



Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: West Africa



This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers the West Africa (WA) region. The core countries of focus for this region are Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to any of the countries over the rest.

The QMMUs offer a quarterly update on new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and relevant policy developments in the region. These updates are based on a compilation of a wide range of secondary (data) sources, brought together within a regional framework and applying a mixed migration analytical lens. Similar QMMUs are available for all MMC regions.

The Mixed Migration Centre is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration.

For more information on the MMC, the QMMUs from other regions and contact details of regional MMC teams, visit mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

MMC's understanding of mixed migration

“Mixed migration” refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people in mixed flows have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Those in mixed migration flows travel along similar routes, using similar means of travel - often travelling irregularly, and wholly, or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

Front cover photo credit:

Jean-Baptiste Joire (2017)

Women watching boats in Joal-Fadiout, Senegal, February 2017.

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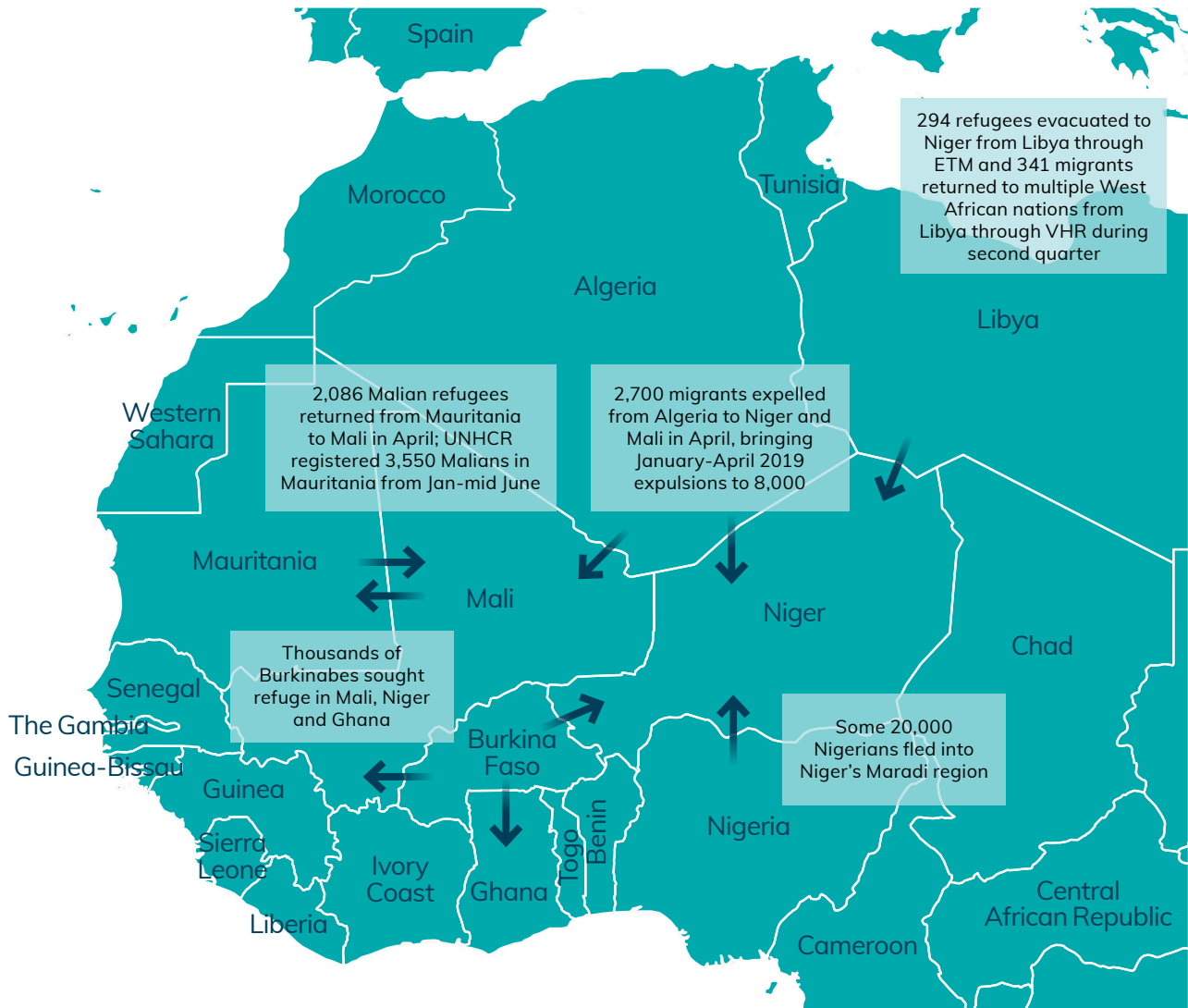
Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: West Africa

Quarter 2 - 2019

Key Updates

- **Special Rapporteur report on Niger:** On 16 May, the United Nations released the [report of the Special Rapporteur](#) on the human rights of migrants on his trip to Niger in October 2018. The report recognized the internal and external challenges faced by Niger in relation to migration management. It noted that recent measures taken by Niger to address its migration challenges have resulted in a criminalization of migration and obstruction of free movement that contravene ECOWAS and international human rights principles and standards. It points also to the role of destination countries in shaping these policies, and calls on both Niger and the international community to allow regular and safe migration pathways
- **New flows from Nigeria:** An intensification of violence in northwestern Nigeria has caused [approximately 20,000 people](#) to cross into Niger's Maradi region since April, the majority of whom are women and children. The violence has not been attributed to Boko Haram, but rather to kidnappings, vigilantism and conflict between farmers and herders across ethnic lines. Those arriving in Niger recount violent attacks against civilians.
- **Burkina Faso displacement:** As of the end of May, UNHCR estimated that some [15,000 Burkinabes](#) had sought refuge outside of Burkina Faso, with 11,500 in Mali, more than 1,500 in Niger, and 1,911 in Ghana.
- **Expulsions from Algeria:** UNHCR reports that in the month of April Algerian authorities [deported some 2,700 people](#) to Niger and Mali, an increase over previous months. A total of 8,000 people have been deported since the beginning of the year through to the end of April.

Regional Overview*



*Information on the map relates to selected updates and does not represent all mixed migration flows within and out of West Africa.

Mixed Migration Regional Updates

West Africa

Insecurity and displacement on the rise across the region

Insecurity in the region continued to increase during the second quarter of 2019. UN officials warned that “[armed attacks in the Sahel have reached unprecedented levels](#),” citing a substantial surge in security incidents in Burkina Faso, Mali and Western Niger in recent months, with more than 150 violent incidents reported in April alone. Civilians are bearing the brunt of this violence, and three of the five countries with the most fatalities due to [civilian targeting worldwide](#) as of May 2019 are found in West Africa (Nigeria – 1,175 civilian fatalities, Burkina Faso – 670 reported fatalities, Mali – 490 reported fatalities). The security situation in the [Lake Chad Basin](#) is also seen to be worsening, propelling forced displacement to its [highest level](#) since the beginning of the crisis almost ten years ago.

[UNHCR](#) reported secondary movements of approximately 20,000 people within the Diffa region of **Niger** due to a deteriorating security situation caused by Boko Haram. There have also been [reports](#) of the return of some refugees from Diffa to Damaska and Maiduguri in Nigeria. While this has not been officially confirmed, UNHCR is monitoring the situation. Overall displacement in the Diffa region as of the end of May stood at some 250,000 persons (118,868 refugees, 104,288 IDPs and 25,731 returnees).

An intensification of violence in northwestern **Nigeria** caused [approximately 20,000 people](#) to cross into Niger’s Maradi region since April, the majority of whom are women and children. The violence has not been attributed to Boko Haram, but rather to kidnappings, vigilantism and conflict between farmers and herders across ethnic lines. Those arriving in Niger recounted violent attacks against civilians.

As at the end of May, there were [56,306 Malian refugees](#) in Niger, primarily in the western regions of Tillaberi and Tahoua, according to UNHCR. Various efforts are ongoing to foster greater integration and socio-economic opportunities for these refugees. Parts of these regions remain under a government declared state of emergency.

A surge in inter-communal attacks in the north and center of **Mali** have continued to drive displacement, and in early April some [30,000 Malians](#) staged a demonstration to protest the government’s inability to address the spiraling violence. Despite this challenging backdrop, [MINUSMA](#) reported that 2,086 Malian refugees returned voluntarily in April from the Mbera refugee camp in Mauritania to Koigouma, a village in the Timbuktu region. Meanwhile, [3,550 Malians](#) have been newly registered by UNHCR in **Mauritania** since the beginning of 2019. This reflects further cross-border movements by Malians as well as registration of Malians already in Mauritania who had not previously come forward. Mauritania currently hosts around 59,500 Malian refugees out of an estimated overall total of [138,391 Malian refugees](#) in the region (Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Niger).

In **Burkina Faso** the second quarter of the year has been marked by mounting violence and displacement (see Thematic Focus).

Policy updates

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) of Nigeria and Niger's Agency Against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants [formalized a cooperation agreement](#) in April. The agreement anticipates joint cross-border sensitization exercises and the establishment of a technical working group to foster cooperation on investigation and training of social workers and counsellors to support victims of trafficking.

At the ECOWAS Ambassadors' Retreat in mid-April, ambassadors from member nations of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) called for a variety of measures to enhance [protection of refugees and stateless persons](#) in the region. Among other things, they recommended that refugees be included in the development plans of member states. They also called on member states to support self-reliance, including through private sector funding, diaspora networks and the ECOWAS stability fund. Further discussion on statelessness will take place at the ambassadorial level prior to recommending its addition to the agenda for the ECOWAS Summit of Heads of State and Government.

The European Commission has announced that the [European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa](#) (EUTF) will put an additional €115.5 million towards programs in West Africa seeking to "enhance security, migrant protection and job creation in the Sahel region." In West Africa, EUTF funding has had a significant orientation towards migration management, with [38% of its regional funding](#) (€161,330,000 out of €429,579,096) allocated to this objective as of the end of June 2019. This makes "improved migration management" the most heavily funded EUTF objective in the region. Its other objectives are improved governance and conflict resolution, strengthening resilience, and greater economic and employment opportunities.

On 16 May, the United Nations released the [report of the Special Rapporteur](#) on the human rights of migrants on his trip to Niger in October of 2018. The report provides observations and recommendations on the migration-related laws, policies, practices and agreements adopted and implemented by Niger, and their impact on the human rights of migrants. It notes that recent measures taken by Niger to address its migration challenges have resulted in a criminalization of migration and obstruction of free movement that contravene ECOWAS and international human rights principles and standards. It points also to the role of destination countries in shaping these policies, and calls on both Niger and the international community to allow regular and safe migration pathways. Among other things, it calls on Niger to reform its Law on the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants (2015-36) so that it is fully aligned with international standards, and does not criminalize or victimize migrants, but rather ensures their protection.

Mixed migration from West Africa towards North Africa and Europe

Western route arrivals on par with 2018

According to [UNHCR](#), as of the end of May, land and sea arrivals (Spanish mainland, Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla) of migrants and refugees in Spain through the Western Mediterranean route stood at 10,400, so very similar to the 2018 end-May total of 10,640. At the same time, total sea arrivals in Italy through the Central Mediterranean route showed a more than eight-fold decrease as compared to the same period last year. Whereas at the end of May 2019, UNHCR reports the arrival of approximately 1,600 refugees and migrants, the end-May totals in 2018 were [13,430](#), in itself a decrease from the end-May totals in 2017 (60,228) and 2016 (47,581).

West African migrants and refugees continue to show a greater percentage of representation along the Western Mediterranean route than along the [Central Mediterranean](#) route. From January to May four of the top five nationalities of arrival in Spain through the Western Mediterranean route were West African, according to UNHCR. They made up [45% of the overall total](#). Guineans and Malians each comprised 14% of arrivals, a slight decrease over their total numbers at the same time last year. Ivorians stood at 9%, and Senegalese at 8%, in both cases an increase over 2018 figures. While remaining low in relative terms, arrival figures for Senegalese in the first five months of 2019 (862) have more than tripled over the same period in 2018 (246).

Migrant fatalities along the route

According to [IOM's Missing Migrants Project](#), 67 fatalities were recorded in the second quarter of 2019 along the Western Mediterranean route. This is a decrease in fatalities both compared to the first quarter of 2019 (134) and to the second quarter of 2018 (165).

Migrant deaths in the Sahara are not well documented, and their number remains unknown. In mid-June an IOM search and rescue mission rescued [406 migrants](#) who had lost their way in Niger's Ténéré desert, and provided humanitarian assistance, transportation to Arlit and access to the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) program. The migrants came from 14 West African countries, primarily Guinea-Conakry, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, and included seven women and four children. According to IOM nearly 20,000 people have been assisted by its humanitarian patrols since the beginning of the operation in April 2016.

Southbound mixed migration from North Africa

During the second quarter of the year, a deteriorating political and security situation in Libya has led to an increasingly difficult humanitarian and human rights situation for refugees and migrants stranded there. Meanwhile, an increasing number of people are being turned back at sea by the Libyan coast guard. Returns from Libya to West Africa continue both spontaneously and with international support. The second quarter of 2019 also saw further deportations from Algeria to Niger and Mali.

Reverse mixed migration flows due to armed conflict in Libya?

Clashes between rival Libyan administrations in Libya's capital, Tripoli, have had [dangerous consequences](#) for migrants and refugees held in detention centers. Decreased humanitarian access to these facilities due to the intensifying conflict has further worsened conditions already considered inhumane. As of early June approximately [3,400 refugees and migrants](#) were held in detention in Tripoli. In light of the challenging circumstances in Tripoli, there have been reports of migrants and refugees departing Libya for points west and south. While various [actors](#) in Niger had been bracing and preparing for a large influx from Libya, thus far it has not materialized.

Assisted movements from Libya

In addition to self-organized movements from Libya, international organizations continue to assist in organizing relocations, evacuations and returns.

In the first two and a half weeks of April UNHCR relocated some [539 refugees](#) from detention centers close to battle zones within Tripoli to its Gathering and Departure Facility in a safer area of the city. An evacuation flight departed for Niger carrying [163 refugees](#) – many of whom had been relocated from the Abu Selim and Ain Zara detention centers earlier in the month. They included [dozens of women and children](#), and hailed from countries including Eritrea, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan and Somalia. A further [131 refugees](#) of Sudanese, Eritrean and Somali origin were taken to Niger in June under UNHCR's Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM).

IOM's [Voluntary Humanitarian Return](#) VHR program supported some 188 migrants to return to their countries of origin during the first two weeks of April as clashes spiked in Tripoli. The majority of these were assisted through an 11 April charter flight carrying 160 people returning to Mali, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. The returnees included 20 women and 16 children. About two weeks later another charter flight left Tripoli carrying [153 migrants](#) from Mali, the Gambia, Guinea (Conakry) and Senegal. Those not from Mali received further onward transportation assistance after arriving in Bamako.

Migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees in Niger

Of the 2,782 refugees transported to Niger since the launch of the ETM in 2017, [1,364 remained in Niger](#) as of mid-June. These [refugees](#) are predominantly Eritrean and Somali, many of them are women and children, and they have been identified as having compelling protection needs.

UNHCR and Nigerien government counterparts undertook [missions to Agadez in April](#) to assess protection screening processes and address concerns from asylum seekers over delays in processing their claims. According to the New Humanitarian, Agadez hosts some [1,500 Sudanese](#) who have moved from Libya to Niger in search of protection since 2017. Long asylum processing times, difficult conditions and an uncertain future have caused substantial mental strain among this group. Hundreds of Sudanese have also left Niger of their own accord, without obvious viable onward destinations. UNHCR states that it is working to establish psychosocial support projects to address the mental health needs of this group. At the same time, the OHCHR Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants has [called for the international community](#) – particularly the European Union and its member states – to support Niger in their shared responsibility for upholding the human rights of this vulnerable population.

The Special Rapporteur also recognized the status of Niger as a transit country, notably for migrants expelled or forced to return from Algeria and Libya. He pointed out the [limited availability of humanitarian assistance](#) for migrants in Niger, observing that this can push migrants to sign up for assisted voluntary return as they see no feasible alternatives. This can then result in remigration, an issue that calls for further study.

Deportations from Algeria

UNHCR reports that in the month of April Algerian authorities [deported some 2,700 people](#) to Niger and Mali, an increase over previous months. A total of 8,000 people had been deported in the first four months of the year, although deportations were expected to decrease during Ramadan, as was the case last year. [Expulsions to the border](#) place migrants in a particularly dangerous situation; in Niger all non-Nigeriens must walk 15 km through the desert to reach the nearest settlement.

According to the advocacy and rescue NGO Alarme Phone Sahara, some [1,316](#) persons made their way into Niger in the first ten days of May after being left at the Algerian border. Among this group were multiple Bangladeshis, who as [non-ECOWAS citizens](#) face being returned to the Algerian border by Nigerien authorities and stranded there.

In the May 2019 [report on his mission to Niger](#), the Special Rapporteur for the human rights of migrants emphasized that expulsions from Algeria to Niger are taking place “in flagrant violation of international law.” He called on the Algerian government to uphold its international commitments and immediately cease all collective expulsions to Niger. He noted that there has been no protest against these actions on the part of ECOWAS, and simultaneously urged it and its member states to work towards halting the expulsions, and to give all necessary support to their citizens who had been deported.

Thematic Focus: Burkina Faso - Increasing conflict in a mixed migration context

Burkina Faso has seen a spike in violence in the last quarter, leading to a surge in displacement, with expectations of much more to come. This plays out in a complex mixed migration environment, and raises questions about how broader patterns of human mobility will be affected as the situation in the country evolves.

Mixed migration context: Burkina Faso is a country of emigration, of destination and of transit. A 2013 OECD study estimated that 1.6 million people born in Burkina Faso (or some [9.6% of the population](#)) lived abroad. Since the 1960s [Ivory Coast](#) has represented the main country of destination and as of 2016 was where the largest stock of Burkinabes is still residing.

Burkina Faso was seen as a major **transit hub** for West Africans traveling through Niger aiming to reach Libya, Algeria and Europe, with peaks observed during 2015-16. However, increasingly restrictive migration policies on the part of the Nigerien government and a growth in armed violence along the border have reduced these flows.¹

Since 2017, **returns** have become more prominent, and the direction of movement has changed. Between 1996 and 2006, an average of [62,642 returnees](#) per year were observed in Burkina Faso, the majority from Ivory Coast (88.6%) with a peak in 2002 in the context of the Ivorian political crisis. Today, return flows mainly originate from Libya, Niger and Algeria. According to a member of the Force de Défense et de Sécurité (FDS) interviewed in Seytanga in January 2019 in the context of an upcoming MMC study on security and migration governance in the Liptako Gourma (border area between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso): “Currently migrants transit by here in dribs and drabs... There are more returns of migrants from Libya than departures these days.”²

Violence on the rise: Weak governance and porous borders have contributed to cross-border movements of non-state armed groups, including opposition armed groups and organized criminal groups. A heavy-handed [response](#) to increasing violence on the part of the state security apparatus has led to increasing fear and distrust among the population. At the same time, as trust between the government and border communities breaks down, citizens increasingly look to non-state armed groups such as the Koglweogo for security. This has been particularly noted in the east of the country.³ These types of self-defense groups have also been [implicated](#) in violent attacks against civilians. Violence has been on the rise since 2015, with [attacks](#) concentrating in the north of the country, but also occurring in Ouagadougou and spreading elsewhere in the country. It has surged in recent months.

1 Forthcoming MMC study on the governance of security and migration in the Liptako Gourma.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

Humanitarian situation: Humanitarian actors are expressing grave apprehension over the situation in Burkina Faso; already in the first three months of 2019 there were as many armed incidents as in the entirety of 2018. This escalating violence has continued into the second quarter, spurring displacement, which as of mid-May had [tripled](#) since the beginning of the year. Reported numbers of internal displacement at the end of June stand at more than [190,000](#), and the needs of the displaced have outstripped humanitarian resources available to respond.

Cross-border displacement: As of the end of May, UNHCR estimated that some 15,000 Burkinabes had sought refuge outside of Burkina Faso, with 11,500 in Mali, more than 1,500 in Niger, and 1,911 in Ghana. Given that as of 31 March, [Mali hosted 8,457 Burkinabes](#), it would seem that there were more than 3,000 additional crossings from Burkina Faso into Mali during April and May. UNHCR also reported border crossings of more than [2,000 Burkinabes into Niger](#) during April and May.

Secondary displacement: UNHCR has raised concerns over the potential for secondary displacement. Burkina Faso plays host to some 25,000 Malians, 98% of whom reside in the Sahel region in the north of the country where attacks have escalated in recent months. On 10 April 2019, armed individuals on motorcycles struck the gendarmerie at the entrance to the Goudebou refugee camp near the city of Dori.⁴ The town of Arbinda, which has sustained multiple violent attacks in recent months, was already home to [14,000 IDPs](#).

Going forward: Mounting insecurity characterized by violent attacks and counter-attacks against civilians have spurred predictions of increasingly substantial displacement in and from Burkina Faso. Concerns have been raised about conflict from the Sahel spilling into [coastal countries](#), and Ghana has begun to see Burkinabe refugees in recent months.

In March 2019, UNHCR was reported to be [assessing the feasibility](#) with the Government of setting up an Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) for the temporary evacuation of vulnerable refugees trapped in detention in Libya. Burkina Faso would join Niger in hosting evacuees while they await onward resettlement. However, according to a recent [UNHCR update](#), the security situation in Burkina Faso is not currently conducive to moving forward with ETM implementation, and the Government has communicated the postponement of its participation.

It is also important to consider the impact of the current situation in Burkina Faso on mixed migration more broadly. How will transit flows – including those returning to the country – be affected by the increased insecurity? The 4Mi data from 977 migrants and refugees surveyed in three locations in Burkina Faso (Bobo Dioulasso, Dori, and Kantchari) from January-June 2019 suggests that security considerations are not an overriding factor in the decision-making process.⁵ This meshes with a conclusion of the upcoming MMC study on security and migration governance in the Liptako Gourma that indicated that material obstacles (enhanced border control, lack of funds) were more compelling than security risk factors in the migration decision-making process. The 4Mi findings showed that 62% of migrants and refugees surveyed were fully aware of the risks that they faced, and 84% would make the migration decision again knowing what they know now. It remains to be seen whether this attitude persists through the growing conflict.

⁴ Forthcoming MMC study on the governance of security and migration in the Liptako Gourma.

⁵ As survey data collection relied on a non-randomized, purposive sampling, the survey results supply insights on mixed migration dynamics, but findings should not be used to make any inferences about the total population of migrants and refugees. Further information on 4Mi approach and methodology can be found [here](#).

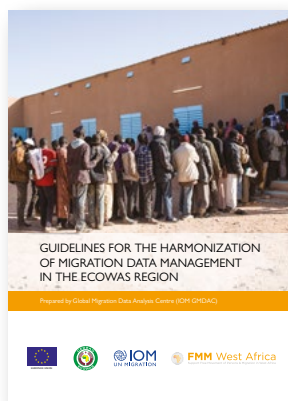
Highlighted new research and reports



[Gares routières, cœurs battants de l'Afrique](#)

Le Monde | April-May 2019

Le Monde has published a series of articles dedicated to the bus stations of Africa, a crossroads for daily life across the continent. Since the virtual disappearance of passenger rail transport, these bus stations represent a crucial means of accessing mobility. They are places where multiple national and international destinations are on offer, where different types of jobs and activities mix, where individual and collective trajectories intersect. This series provides a perspective on Ghanaian buses, taxi unions in Ivory Coast, the inter-city Cotonou-Abidjan bus, and coxeurs in Senegal. It can help provide insight into mobility-related dynamics in West Africa.



[Guidelines for the harmonization of migration data management in the ECOWAS region](#)

IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre | 2019

These guidelines and their related training kit are intended to help build capacity for the collection and management of migration data. By doing so, they aim to further develop an evidence base to be applied in migration policy-making to be used by actors at the regional and national levels within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The guidelines form an integral element of the "Support to Free Movement and Migration in West Africa" project, which is funded by the European Union (EU) and by ECOWAS. They are intended to identify and fill knowledge gaps and answer policy questions with specific relevance to the region.



Incoherent Agendas: Do European Union migration policies threaten regional integration in West Africa?

Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations | June 2019

This policy brief draws on an emerging constellation of research related to the impact of EU migration policies in West Africa to assess their impact on regional integration. While more evidence is still necessary, initial findings suggest that EU policies can create circumstances which challenge ECOWAS principles of free movement, thereby slowing processes of regional economic and political integration.

This in turn could actually curtail development, in contradiction to an accepted EU approach to address the root causes of migration. The brief seeks to provide input to policy-makers on how these unintended consequences could be avoided.



Migration et Santé: Déterminants Sociaux et Santé des Migrants

Médecins du Monde | June 2019

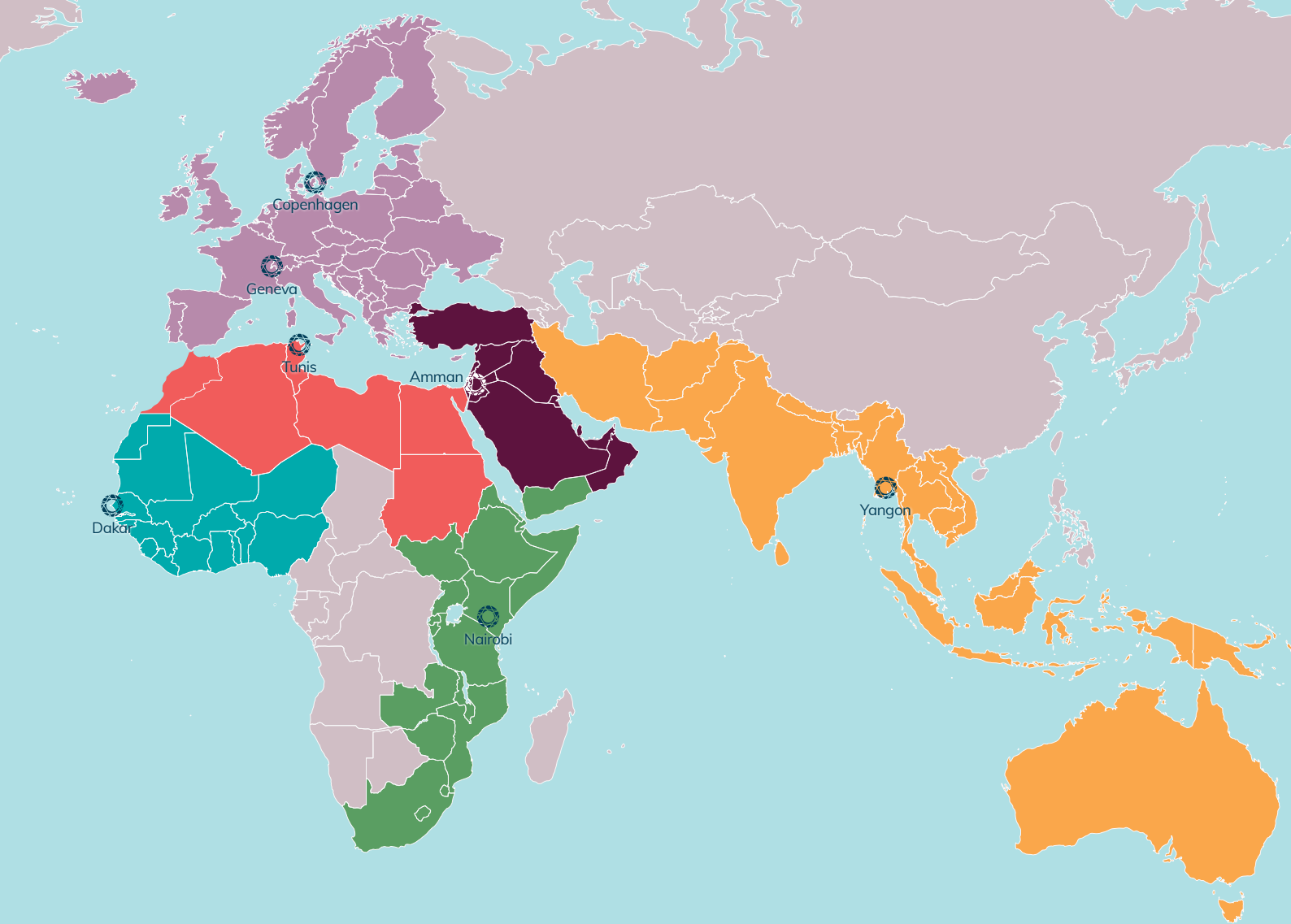
This paper seeks to provide a snapshot of both the health status and access to care of migrants, as well as their exposure to violence. It does so through interviews and focus group discussions carried out with migrants along key migratory routes in Niger, Morocco and Tunisia. The Niger findings are based on 100 migrant interviews and eight focus group discussions.



Youth and Mobility: Children and Youth on the move across West and Central Africa in 2018

IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) | April 2019

This report aims to give an overview of youth mobility in West and Central Africa, including information on migrant profiles, routes, intentions, needs and vulnerabilities. Using IOM's Flow Monitoring Methodology, it is based on 11,000 surveys conducted with young people across the region in 2018. Some key takeaways include findings that 29% of all interviewees reported facing difficulties during their travel; and 85% of all respondents stated that they had information needs, 15 % of whom specified a need for information on return (specifically in Chad and Niger).



The MMC is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration. The MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of and governed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and global and regional MMC teams are hosted by the DRC offices in Amman, Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Tunis and Yangon.

For more information visit:

mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

