLICT, VIOLENCE AND INSECURITY AREAS
- NUMBER OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

DETAILS: THIS MAP PRESENTS THE CORE CONFLICT AREAS AND NUMBER OF IDPs DISPLACED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MAIN DISPLACEMENT CRISIS.

SOURCES: (1) REGION AS COVERED BY IOM REGIONAL OFFICE. (2) BASED ON REPORTS FROM IOM FIELD OFFICES AND ACLED DATABASE. (3) NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, IDMC, IOM, UNHCR.

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.
265,400 individuals were internally displaced due to disasters, such as floods, storms, or wildfires, in West and Central Africa in 2021(2)
Durable solutions to forced displacement require strong, secure and stable security conditions, access to livelihoods and services as well as sustained social cohesion. IOM implements the Stability Index to evaluate the stability of living conditions in the Lake Chad Basin and Liptako Gourma Region by calculating a Stability Score for each displacement-hosting location, identifying pockets of stability and instability and thereby prioritizing humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programmes. As per Round 2 of the Stability Index, the average Stability Score of locations in the Lake Chad Basin was 56 (out of 100), while it was 72 (out of 100) in locations of the Liptako Gourma.
IOM is assisting stranded migrants who wish to go home. Between 2017 and 2022 (as of June), 148,894 migrants benefited from IOM assistance, often conducted through the EU-IOM Joint Initiative on Migrant Protection and Reintegration, a comprehensive programme to save lives, protect and assist migrants along key migration routes in Africa.
IOM counts 20 country offices in West and Central Africa as well as more than 45 sub-offices. Transit centers, Migrants Resources Centers and shelter for victims of trafficking and unaccompanied migrant children are active in eight countries.
IOM’s Regional Data Hub supports all 23 West and Central African countries covered by IOM’s Regional Office for West and Central Africa, including data & research activities in 13 of them, contributing to a stronger evidence base around regional mobility and migration in WCA.
NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

This section provides additional details on data sources used in this report.

DATA ON RETURNS THROUGH ASSISTED VOLUNTARY AND HUMANITARIAN RETURN PROGRAMMES

DESCRIPTION: Data collected on the regions of origin of migrants provides details on individuals assisted in voluntary or humanitarian return by IOM. It does not necessarily present the origins of all migrants moving in WCA and focuses on a very specific migrant population (those trying to move to other regions).

FLOW MONITORING (DTM)

DESCRIPTION: At Flow Monitoring Point (FMP), enumerators collect information on the number, frequency and defining features of individuals transiting through a particular location. Prior to the establishment of an FMP, areas of high mobility are identified following discussions with national and local actors. The locations at which FMPs are set up, key points of transit such as border points or coach stations, are then identified based on participatory mapping of main migration routes conducted in partnership with national and local authorities. In 2022, 30 FMPs were active in eight countries of the West and Central Africa region (Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Gambia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal) during the timeframe indicated. The data should not be generalized and does not present a full picture of inter- and intra-regional migration, but rather a snapshot of migration flows at specific locations. For example, while IOM aims to establish Flow Monitoring Points at locations with high transit flows (based on information from key informants), flows are changing, and FMPs can only provide a partial picture.

LIMITS: The data presented on Page 11 is based on surveys conducted with travellers at FMPs in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Gambia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal during the timeframe indicated. The data should not be generalized and does not present a full picture of inter- and intra-regional migration, but rather a snapshot of migration flows at specific locations. For example, while IOM aims to establish Flow Monitoring Points at locations with high transit flows (based on information from key informants), flows are changing, and FMPs can only provide a partial picture.

MOBILITY TRACKING (DTM)

DESCRIPTION: Mobility tracking aims to quantify presence of population categories, reasons for displacement, length of displacement and needs within defined locations, with a frequency that captures mobility dynamics. This component is well suited to quantifying groups of people, whether internally displaced, migrants in transit locations, stranded migrants or other populations of concern. Its approach is highly customizable: it can be light-touch or in-depth depending on the phase and requirements of the response, and often increases in depth and detail over successive rounds. Mobility tracking can be established quickly and is suitable for covering large areas, including for nationwide coverage. It is better suited for populations with some base level of stability and predictability of location, rather than highly mobile populations. However, in and out movement is routinely captured, and the event tracking tool can supplement to mitigate this limitation.

STABILITY INDEX (SMI)

DESCRIPTION: The Stability Index combines 36 key indicators of stability to calculate a single Stability Score for each surveyed locality. These indicators relate to three key themes crucial to stability: safety and security, livelihoods and basic services, and social cohesion. Indicators for each of these themes are grouped to create sub-indexes to facilitate the comparison of localities by theme. These indicators, taken in aggregate, highlight areas that are conducive to durable solutions for internal displacement, as well as unstable areas that may require humanitarian intervention. Questions about the perception of stability in the community and whether members of the community plan to leave in the next six months are used to validate the relationship between the Stability Score and community sentiment. The Stability Index uses Principal Component Analysis to assess the impact of each indicator on the variability in the data in order to generate weights for the composite index. It includes data collected through key informant interviews at the locality level.
NOTE ON METHODOLOGY II

TRANSHUMANCE TRACKING TOOL (DTM)

COUNTRIES: BURKINA FASO, CAMEROON, COTE D’IVOIRE, GUINEA, MALI, MAURITANIA, NIGER, NIGERIA, SIERRA LEONE

Transhumance is a farming method by which farmers accompany their herds in search of pasture and water points. It can be carried out internally in a country or cover several countries, and often extends over large distances. Climate variation, the economic situation and the reduction of pastures and water have accentuated the phenomenon of transhumance for twenty years, pushing transhumant pastoralists to travel longer distances.

IOM has developed the Transhumance Tracking Tool (TTT). The TTT, with data collected through a network of key informants, collects key data on transhumance movements in West and Central Africa, with the aim of providing the information needed for the implementation of support programs for populations involved in transhumance.

This methodology aims to support, strengthen and harmonize transhumance monitoring within the West and Central Africa region implemented by various associations linked to the Bilital Maroobé Network (RBM) which provide information to help implement programs for the population involved in transhumance and try to inform populations and authorities of the risks of conflicts linked to transhumance.

The methodology used in the context of the TTT, developed in collaboration with government partners and society civil, is based on an approach similar to the monitoring of populations (Flow Monitoring Points by IOM) and is based on three fundamental tools (the mapping, counting and alert).

MISSING MIGRANTS PROJECT (GMDAC)

COUNTRIES: CAMEROON, CHAD, GAMBIA, GUINEA, MALI, MAURITANIA, NIGER, SENEGAL

Missing Migrants Project counts migrants who have died at the external borders of states, or in the process of migration towards an international destination, regardless of their legal status. The Project records only those migrants who die during their journey to a country different from their country of residence.

Missing Migrants Project data include the deaths of migrants who die in transportation accidents, shipwrecks, violent attacks, or due to medical complications during their journeys. It also includes the number of corpses found at border crossings that are categorized as the bodies of migrants, on the basis of belongings and/or the characteristics of the death.

The Missing Migrants Project currently gathers information from diverse sources such as official records – including from coast guards and medical examiners – and other sources such as media reports, NGOs, and surveys and interviews of migrants. In the Mediterranean region, data are relayed from relevant national authorities to IOM field missions, who then share it with the Missing Migrants Project team. Data are also obtained by IOM and other organizations that receive survivors at landing points in Italy and Greece. IOM and UNHCR also regularly coordinate to validate data on missing migrants in the Mediterranean.

There are some limitations to the data available on deaths and disappearances during migration in West and Central Africa. The information available is sparse and rarely contains information on sex, age, and places of disappearance or death. Moreover, there is no perfectly harmonized data on the number of migrants missing, nor information on the families who are still looking for those lost during their migration.

EXTERNAL SOURCES

ARRIVALS IN ITALY, GREECE AND SPAIN: data presented on arrivals to Europe is taken from figures provided by Greek, Italians and Spanish national authorities. However, the complete nationality breakdown of migrants is not available; only the top 10 nationalities of arriving migrants is provided. Therefore, nationality figures presented are likely fragmented.

IDMC: the internal Displacement Monitoring Centers is the world’s definitive source of data and analysis on internal displacement and provide regular data on internal displacement through its Global internal displacement database and report.

UNDESA: the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) provides regular update on its migrants’ stocks. Data presented does not reflect all migration stocks in each country and are likely underestimating total migrants’ population in the region.