Mixed
Migration
Centre

MMC West Africa

QUARTER 3 2020

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 seven 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

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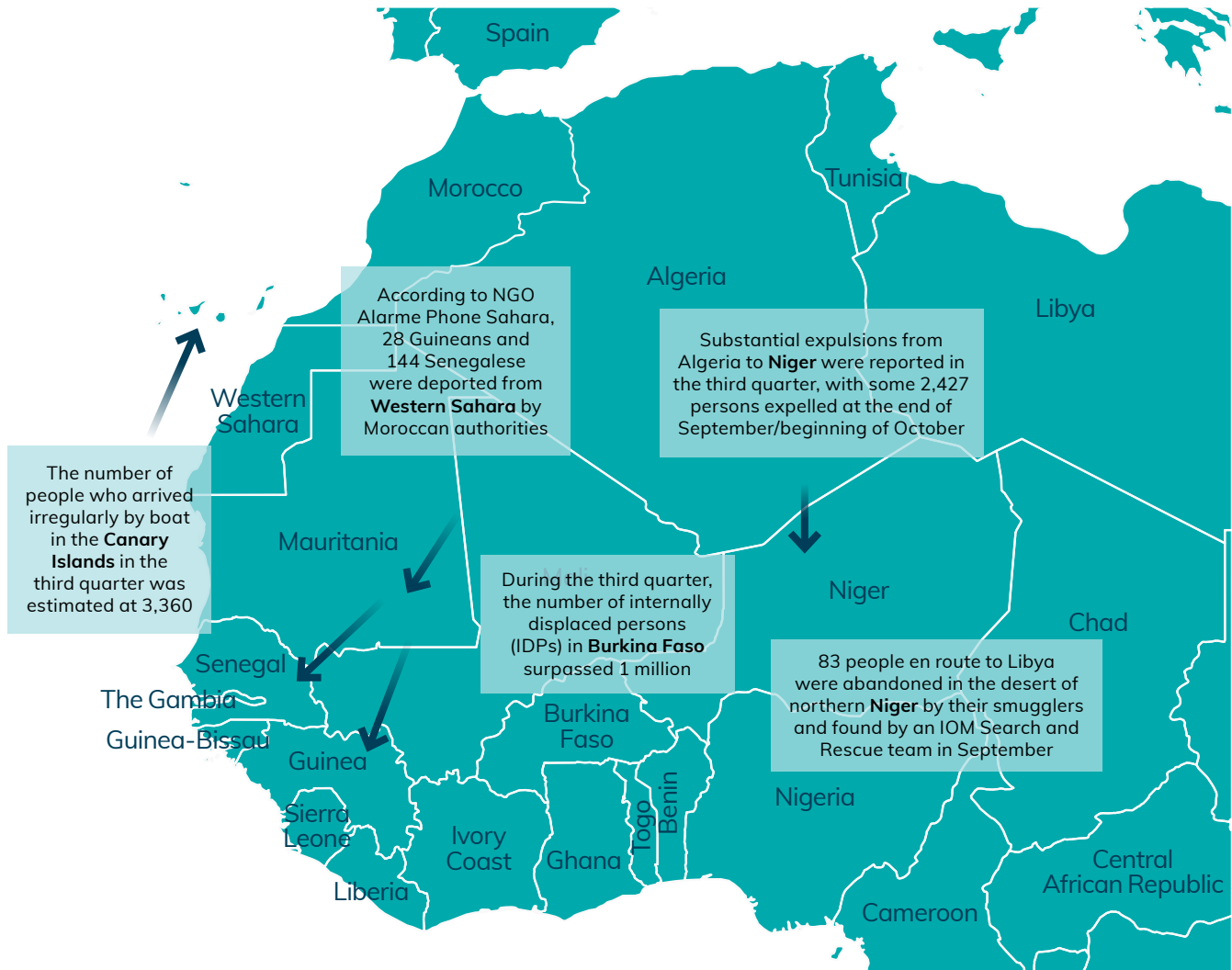Women watching boats in Joal-Fadiout, Senegal, February 2017.

Quarterly Mixed Migration Update:
West Africa

Quarter 3 - 2020

Key Updates

- **Burkina Faso displacement:** In August 2020, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Burkina Faso surpassed one million, according to the National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation (CONASUR). This represents five percent of the total population, or one person in 20, and an increase in internal displacement of more than 100% since the beginning of the year.

- **Canary Islands arrivals:** An estimated 3,360 sea arrivals were recorded in the Canary Islands during the third quarter, according to a compilation of Spain Weekly Snapshots (29 June – 27 September; Weeks 27 – 39) from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This was more than the previous two quarters combined (2,775).

- **Atlantic/West African route to the Canaries:** According to analysis from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Missing Migrants Project cited in El Pais, of the irregular sea routes to Europe, the route to the Canary Islands was the most dangerous from January to July 2020, with approximately one recorded death for every 20 arrivals.

- **Expulsions from North Africa:** A variety of expulsions took place from North Africa to West Africa during the quarter. In addition to some 1,048 expulsions from Algeria to Niger recorded by UNHCR from May to July 2020, the NGO Alarme Phone Sahara reported some 2,427 people expelled from Algeria into Niger at the end of September and beginning of October. Alarme Phone Sahara also reported the deportations of 28 Guinean women and 144 Senegalese from Western Sahara by Moroccan authorities in conjunction with the Senegalese and Guinean embassies.

- **Policy and legal advances:** On 2 September 2020, Ivory Coast became the first country in Africa to adopt a statelessness determination procedure. On 28 September 2020, the Government of Niger issued a decree adopting its National Migration Policy (2020-2035) and a corresponding five-year Action Plan.

Regional Overview*

Spain

Morocco

Tunisia

Algeria

Libya

Western Sahara

According to NGO Alarme Phone Sahara, 28 Guineans and 144 Senegalese were deported from **Western Sahara** by Moroccan authorities

Substantial expulsions from Algeria to **Niger** were reported in the third quarter, with some 2,427 persons expelled at the end of September/beginning of October

The number of people who arrived irregularly by boat in the **Canary Islands** in the third quarter was estimated at 3,360

Mauritania

Niger

Chad

During the third quarter, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in **Burkina Faso** surpassed 1 million

83 people en route to Libya were abandoned in the desert of northern **Niger** by their smugglers and found by an IOM Search and Rescue team in September

Senegal

The Gambia

Guinea-Bissau

Guinea

Sierra Leone

Burkina Faso

Togo

Benin

Nigeria

Central African Republic

Ivory Coast

Ghana

Liberia

Cameroon

*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 region

The most updated Flow Monitoring numbers available from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at the end of the third quarter 2020 show that after a substantial decline in migration flows in West Africa in March – at the time when regional governments began to implement travel bans and border closures – there has been a month by month increase in flows from May through July, although the rate of increase appears to be slowing (+65% from April to May, +29% from May to June, + 18% from June to July).

Displacement in the Central Sahel

In August the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in **Burkina Faso** surpassed one million, according to the country's National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation (CONASUR). This represents five percent of the total population, or one person in 20, and an increase in internal displacement of more than 100% since the beginning of the year. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has expressed concern that as many of 1.5 million people could be internally displaced by the end of 2020. More than 184 attacks against civilians were recorded between the beginning of the year and August, and against this ever-deteriorating security backdrop, many displaced persons have needed to move multiple times. The majority of IDPs (76% as of August) are found in the Centre Nord and Sahel regions, and the majority of Malian refugees in Burkina Faso are hosted in the Sahel region, where host communities also face extremely challenging circumstances.

Numbers available from UNHCR at the end of the third quarter of 2020 did not show a major increase in refugees in **Mali** (42,780 as of 31 July) or **Niger** (228,717 as of 31 August) during the first part of the quarter, nor in the number of IDPs in Niger (265,522 as of 31 August). However, internal displacement in Mali increased by 20,665 persons, reaching a total of 287,496 persons, from 30 June (end second quarter) to 31 July. This outpaced rises in internal displacement seen in previous months (266,831 as of 30 June, 258,017 as of 31 May, 250,998 as of 30 April etc).

Whereas the Maradi region of Niger had seen a spike in displacement in the second quarter of the year, these numbers did not change significantly during the third quarter. UNHCR figures estimated that some 70,000 refugees from **Nigeria** (of which 41,538 had been biometrically registered) and more than 23,000 IDPs were present in Maradi as of 15 September. The Maradi region was substantially affected by flooding during the quarter, which caused nearly 1,300 refugees to lose their shelters.

Policy updates

On 2 September, **Ivory Coast** became the first country in Africa to adopt a statelessness determination procedure with the signature of two decrees which put in place procedures to regularize the status of stateless persons. This step will allow persons previously without legal status to acquire documents and engage in a variety of crucial activities such as opening a bank account, enrolling in school, or accessing formal employment. A 2016 report published by UNHCR pointed out that Ivory Coast "has the largest reported estimate of stateless persons or those of undetermined nationality in West Africa: 700,000."

On 28 September, the Government of **Niger** issued a decree adopting its National Migration Policy (2020-2035) and a corresponding five-year Plan of Action.

According to the policy itself, the overall vision is that:

> *By 2035, Niger, strengthened by its geostrategic position and proud of its governance of migration, guarantees the effectiveness of the rights of migrants, host populations and social cohesion, within a framework of sub-regional, regional and international cooperation for inclusive and sustainable development.*

This vision is articulated around three strategic axes: 1) the exploitation of Niger's local economic potential and opportunities; 2) the protection of migrants and assistance of migrant women and men, their families and host communities; 3) the management of migration flows.

The policy also aims for coherence and alignment with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, of which Niger is a signatory, and the objectives of the Plan of Action were developed with this in mind.

Mixed migration from West Africa towards North Africa and Europe[1]

Western Mediterranean Route

In the first three quarters of the year (as of 27 September), UNHCR reported 19,093 land and sea arrivals to Spain. These encompass arrivals by sea to the Spanish mainland, Canary Islands and Balearic Islands, and arrivals to Ceuta and Melilla by land and sea. While down by 17% compared to the same period of 2019, arrivals in the third quarter nonetheless show a substantial increase over the previous two quarters (8,453 arrivals from 1 January to 28 June). In keeping with previous trends, as of 31 August, West Africans from four countries were among the top nationalities of arrival, with 14% from Mali, 8% from Guinea, 7% from Ivory Coast and 5% from Senegal.

Of the arrivals noted above, an estimated 3,360 were recorded in the Canary Islands during the third quarter, according to a compilation of UNHCR's Spain Weekly Snapshots (29 June – 27 September; Weeks 27 – 39). This was more than the previous two quarters combined (2,775). The estimated 6,135 arrivals seen in the Canary Islands from January – September of 2020 are more than six times the number recorded in the corresponding period of 2019 (975). Requests from the Associated Press to share statistics on nationalities of Canary Islands arrivals were declined by the Spanish government, but UNHCR infographics indicate that West Africans are substantially represented. The UNHCR Representative in Spain stated that "There's been a change in profile. We see more arrivals from the Sahel, from the Ivory Coast, more women, more children, more profiles that would be in need of international protection."

According to IOM Missing Migrants Project analysis cited in El Pais, of the irregular sea routes to Europe, that of the Canaries was the most dangerous from January to July 2020, with approximately one recorded death for every 20 arrivals.[2] As of September, IOM had recorded the deaths or disappearance of some 247 refugees and migrants seeking to reach the Canary Islands thus far in 2020. This compares to 210 known deaths tabulated in all of 2019, and 43 in 2018.

The migratory pressures being faced by the Canary Islands as arrival numbers have increased over the last year were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which halted both deportation flights and transfers to the Spanish mainland. According to a representative of the Spanish Commission to Help Refugees, "Blocking people from leaving the Canaries has turned the islands into an open-air prison." Migrants and refugees have been housed in churches and schools, and makeshift accommodations at docks and port facilities with minimal resources. There have also been efforts made to temporarily house people in hotels as other solutions are explored.

The increase in arrivals has not gone unnoticed by European politicians, who also see Mauritania as playing a crucial role in migration towards the Canaries, both as a point of departure and transit en route to the islands and as a recipient of persons expelled from the islands. During a September visit to Mauritania with

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1   Numbers in this section reflect best estimates available at time data was accessed (early October) but sources may be subject to later updates.
2   As compared to: Western Mediterranean Route – 1 death for every 94 arrivals; Central Mediterranean Route – 1 death for every 54 arrivals; and Eastern Mediterranean Route – 1 death for every 115 arrivals.

the Commissioner for Home Affairs of the European Commission, Ylva Johansson, the Spanish Minister of the Interior, Fernando Grande-Marlaska, stated that "Mauritania has an important relevance in the control of the irregular migratory flows towards the Canary Islands" and "for months we have been concerned about the increase in the movement of immigrants from the African coasts." Further underscoring its importance to Spain, Mauritania was the first international destination to be visited by Spain's Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, following a travel halt due to the pandemic.

Central Mediterranean Route

The third quarter of 2020 saw a major increase in irregular sea arrivals in Italy (provisional figures of 16,777) both compared to the previous two quarters, and compared to the corresponding period in 2019. This brought estimated arrivals for the year to 23,726, more than three times the total for the previous year to date. As of the end of August, Ivory Coast was the only West African country to be among the top ten nationalities of arrival, with 5% of arrivals reported by UNHCR to that point in the year. However, it is notable that almost a third of the recorded arrivals of women (376 of 1,158) came from Ivory Coast. Additionally, Ivory Coast was the nationality with the fifth highest percentage of unaccompanied child arrivals in Italy (129 of 2,612) and Guinea was the fourth (138 of 2,612).

Southbound mixed migration

International activities and populations of interest in Niger

Resettlement of refugees who had been evacuated from Libya to Niger under UNHCR's Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) had halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but resumed during the quarter. As of 18 September, 776 evacuees remained in Niger.

As of September, UNHCR had identified 1,438 asylum seekers and refugees in Agadez, Niger, primarily coming from Sudan. On 20 March Niger's General Directorate of Civil Status temporarily halted interviews of asylum seekers due to COVID-19, but as of 25 May these measures were lifted and UNHCR activities recommenced fully. In spite of this resumption of activities, many refugees and asylum seekers have found themselves in a protracted situation in Agadez, with hundreds of Sudanese having gone there from Libya in late 2017. In a letter transmitted to UNHCR headquarters in early August, Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers stated that their "conditions are not appropriate for human beings" asking to be "rescued immediately" and citing mental problems suffered by many among their number due to their living situation.

On 3 September an IOM Search and Rescue (SAR) team encountered 83 migrants and refugees heading to Libya stranded in the desert in Niger's Agadez region. The group included 41 females from Nigeria (including twin four-year old girls) and 42 males, primarily from Nigeria but also from Togo, Mali and Ghana. They had been abandoned after their smugglers sighted military vehicles which they feared might intercept their convoy. Before departing the smugglers took their belongings, and the group had been without food and water for three days. The group was given food, water and medical assistance, and was taken to a COVID-19 quarantine site in Dirkou. Not including this latest group, the SAR teams have assisted 321 people in the Sahara desert in Niger in 2020.

Assisted Voluntary Return

Following pandemic-related closures of borders and airspace posing an obstacle to Assisted Voluntary Return operations from the end of the first quarter into the second quarter of 2020, the third quarter saw a variety of returns within the region and from countries beyond West Africa.

These included a resumption of IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) flights from Libya after the pandemic caused a five-month hiatus. In late August, 118 Ghanaians were assisted to return from Libya to Ghana. The group included seven women, three children and two infants. According to IOM, more than 2,300 people have registered to return from Libya to their countries of origin through the VHR program since March.

IOM organized three flights from Algeria during the quarter. According to IOM the difficult circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic had spurred migrants to seek assistance to return to their countries of origin from their national embassies as well as from IOM. Algeria and the governments of countries of return temporarily lifted travel restrictions as necessary to allow the flights to land. These flights comprised the return of 84 Malians to Bamako in mid-July; the return of 114 Guineans, Ivorians and Liberians to their respective countries in late August; and the return of 85 Beninese and Burkinabés in late September.

There were also movements to and from Niger, a hub for returns in West Africa. Despite COVID-19 related border closures, on 6 August 147 Nigeriens, primarily women and children, were assisted to return to their country from the Ivory Coast. This was the first charter flight organized by IOM Ivory Coast to support returns during the pandemic, after the June registration of some 550 Nigeriens stranded in the Ivory Coast. Three weeks later 80 Ivorians in Niger and 146 Nigeriens in Ivory Coast were assisted to return to their respective countries on 27 August. On 23 September 26 Gambians and 100 Guineans were assisted in returning home from Niger. In the case of the Gambia, the return was possible as the government approved the opening of a humanitarian corridor in their otherwise closed airspace. This marked the first AVR flight to the Gambia to take place in six months.

Additionally, returns have taken place from outside the continent. On 16 August, 68 stranded Nigerian women were assisted to return home from Lebanon.

Expulsions

Expulsions from Algeria to Niger continued in the third quarter, with UNHCR recording the expulsion of 1,048 persons from May to July (51% of which were Nigerien citizens). On 30 September the Algerian Minister of the Interior, Kamel Beldjoud reported on the expulsion of 1,500 migrants deemed to be "illegal" in a plenary session of the People's National Assembly. Monitors from the NGO Alarme Phone Sahara based in northern Niger near the Algerian border corroborate the movement of two "unofficial convoys" carrying 976 people from a variety of sub-Saharan African countries, as well as one Pakistani, on 30 September and 2 October. Two "official convoys" carrying some 1,451 Nigerien citizens were also recorded at the beginning of October. Given that people on "unofficial convoys" are generally left in the desert in the border region 15-20 kilometers from the nearest Nigerien settlement, Alarme Phone Sahara calls into question the Algerian Interior Minister's assertion that the expulsions were carried out "voluntarily" and "in accordance with international agreements and conventions signed by Algeria, particularly those linked to the respect of human rights and dignity."

Alarme Phone Sahara has also reported deportations of 28 Guinean women and 144 Senegalese from Western Sahara by Moroccan authorities in conjunction with the Senegalese and Guinean embassies.

Thematic Focus:
Gender and COVID-19: Impact on the journeys and daily life of refugees and migrants

Development actors have increasingly deployed gender as a lens of analysis for understanding and addressing the differential impacts of public health crises, and the gender impacts of the COVID-19 crisis continue to be explored. A subsector of the broader population in West Africa, migrants and refugees must navigate a landscape rapidly changed by COVID-19, with developments and consequences that include increased internal and external border controls, poverty and food insecurity, stay at home orders etc. Using data from the MMC's 4Mi project, it is possible to compare and contrast experiences of male and female refugees and migrants in terms of their migration journey and daily life in the face of the pandemic.
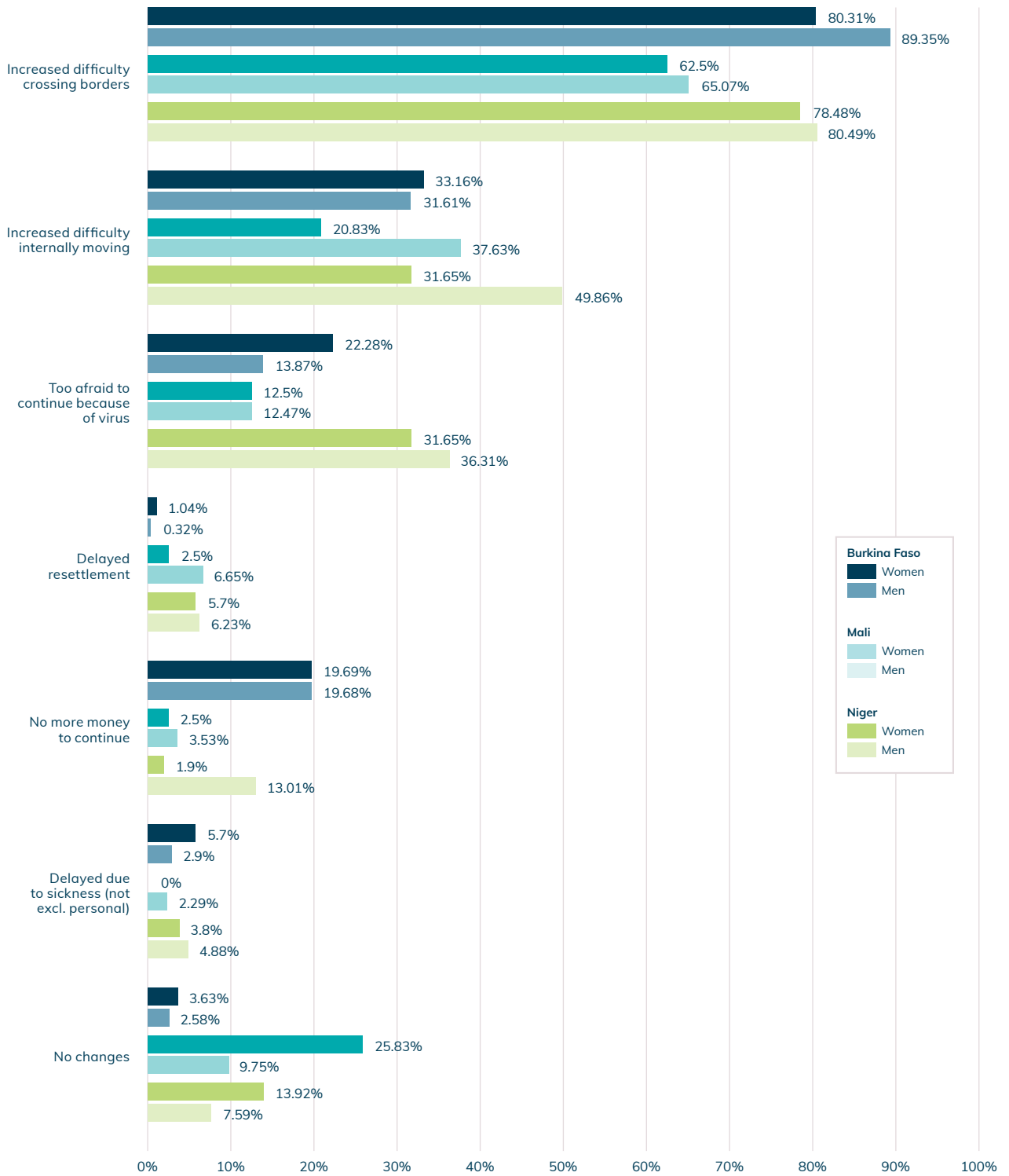
Respondent profile

Between July and September 2020, the MMC West Africa surveyed 1,631 persons in Burkina Faso (31%, n=503), Mali (37%, n=601) and Niger (32%, n=527). 41% of respondents in Burkina Faso were women (n=193), 25% in Mali (n=120) and 34% in Niger (n=158). In total, monitors identified 29% of respondents as women and 71% as men. The median age for female respondents was 26 and the median age for male respondents was 29. The top five nationalities represented in the sample for women were Nigeria (19%), Togo (14%), Côte d'Ivoire (10%), Guinea (8%) and Benin (8%); and Guinea (16%), Niger (10%), Côte d'Ivoire (10%), Burkina Faso (9%) and Mali (8%) for men. 23% percent of women surveyed reported travelling with persons under 18 in their care compared to 8% of men surveyed.

Impact of COVID-19 on migration decision and journey

The overwhelming majority of respondents reported migrating for economic reasons, although men (89%) were more likely to cite this than women (79%). An additional important factor mentioned by 47% of female respondents was personal and family reasons (compared to 31% of male respondents), likely related to the role that women in West Africa tend to play as primary caregiver to children. Indeed, personal and family reasons were more important for both women and men who reported travelling with children (respectively 72% and 49%). Although COVID-19 has had a disruptive influence on the livelihoods of many, 77% of respondents reported that COVID-19 was not a factor in their decision to leave or that they had left before the pandemic began. In the case of those for whom COVID-19 was a factor in their decision to migrate, and who left after the pandemic had begun (n=369), a large proportion of respondents cited the economic impact of the crisis (84% for men and 75% for women).

## Figure 1. What impact has the Coronavirus had on your migration journey?

Increased difficulty crossing borders
- 80.31%
- 89.35%
- 62.5%
- 65.07%
- 78.48%
- 80.49%

Increased difficulty internally moving
- 33.16%
- 31.61%
- 20.83%
- 37.63%
- 31.65%
- 49.86%

Too afraid to continue because of virus
- 22.28%
- 13.87%
- 12.5%
- 12.47%
- 31.65%
- 36.31%

Delayed resettlement
- 1.04%
- 0.32%
- 2.5%
- 6.65%
- 5.7%
- 6.23%

No more money to continue
- 19.69%
- 19.68%
- 2.5%
- 3.53%
- 1.9%
- 13.01%

Delayed due to sickness (not excl. personal)
- 5.7%
- 2.9%
- 0%
- 2.29%
- 3.8%
- 4.88%

No changes
- 3.63%
- 2.58%
- 25.83%
- 9.75%
- 13.92%
- 7.59%

Legend:
Burkina Faso
- Women
- Men

Mali
- Women
- Men

Niger
- Women
- Men

Despite COVID-19 not appearing to have a substantial impact on the migration decision-making of respondents, it did impact their journey significantly. Respondents reported increased difficulty crossing borders (76%), increased difficult moving internally (34%), being too afraid to continue on due to the virus (24%), and of those who had lost income (n=717), 31% reported being unable to continue their journey. While overall the percentages of men and women reporting these challenges was quite similar, experiences did appear to differ to a greater extent by gender at the country level. Male respondents reported greater difficulty crossing borders in Burkina Faso (89%) as compared to female respondents (80%) and moving internally in Mali (38% as compared to 21%). Further, female respondents in Burkina Faso reported they were too afraid to continue their journey (22%) more than male respondents (14%). The reverse was true in Niger with 50% of male respondents reporting that they were too afraid to move as compared to 32% of female respondents). Finally, 13% of men in Niger could not continue their journey due to the economic impact of COVID-19, while only 2% of women respondents in Niger reported the same.

Overall, a higher percentage of female respondents reported an increased risk of labor exploitation in the face of the pandemic (60% women and 50% men) as well as an increased risk of sexual exploitation (59% women versus 33% men) since the pandemic started. However, those women who reported unexpectedly stopping longer (n=64) or running out of money (n=44) en route were between 11-13 points more likely to agree that the risk of labor and sexual exploitation had increased as compared to female respondents overall (73% and 70% respectively). The trend did not hold for men. In contrast, however, men who changed migration path but kept the same destination (n=219) were at least 10 points more likely to strongly agree or agree that the risk of labor and sexual exploitation has increased since the start of the pandemic as compared to men overall.

Impact of COVID-19 on daily life

It is clear that the pandemic has had an impact on the [economy and employment opportunities](#) in the region, and 61% of respondents reported reduced access to work. While about 30% of respondents, both male and female, reported a loss of income during the pandemic resulting from a loss of work, gender differences were apparent when breaking down the sample by country. In Burkina Faso, 40% of women reported a loss of work-related income compared to 32% of men. The reverse was true for Niger, where 31% of men reported a loss of work-related income compared to 18% of women.

Figure 2. Have you lost income due to Coronavirus restrictions?
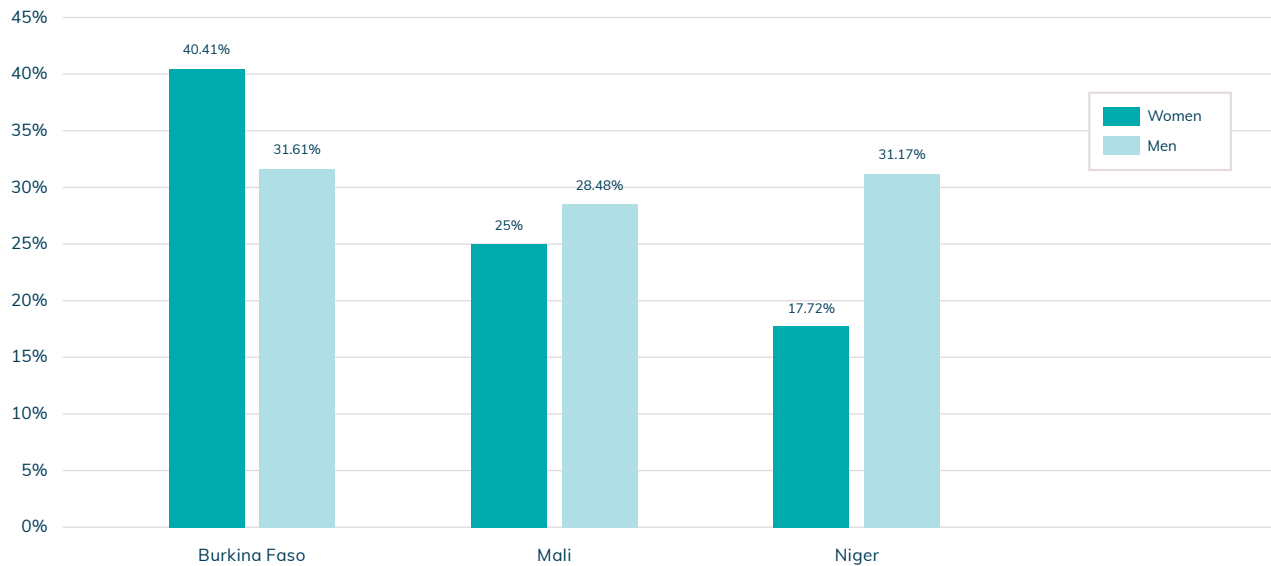
Looking at the overall sample, male and female respondents suffered differently due to loss of income, as well as in terms of the broader impacts of the pandemic. For example, men were more likely to report a reduced availability of basic goods than women (26% versus 18%), as well as saying they were less able to afford them (26% versus 22%). Of respondents who reported losing income (n = 717), 61% said they were using up their savings, yet female respondents were more likely to have fallen into debt (31% versus 24%). In relation to this, female respondents reported feeling worry and anxiety due to their loss of income (44%) to a greater extent than male respondents (37%). Female respondents were also more likely to report worry and stress as an impact of COVID-19 overall (55% versus 50%).

Many of the respondents regardless of gender felt they knew how to protect themselves and others against the pandemic (80%). However, the aid received which could facilitate such measures differed between women and men. 22% of respondents had received some form of additional assistance. Of those persons (n=360), men were more likely to say they had received personal protection equipment (49% compared to 37%), while women reported receiving food (50% vs 33%), psychological assistance (17% vs 9%) and childcare (11% vs 1%) at higher rates than men.

Additionally, about half of respondents believed they would be able to access healthcare if they had COVID-19 symptoms regardless of gender. Respondents most often cited cost (49%), fear of deportation, arrest or reporting (19%), not knowing where to go (15%) and legal status (12%) as barriers for accessing healthcare. However, on the country level important gender differences related to such barriers were seen. Female respondents in Niger appeared more vulnerable in specific aspects regarding healthcare access than male respondents, more often citing cost (56%) and legal status (10%) than men (44% and 5% respectively). In Mali, female respondents cited legal status as a barrier to health access more than twice as often as male respondents (39% versus 13%). In contrast, male respondents more often reported cost as a barrier (50%) than female respondents (34%), and only 53% of male respondents in Mali reported being able to access healthcare at all if they showed symptoms of COVID-19, as compared to 65% of female respondents, suggesting that cost is a particularly significant obstacle. There were no substantial differences on this question between male and female respondents in Burkina Faso.

Living and working conditions also were shown to vary according to gender and thus male and female respondents reported differential ability to act upon the COVID-19 information they had received (only 1% of the sample reported having received no information on the virus). For example, a greater proportion of female respondents expressed that they were unable to practice physical distancing at work (35% versus 14%), as well as at home (52% versus 37%). That many women in the region work in the service industry may help explain this difficulty. Further, women were 12% more likely to share a toilet with other households and be accompanied by children in their care (23%) providing further insight into women's difficulty in physically distancing as a preventative measure at home.

Overall, while female respondents showed some distinct characteristics, particularly a greater emphasis on family in terms of reason for departure and caring for children en route, it is notable that across many categories of analysis, there were no major differences between male and female respondents when looking at the aggregated data across all three countries of interview. However, when data is further broken down to the country level, there are interesting differences seen in relation to gender. This highlights the salience of local differences in opportunities and constraints related to gender. It underscores the importance of examining location and gender together when considering the impacts of the pandemic on people on the move in West Africa.

Highlighted New Research and Reports
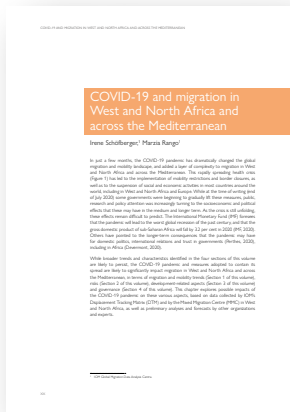
COVID-19 and migration in West and North Africa and across the Mediterranean

IOM | July 2020

Drawing predominantly on data from the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) and from the MMC 4Mi project, the authors examine the impact of COVID-19 on migration in West and North Africa according to current trends in migration movements, risks exacerbated by COVID-19, its impact on development and the consequences for migration governance. While the pandemic and governments' corresponding efforts to restrict movement initially stunted internal and cross border movement, in the summer months an uptick did occur as the same governments began to loosen restrictions. Concurrently, roughly 50,000 people had become stranded in the region and remained so as of June 2020. Routes in the region were also deemed likely to be more hazardous due to such travel restrictions. Further, loss of income, rising food insecurity, precarious access to health care and other secondary and tertiary impacts of COVID-19 have negatively impacted migrants in the region, with irregular migrants, migrants employed in the informal economy, migrants in camp or camp-like settings and other vulnerable migrants likely being more severely impacted. The situation underlines the importance of migrant inclusion in COVID-19 responses.
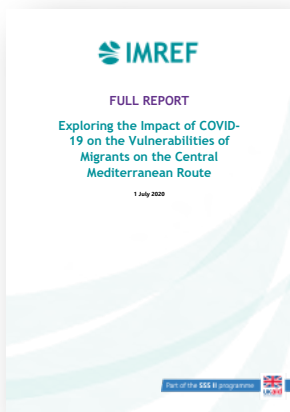
Exploring the Impact of COVID-19 on the Vulnerabilities of Migrants on the Central Mediterranean Route

IMREF | July 2020

Based on a rigorous review of the available sources on COVID-19 and migrants on the Central Mediterranean Route from 4Mi data, the report examines the impacts of COVID-19 and the reactions thereto on migrants' and refugees' movements, risks and access to health and protection services. Key trends identified in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso included increased difficulties migrating, uncertainty regarding continuing migrating and longer stays in transit due to travel restrictions and increased controls. Depleted financial resources, secondary health concerns beyond COVID-19, strained relations with the host community, increased reliance on smugglers and reduced availability and visibility of protection services are critical risks for migrants and refugees and barriers for accessing health and protection services. The report concludes with recommendations for donors and implementers.
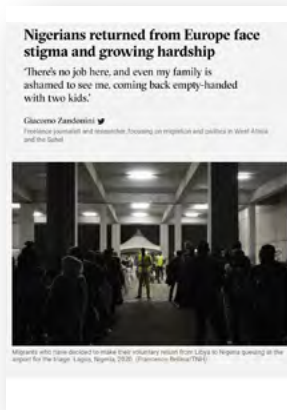
Nigerians returned from Europe face stigma and growing hardship

The New Humanitarian | July 2020

This article provides insight into the stigmatization and exclusion of Nigerian returnees, and the differential treatment of and opportunities available to voluntary and forced returnees. The 16,800 Nigerians who have been voluntarily repatriated from African and Europe benefit from increased support from local and UN agencies. They can access empowerment courses, receive financial support and obtain assistance to establish their own business. In contrast, the 8,400 deportees from Europe do not benefit from donor-funded support and often feel anger regarding their treatment. Despite these disparities, both returnee groups endure stigmatization and economic struggles once back in Nigeria. Nigerian society and their families often see them as failures, regardless of why they returned. There are significant unmet psychological needs, particularly among deportees, many of whom have endured trauma during their return. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated both groups' struggles to regain an economic foothold.
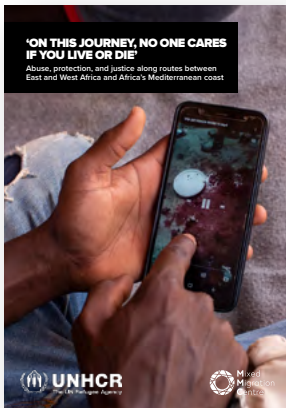
On this journey, no one cares if you live or die: Abuse, protection and justice along routes between East and West Africa and Africa's Mediterranean Coast

UNHCR and MMC | July 2020

Through highlighting and mapping the primary routes refugees and migrants use in West Africa, East/the Horn of Africa and North Africa as they travel to and through Libya and Egypt, this report examines the many risks and abuses they endure along the journey, as well as the protection gaps and justice mechanisms along the Central Mediterranean Route. Based on 4Mi data, the report seeks to shed light on protection incidents experienced along this route: death, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), trafficking, severe physical abuse, kidnap for ransom and the myriad abuses associated with detention. In West Africa, physical violence and SGBV were reported to be most common in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, the main transit countries in West Africa along the Central Mediterranean Route. The report concludes by describing some of the support available to survivors of abuses along the route, identifying critical gaps in assistance for survivors and providing an overview of mechanisms of accountability for perpetrators.
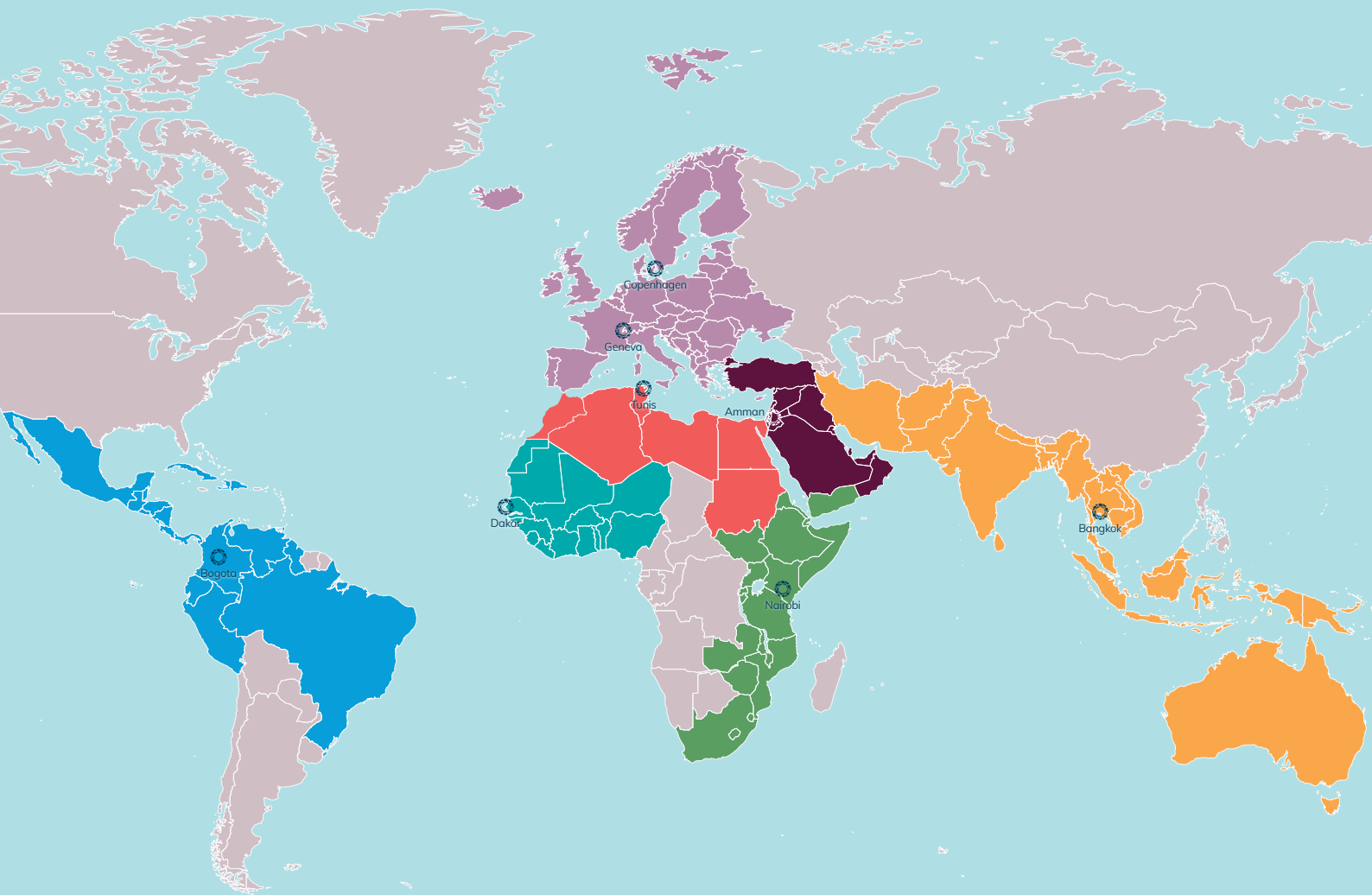
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The MMC is part of and governed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Global and regional MMC teams are based in Amman, Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Tunis, Bogota and Bangkok.

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