



**Front cover photo credit:**

4Mi Monitor Burkina Faso, January 2021

With the closure of the borders, migrants boarding motorbike taxis as they get off the buses for the clandestine crossing of the border with Côte d'Ivoire at Niangologo (Cascades region, border with Côte d'Ivoire).

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**Researched and written by:** Diana Ihring and Judith Meskers

**Reviewed by:** Aurélia Donnard, Bram Frouws

**Layout and design:** Simon Pegler

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## About MMC

The Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) is a global network consisting of six regional hubs (Asia, East Africa & Yemen, Europe, North Africa, West Africa and Latin America & Caribbean) and a central unit in Geneva. The MMC is a leading source of 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). While its institutional link to DRC ensures MMC's work is grounded in operational reality, it acts as an independent source of data, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration for policy makers, practitioners, journalists, and the broader humanitarian sector. The position of the MMC does not necessarily reflect the position of DRC.

For more information on MMC visit our website:

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# About this report

The present research was commissioned by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to inform its 2022 programming in the border zone between the Sahel countries of Mali and Burkina Faso and the economically strong coastal countries of that zone (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana). The Mixed Migration Centre in West Africa (MMC) proposed to conduct a study on the impact of the current conflict in the Sahel on the mobility of refugees and migrants to these coastal countries which were identified as likely to face a spillover of the current crisis in the Sahel and an influx of population.

Lack of data available on this subject identified by the MMC and a data collection at Côte d'Ivoire's borders with Mali and Burkina Faso was initially proposed to be conducted in the first part of 2021. The present research confirms the need for further data collection at border areas to monitor potential spread of existing movements in Burkina Faso and Mali towards southern coastal countries.

The MMC contracted IMPACT Initiatives to undertake the first phase of the research. This report is based on a review of existing literature and interviews with key informants, as well as some additional surveys conducted by the MMC with refugees and migrants themselves at the border between Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire.

# Introduction

The aim of the present report is to inform programmatic and operational response to conflict-induced movements in the Sahel region in 2021. More specifically, it aims to determine to what extent the flare-up of conflict in the Sahel region since 2019, and most severely in 2020, is likely to impact cross-border movements from Burkina Faso and Mali towards Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana and, if so, in what way. The research was conducted between December 2020 and January 2021 and is based on a thorough secondary data review (SDR) aggregating publicly available information, 20 key informant interviews (KIIs) and interviews with 25 people on the move originating from Burkina Faso and Mali toward Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana<sup>1</sup>. KI profiles include international organisation (IO) and non-governmental organisation (NGO) practitioners based in the region, migration experts, community, and internally displaced person (IDP) leaders located at key transit points along the route and representatives of refugee and migrants' rights organisations in destination countries. Interviews were conducted between 10 and 20 January 2021 and added the perspective of Burkinabè and Malians already on the move towards southern countries.

The research questions the report sets out to answer are as follows:

- 1. What are the characteristics of the recent movements of refugees and migrants** between the Sahelian conflict-struck countries of Mali and Burkina Faso and the West African, economically attractive coastal countries (Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana)?
  - What are the demographic profiles of refugees and migrants along this route?
  - In which conditions do refugees and migrants along this route find themselves?
- 2. To what extent have the characteristics of movements changed** due to the flare-up of the Sahelian conflict? Is the conflict a particular driver of movement towards the coastal countries?
  - What are the main drivers for refugees and migrants towards the coastal countries?
  - What are the (movement) intentions of refugees and migrants along this route for 2021?
  - What are the familial movement intentions and household compositions of refugees and migrants along this route?
- 3. What are the protection risks** facing refugees and migrants along the route towards the coastal countries?
  - What are the needs, capacities, and vulnerabilities of refugees and migrants along this route?
- 4. What are the risks and challenges** facing refugees and migrants upon their arrival in the coastal countries?
  - What are the protection risks and socio-economic challenges?
  - How is the relation with the host communities? Are there any relational tensions?

To note, given the inherently dynamic nature of the conflict and mixed migration flows in the region, findings herein presented shall be treated as indicative only, mirroring an understanding of the context as of January 2021 only.

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1 The perspectives of 25 people on the move interviewed through the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC)'s 4Mi survey at key transit points: Dakola (border Burkina Faso and Ghana), Niankorodougou, Mangodara and Loumana (border Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire)

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# Key findings

**Based on information available as of January 2021, conflict-induced North-South movements are present in the region.** Information on the size, the profile of those displaced, and their needs remain anecdotal, and are based on individual testimonies from displaced people, protection monitoring reports, and field officers working for humanitarian organisations. In 2020, the impact of the Sahelian conflict on cross-border movements from Burkina Faso and Mali towards Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana appeared mostly indirect, through its impact on the economy in locations of first displacement, with the share of conflict-induced displacement among overall mixed flows towards southern countries remaining low overall. Looking at 2021, the following broad trends emerge:

1. As the Sahelian conflict shows no signs of de-escalation soon, there are **clear indications of a south-bound move of conflict dynamics**. 2020 saw a considerable increase in violent attacks in Burkina Faso's southern regions and the borderlands with Côte d'Ivoire, while the southward spread of militant attacks from Burkina Faso's central regions downward towards Côte d'Ivoire continues. This situation mirrors pronounced Jihadist ambitions to reach the Guinea Gulf countries via Burkina Faso and Southern Mali. Numbers of IDPs in Burkina Faso's southern regions appear to be increasing, a trend which may spill over into cross-border displacement, should violence continue southwards.
2. **The IDP population in Burkina Faso has grown exponentially** in 2020. Livelihoods sources and humanitarian assistance in areas of first displacement are in many areas insufficient to cover displaced populations' basic needs. Should displacement become increasingly protracted, pressure on public services and increasing resource scarcity are likely to i) increase **community tensions**, which, in turn, are likely to lead to repeat displacements, both internally and cross-border, ii) become a push factor for secondary cross-border movements towards economic centres.
3. Already in 2020, limited livelihoods in areas of first displacement have led to IDPs (mostly young men and heads of household) engaging in temporary **secondary cross-border movements**<sup>2</sup> into Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, and to secure livelihoods for households left behind to work in gold mining and agriculture. Despite their vulnerable situation, once there, they are perceived as economic migrants and not assisted by authorities. Should the situation at origin and in areas of first displacement not improve, it is possible that IDPs may increasingly move as family units and more permanently.
4. For the most part, **forced displacement patterns among mixed flows towards Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana (including secondary movements) in 2020 have gone undetected**. This is because most arrivals settled locally with existing family and avoided government actors, due to the irregular nature of their entry (due to COVID-19 restrictions on cross-border movement) and a lack of trust toward government authorities.
5. **Protection risks along the journey**, and particularly at border crossing points, have been exacerbated by COVID-19 over 2020, with widespread agreement among respondents that the crossing has become longer, more dangerous and costlier. Based on the MMC survey, 20 out of 25 refugees and migrants interviewed at border points specifically mentioned that even asylum seekers and those with the right to cross are denied entry or experience pushbacks at the border.
6. There is a widely acknowledged **scarcity of reliable data on the subject**. This poses challenges to understanding the scope of the phenomenon, but also to ensuring that those in need of international protection along the route are identified and receive the assistance they need. There is a need to capture quantitative data on internal and cross-border movements in this particular region.

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2 Although the concept of secondary movement has been conceptualized in relation to refugees and asylum seekers who have crossed a border (UNHCR 10 Point Plan on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration Chapter 8), in this particular context it is applied to IDPs who are crossing borders after a first internal displacement. In September 2019, the [UNCHR Guidance on Responding to Irregular Onward Movement of Refugees and Asylum-seekers](#) also referred to 'onward movement' to "reflect the fact that such movements may be driven by numerous different factors, and often involve tertiary or multiple stages. Neither term is defined in international law, and this document accordingly adopts a broad and factual approach and seeks to use simple and practical terminology."

# Methodology

The research was conducted between December 2020 and January 2021 and was based on the following data collection methods:

- **Secondary data review**
- **20 key informant interviews** with: IO & (I)NGO staff, migration experts, community and IDP leaders located at key transit points along the route; representatives of refugee and migrants' rights organisations in destination countries.
- **25 interviews with refugees and migrants:** conducted by the MMC at key transit points: Dakola (border Burkina Faso and Ghana), Niankorodougou, Mangodara and Loumana (border Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire).

The Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi) is the Mixed Migration Centre's flagship primary data collection system, an innovative approach that helps fill knowledge gaps, and inform policy and response regarding the nature of mixed migratory movements. Given that 4Mi's methodology is adapted to target people on the move – a population whose fluidity makes it both challenging to reach and difficult to count – 4Mi data collection uses a non-probability sampling approach, and therefore, is not intended to be representative of the overall volume or characteristics of people on the move in the region.

To complement the findings for the literature review and key informants' interviews, the MMC deployed its 4Mi data collection in new border locations pre-selected as highly relevant to reach Burkinabè and Malians likely to cross southern borders. Within a few days, five monitors identified and conducted interviews with 25 refugees and migrants from Burkina Faso and Mali on the way to cross-borders with Côte d'Ivoire (18) or Ghana (7).

At the time of interview, respondents were in: Dakola at the border with Ghana (10), Niankorodougou (4), Mangodara (6) and Loumana (5) at the border with Cote d'Ivoire. Monitors based the interviews on the current Covid-19 4Mi survey with a modified sampling methodology in order to meet the target group for this research. Therefore, the current survey does not allow to be specific on whether respondents were IDPs or seasonal migrants.

Finally, the 25 interviews conducted aimed at complementing the existing understanding of the individual refugees and migrant's perspective with an in-depth questionnaire on key topics (migration experience, protection risks encountered on the road, migration factors, impact of covid, etc). While more interviews would be necessary to draw statistical conclusions, these 25 interviews allowed to better understand some of the points made in the literature and the key informants interviews.

This pilot has confirmed the operational adaptability and flexibility of the 4Mi and the need to collect more data on migration flows in the border area.



# Findings

## Section 1: Mixed movements in the Sahel

### 1.1. Historical context

Sahelian migration draws on long-held cultural practices and people's lived realities, which frequently transcend country borders which do not mirror the social and cultural make-up of society.<sup>3</sup> Livelihoods in the region are commonly based on the management of the region's natural resources and involve fluid, internal and cross-border migration patterns, in line with seasonal rainfall dynamics. While types of intraregional migration vary greatly among countries in the region, they can be broadly characterised as: labour migration towards urban or coastal economic centres; seasonal employment and transhumance; movement of people along tribal and pastoral society lines; and displacement in response to conflict, persecution, climatic challenges, or extreme weather events.

Traditionally, south-bound migration patterns from Burkina Faso and Mali towards coastal countries commonly involve transhumance pastoralism<sup>4</sup> and economically-driven semi-permanent or seasonal migration towards urban centres, as well as plantations in the coastal countries.

**Figure 1: Areas of focus**



While these two broad categories characterise a contextual set of motivations, it is noted that intra-regional mobility in the West African Sahel should inherently be understood as 'mixed migration', involving people with various legal statuses moving for a variety of reasons and facing many of the same protection risks'.<sup>5</sup>

3 Vigil, S., *Climate Change and Migration: Insights from the Sahel*, 2017

4 OECD (2014). *An atlas of the Sahara-Sahel: Geography, Economics and Security*.

5 Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) & Danish Refugee Council (DRC) (2017). *Before the desert: Conditions and risks on mixed migration through West Africa* p. 7.

Importantly, in times of insecurity and/or climatic shock, the intricate system of regional alliances, regulatory frameworks, and cross-border social networks spread throughout the West Africa Sahel region are commonly used to inform routes and decision-making.<sup>6</sup> As determined in greater depth throughout this report, pre-existing south-bound migration patterns, combined with the increasing instability of the region, can aid to gauge the form of future displacement patterns.

## 1.2. Changing picture: conflict, climate change, and COVID-19

The Central Sahel crisis, which erupted in Mali in 2012, involves Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, and has steadily intensified since, most severely over the course of 2020. **In the last two years, escalating violence in the Central Sahel region has resulted in an increase in the number of people who are displaced**, from an estimated 70,000 displaced people in 2018 to 1,5 million in 2020.<sup>7</sup> In Burkina Faso, as of 10 November 2020, the number of IDPs has increased by more than 100% since the start of 2020.<sup>8</sup>

**The intensification of violence is closely linked to poor governance, human rights violations, and an increasing stress on natural resources**, in turn impacted by the effects of climate change, such as higher unpredictability of seasonal droughts and floods, on which a large proportion of the population depend for their livelihoods.<sup>9</sup> All Sahelian countries figure among the top 50 least developed countries worldwide.<sup>10</sup> The region's mass displacement has fuelled the ongoing food security crisis, since displaced people have less or no access to farm land,<sup>11</sup> which might in turn cause secondary or tertiary displacement of people seeking to meet their and their families' basic needs elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

**The COVID-19 pandemic is further aggravating the vulnerabilities of affected populations in the region.** In addition to the direct negative impact on public health, the virus has caused an array of impactful secondary effects, including a fall in economic activities and revenues, a loss of livelihoods for many already-vulnerable populations, as well as border closures and movement restrictions as part of contingency planning.<sup>13</sup> Though restrictions on internal movement were largely lifted in April and May 2020, the economic impact on households will be felt in the longer term: purchasing power reportedly has not yet recovered, and people depending on agriculture have missed planting season, leaving them highly vulnerable to food insecurity.<sup>14</sup> As of January 2021, land borders are still officially closed for transit, increasing protection risks for people engaged in cross-border movements.<sup>15</sup>

**The intensifying conflict and subsequent increasing displacement may bring about changes in the region's migration flows.** For instance, according to the UNHCR,<sup>16</sup> an uptick in mobility coupled with less economic opportunities likely erodes community-based reception structures, as opportunities for host communities to share their resources with displaced people diminish. This could set off a trend of individualisation of mobility which further exacerbates protection risks for people on the move unable to access community support during their journey and upon their arrival.<sup>17</sup>

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6 See e.g. Hampshire, K. (2002). Fulani on the move: Seasonal economic migration in the Sahel as a social process. *Journal of Development Studies* 38(5).

7 UNHCR (September 2020). [High-Level humanitarian event on the Central Sahel](#)

8 UNHCR (10 November 2020) [Operational portal refugee situations: Burkina Faso](#).

9 DRC (November 2020). [Central Sahel is rapidly becoming one of the world's worst humanitarian crises](#).

10 UNCTAD. [UN list of least developed countries](#), last accessed 09 December 2020.

11 Mednick, S. (August 2020). [Conflict and coronavirus spark a hunger crisis in Burkina Faso](#).

12 See section 2.2.d.

13 WFP (2020). [Covid-19 Pandemic: Impact of restriction measures in West Africa](#).

14 Mednick, S. (August 2020). [Conflict and coronavirus spark a hunger crisis in Burkina Faso](#).

15 See section 4.

16 UNHCR (2008) [West Africa as a migration and a protection area](#).

17 Ibid. More on this throughout the report.

## Section 2: Characteristics of recent (2020) movements from Mali and Burkina Faso towards the coastal countries

At the time of writing, very limited data was available on the recent characteristics, including demographic profiles, of people engaged in movements from Mali and Burkina Faso towards Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Findings presented in this section are hence heavily based on KI reporting, as well as anecdotal evidence shared in news items, as available.

### 2.1. Routes and key transit points

Routes travelled mirror migration patterns built over the many years that historically predominantly economic migration from Sahelian towards coastal countries has been practiced. Usually, the main means of transport are public buses and mini buses. With the emergence of COVID-19, and associated cross-border movement restrictions, the transport means have diversified, with increased use of motorbikes and smaller, unofficial buses which travel smaller routes to circumvent official border controls.

#### 2.1.a. From Burkina Faso

Based on KI interviews, on the route from Burkina Faso to Côte d'Ivoire, refugees and migrants originate primarily from the Sahel, Centre Nord, Nord and Boucle du Mouhoun regions. They transit via the key transit point of Kaya, before proceeding to Ouagadougou, Bobo Dioulasso and Banfora, following the old railway route, to then enter Côte d'Ivoire. These were also the locations where the refugees and migrants were located when interviewed by the MMC.

To reach Ghana, a reportedly much less common destination for Burkinabé people on the move, the key transit towns are Leo and Pô, both situated close to the Northern Ghanaian border. Refugees and migrants' interviews took place in Dakola, less than 20 km south of Pô.

#### 2.1.b. From Mali

The main areas of departure from Mali towards Côte d'Ivoire are reportedly the regions of Sikasso (a traditional area of departure) and Mopti, transiting via Bamako southward.

For Ghana, traditional regions of origin are Gao and Timbouctou, with refugees and migrants reportedly transiting via Burkina Faso (following the same routes as Burkinabé described above); via Niger and Togo or via Côte d'Ivoire.

### 2.2. Demographic profile of refugees and migrants along the route

All KIs reported that the vast majority of people traveling along the route are young, able-bodied men with low levels of education. When asked, KIs most commonly further differentiated demographic profiles based on primary drivers of movement. Based on KI reporting, the most common drivers of people traveling along the route in 2020 were, in descending order: (1) habitual labour migration patterns; (2) seasonal transhumance movements; (3) conflict-induced secondary movements and other temporary household-level movement strategies tied to conflict and (4) conflict-driven cross-border displacement.<sup>18</sup> The demographic composition of each group is presented below.

Refugees and migrants interviewed by MMC mirrored the overall profile KIs described: of 25 Burkinabé and Malian south-bound respondents, 20 were male (5 female), young (average age 30 years old),<sup>19</sup> with overall low levels of education.<sup>20</sup>

#### 2.2.a. Habitual labour migration patterns

As highlighted in section 1.1, intraregional movements have traditionally been particularly driven by economic incentives, reportedly accounting for roughly 70%<sup>21</sup> of West African regional migration flows, with established routes running from the Sahelian countries of Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali towards labour intensive areas in the coastal countries (see figure 2).<sup>22</sup> As of 2019, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) noted that the **Burkina Faso-Côte d'Ivoire corridor constituted the second largest for Africa overall**,<sup>23</sup> indicative of a strong tie of Burkinabé traveling to Côte d'Ivoire to access labour, further reflected in the large Burkinabé diaspora residing in the country, an

18 A more in-depth discussion of drivers and the relative proportion of conflict-induced displacement among mixed flows follows in section 3.

19 Please note that no minors were interviewed during this data collection exercise, which may be why the average age is slightly higher than may be otherwise expected.

20 Eight respondents had not completed any type of education, another eight had completed primary school, followed by four respondents who had completed secondary school, and three each who completed religious primary school or a vocational training.

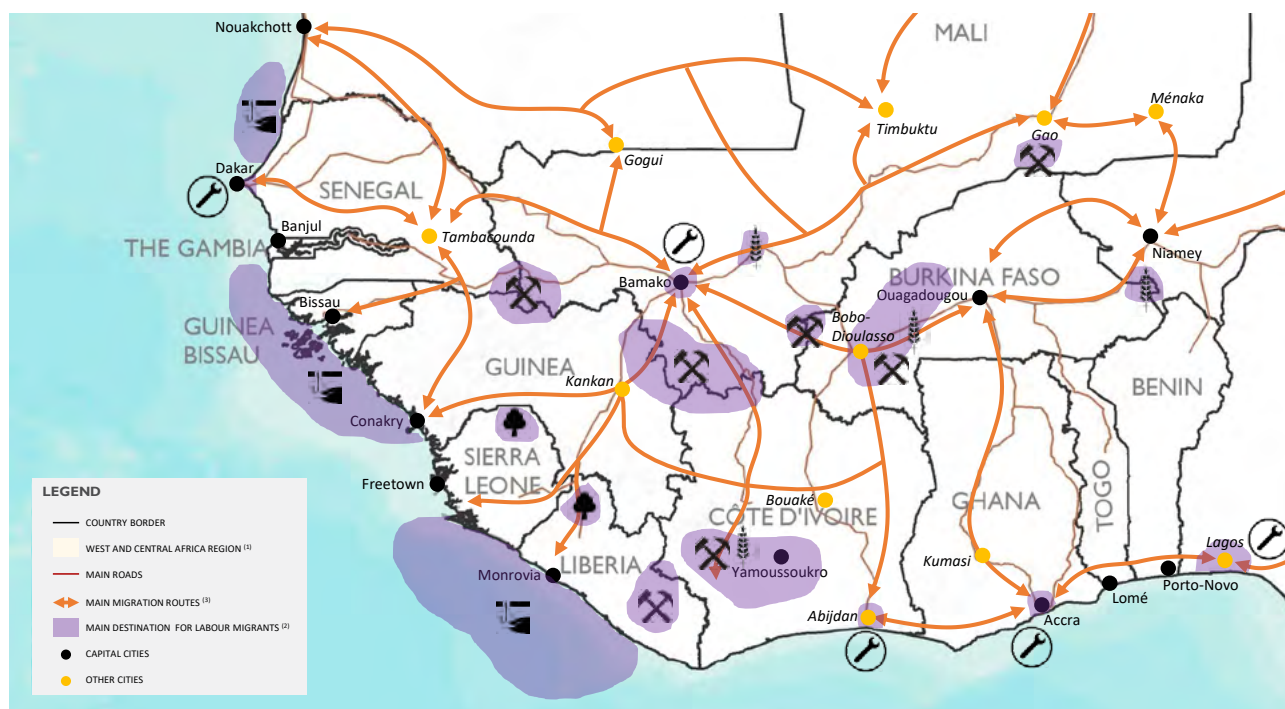
21 IOM West/Central Africa Regional Office (2020). [The Regional Migration Context](#).

22 IOM DTM (June 2020). Regional mobility mapping: West and Central Africa.

23 IOM (2019). World Migration Report 2020.

estimated 1,367,916 according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).<sup>24</sup>

**Figure 2: Main migration routes in West and Central Africa towards labour intensive areas (source: IOM June 2020)**



According to KIIs, most of this type of mobility is temporary and/or seasonal, with people migrating for parts of the year, in accordance with local climatic patterns and according agricultural needs (at origin and destination). For the purposes of labour migration patterns, broadly speaking, Côte d'Ivoire can be divided into three areas, as follows: (1) the north, which has a similar climate to Burkina Faso, where labour migrants go to work in local gold mines; (2) the south/ south-west, which has a more fertile land with vast forests and is, thereby, a destination for migrants looking for agricultural work and (3) the big cities, most prominently Abidjan, where migrants head for commerce, business and, in the case of women and girls, to work as maids.

Based on KIIs, it is predominantly young able-bodied men who engage in this type of migration, with only a small proportion of people engaged in labour migration being women. Several KIIs (five) noted the presence of children engaged in this type of migration. While this was reportedly already traditionally the case – with children migrating during school holidays – three KIIs reported that the emergence of COVID-19 has led to a rise in children migrating to Côte d'Ivoire from Burkina Faso, mostly due to school closures. In these cases, children were reportedly mostly working in mining sites and, to a lesser extent, in agriculture. Similar trends were described in relation to labour migration towards Ghana, with flows generally made up of young men engaged in seasonal agricultural labour in Ghana's north and commerce (whole country).

### 2.2.b. Transhumance migration patterns

By March 2020, there were an estimated 2,055 transhumant herders travelling along corridors running through Burkina Faso's Est and Sahel regions, including towards neighbouring Togo, Niger and Mali. Most herders were adult males (47%), followed by boys (32%). Women (11%) and girls (10%) were less commonly recorded.<sup>25</sup> Data on transhumance is rare, and intrinsically bound to seasonality; to contextualize the above data, it should be noted that the number and routes of herders in Burkina Faso (in an average year) would be relatively low in March due to herds typically residing in the transhumant host countries (mostly Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin) by that time of the year.

May 2020 data from Réseau Bilital Maroobé (RBM) and Action Contre la Faim (ACF) showed a 77% decrease in transhumant movements in Burkina Faso and a 48% reduction in Mali, likely as a result of the COVID-19 movement

<sup>24</sup> UNDESA (2019). [International Migrant Stock 2019](#).

<sup>25</sup> IOM (September 2020). [Mobilités au Burkina Faso](#).

restrictions.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, COVID-19 induced border closures have reportedly resulted in stranded herds along borders.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.2.c. Secondary movements and other temporary household-level movement strategies tied to conflict

In the present context, secondary movements are defined as movements of individuals who were, at first, displaced from their area of origin in Burkina Faso or Mali due to conflict and, at a later stage, moved on to Côte d'Ivoire or Ghana, temporarily or for the longer term. Secondary data on the subject is inherently limited, with only the UNHCR acknowledging (in writing) it likely that secondary movements are becoming increasingly common in the region.<sup>28</sup> Having said that, all but two KIs interviewed reportedly knew of the existence of secondary movements of IDPs from Burkina Faso to Côte d'Ivoire and, to a lesser extent, towards Ghana. The demographic profile of this group was described as being made up predominantly by (young) men, who leave their families in IDP sites or secondary sites of settlement in Burkina Faso and Mali to secure necessary livelihoods sources in Côte d'Ivoire. This is because in many sites where IDPs settle resources and assistance provided are insufficient and, in most cases, IDPs do not have access to land (their original livelihood source). This, in turn, reportedly requires heads of household and/or young men to leave their household behind to access livelihoods, frequently first in a bigger city within the country and then, in a second step, in Côte d'Ivoire. Several examples were given of this type of mobility:

- Men from the Centre Ouest and Sahel regions, who in their areas of origin engaged in mining, and, once displaced due to insecurity in their areas of origin, move to gold mines in Côte d'Ivoire to support their families left behind in locations of first displacement as the actual response is not responding to their needs in terms of livelihood
- Men who have lost their land due to conflict in Burkina Faso and seek to meet their needs in Côte d'Ivoire through work in agriculture
- Men who lost their land due to conflict in the Gao region of Mali and, unable to make it, move to Ghana to access livelihoods sources

Notably, the vast majority of KIs described this type of movement as (intended to be) temporary for the time being, as people move to meet their and their families' needs and later return. At the same time, several KIs knew of cases where the person engaged in secondary movements left, returned, and then promptly left again, leading to, as one KI put it 'IDP camps only inhabited by women and children'.<sup>29</sup> Having said that, some (four) KIs reportedly knew individuals who had either left and later returned to bring their family to Côte d'Ivoire (origin Burkina Faso) or Ghana (from Mali), or of entire households traveling to Côte d'Ivoire or Ghana to settle there. However, even those who reportedly knew of such cases cautioned that in 2020, these cases were a very small minority.

*'The primary drivers of movement towards Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana from here (Mali) are economic. But of course there are communities who are displaced by the conflict- be that intercommunal violence, or general insecurity in the central region. In the first place, they are displaced internally, but they can re-appear in transnational flows. For Mali these are mostly people from the central regions, notably the Dogons, Bozos and others. In these cases, in the conflict-affected areas, security reasons have been added to the already existing economic drivers of migration.'*

**Expert on the situation of Malians abroad in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, interviewed in Bamako**

### 2.2.d. Conflict-driven cross-border displacement

The increase in conflict and insecurity in the Central Sahel region has contributed to a 43% increase in displacement across the region between the end of 2019 and mid-June 2020.<sup>30</sup> Apart from some considerable cross-border movements from Niger and Burkina Faso into Mali, and from Mali into Mauritania, the largest proportion (90%) of regional displacements in the first half of 2020 reportedly remained internal,<sup>31</sup> with roughly half a million people having been displaced within their countries in the first half of 2020.<sup>32</sup>

Available data on cross-border movements appear too limited to draw conclusions on cross-border conflict-induced displacements. All but two KIs raised the lack of reliable data as the main barrier to their better understanding of

26 RBM & ACF (May 2020). [Bulletin mensuel de suivi de l'impact de la COVID19 sur les ménages pastoraux et agropastoraux.](#)

27 World Bank (October 2020). [Improving productivity for pastoralists and agro-pastoralists across the Sahel.](#) For more information, please consult Box 5 below.

28 UNHCR (16 October 2020). [UNHCR warns of mounting needs in Sahel as displacement continues.](#)

29 To note, many of the men cited by the KI are likely to work within the country and have not necessarily engaged in cross-border migration.

30 UNHCR (June 2020). Mid-year trends report 2020.

31 IOM DTM (30 November 2020) [Central Sahel & Liptako Gourma Crisis – monthly dashboard 11.](#)

32 Ibid.

the situation. At the time of writing, the most recent cross-border IOM displacement tracking matrix (DTM) data was collected between 17-23 August 2020, when IOM counted 370 individuals traveling through Niangoloko and Yendéré/Badala in Burkina Faso to Kaoura in Côte d'Ivoire, taking irregular routes to avoid checkpoints due to border closures. Although the specific intentions of these people on the move remain unknown, the relatively high proportion of women and children among the flows (275 men, 95 women, and 36 children younger than 5) – similar to movements recorded in July 2020 (weekly average of 453 men, 162 women, and 47 children younger than 5)<sup>33</sup> – might indicate that at least some of the movements were driven by insecurity.<sup>34</sup> Having said that, when asked, IOM representatives interviewed for this study held that available DTM data did not support the hypothesis that said movements were conflict induced, as respondents were not asked for the reason for migration and the demographic composition in itself did not provide a clear enough indication in this regard.

Indeed, information collected on the characteristics of conflict-induced cross-border displacements in 2020 hint at the scarcity of information – and lack of comprehensive data – available. Anecdotal information collected include:

- As reported by a Ghana government official, the numbers of arrivals from Burkina Faso entering Ghana for conflict-induced reasons has been rising since 2018: in 2018 around 300 people were recorded as entering Ghana for conflict-related movements, while between 2019 and 2020 1,158 were recorded in the Upper West region. The make-up of this group reportedly also included women and children. Reportedly, they tended to settle locally, further south in the interior of the country with already present family members. Some reportedly settled permanently while others went back.
- A rise in Malians displaced from the region of Gao towards Ghana, as described by the mayor of one town located in the region (see Box 3 below for more detail).

To note, while most KIs speaking about conflict-induced displacement from Burkina Faso to Côte d'Ivoire confirmed having heard of such movements, none were able to give concrete examples. This was reportedly because of the under-the-radar, individualised nature, and (for now) low volume of such movements, both during the journey and upon arrival- with individuals settling locally with existing family, hence remaining off the radar of government, international organisations (IOs) and (international) non-governmental organisation ((I)NGO) actors.

## Section 3: Changing dynamics of recent mixed migration flows as a result of the Sahelian conflict

### 3.1. Mixed migration drivers as of 2020

All KIs converged that the most common motivation for people traveling along the route from Burkina Faso and Mali towards Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana in 2020 was economic. This was motivated with the strong historical legacy of labour migration towards those countries, as well as the economic opportunities, which were described throughout to be better in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, compared to Burkina Faso and Mali. Having said that, no KI was able to cite data sources or research conducted on the topic which would substantiate this claim, with both IOM DTM and UNHCR country-level KIs noting that their data collection tools were either put on hold, due to COVID-19, or did not capture this information.

Upon prompting, most KIs did confirm the existence of IDPs among the flows. In these cases KIs reported that IDPs moved on towards Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana due to the inability to meet their families' needs in areas of first displacement. This was reportedly also closely tied to the limited assistance available in sites of first assistance as well as the overall limited resources available.

A sizeable number of KIs (16 out of 20) confirmed a rise between 2019 and 2020 of people travelling along the route to flee conflict in their areas of origin. None of the KIs felt comfortable to put a number or gauge the size of this group, beside stressing that, based on the information they had, this was for now a very small phenomenon. Further, some included here IDPs who had been staying outside their area of origin for a while, before deciding to cross the border.

Overall, KIs stressed that the flows, while predominantly 'economic', were 'mixed'. Here, the Sahelian conflict was cited as a contextual factor, which aggravates many other drivers of movement, but, according to KIs, was not in 2020 a major driver of cross-border movements in its own right. In the case of IDPs, the issue of resource scarcity in areas of

33 Totaling 1812 men, 649 women, and 187 children under the age of 5 (Burkinabe) counted crossing the border from Burkina Faso into Côte d'Ivoire throughout the month of July.

34 IOM-DTM (26 August 2020). [Suivi des urgences – COVID-19](#).

displacement and potential risks of social cohesion were cited as drivers for cross-border movements. Here, economic considerations were given as factor, but of course it is the initial (conflict-induced) displacement which triggered/exacerbated economic needs and hence the decision to migrate cross-border.

### **Box 1: Economic migrant or refugee? The interconnectedness of migration drivers in the Sahel**

As described by an IDP originating from the region of Mopti:

*'It's now been three years that the conflict is the first driver of migration in our area – within the country, towards Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire. The security crisis has severely impacted local economic activities – it's been three years that we stopped our agricultural production. So we migrate to feed the family. But it is also not safe in our area: many people have been killed here. This situation has led many youth and heads of household to leave, to provide for the family that remains, and come back. So when we are in Côte d'Ivoire we are there to work. But the situation here is almost unbearable.'*

Interviews conducted by the MMC at border crossing points tend to confirm KI reporting. Of 25 refugees and migrants interviewed, 23 reported economic considerations as reason for leaving, following by personal/family reasons (reported by 8), violence (not domestic, 7), rights and freedoms (2), access to services, including corruption, and natural disasters or environmental factors (each reported once). While this data confirms the importance of economic factors, it also illustrates how economic reasons are frequently mixed with other factors, such as family reasons, and a relatively high reporting of violence, mentioned by more than one out of four respondents.

*'The IDPs that we interviewed in Kaya- they were planning to join family members in Cote d'Ivoire who were working in gold mining sites, to join them there. So there are IDPs here in Kaya who send family members to Côte d'Ivoire to work in these sites. I know of several households, but there are no figures really. Often, it's IDPs who came to Kaya- the big city- because they hoped life would be better here, but the big city is already overcrowded (with IDPs); they don't find work so they decide to move on. That's why here the IDP camps are full of women and children, but no able-bodied men. They go for some months and then return, so it's a phenomenon we know of, but we don't know the size of it.'*

**NGO field manager, based in Kaya**

## **3.2. The impact of the recent Sahelian conflict on movement towards the coastal countries**

As described in section 1.1, and reflected in the observed increase in displacement further described in section 2, displacement dynamics in the Sahel are constantly changing in line with the rapidly deteriorating conflict. Indeed, when asked, KIs were hesitant to provide projections as to how the situation may evolve, as many interrelated factors play into potential future displacement dynamics. Most KIs felt that, at the time of data collection (January 2021), the impact of the Sahelian conflict on cross-border movements towards southern countries was mostly indirect, through its impacts on the economy in limiting employment, the growing body of IDPs in Burkina Faso, according resource pressure in communities of arrival and inability to fully respond to the needs of displaced people in areas of first displacement. Accentuating factors mentioned impacting ongoing dynamics included the emergence of COVID-19 and associated border closures, and the geographical spread of violence in the region.

Based on SDR and KI views, broad trend lines observed over the course of 2020, and combined with lessons learned from other displacement contexts, the following key issues have been identified:

### **3.2.a. Continued violence continues to drive internal displacement and appears to move south-ward**

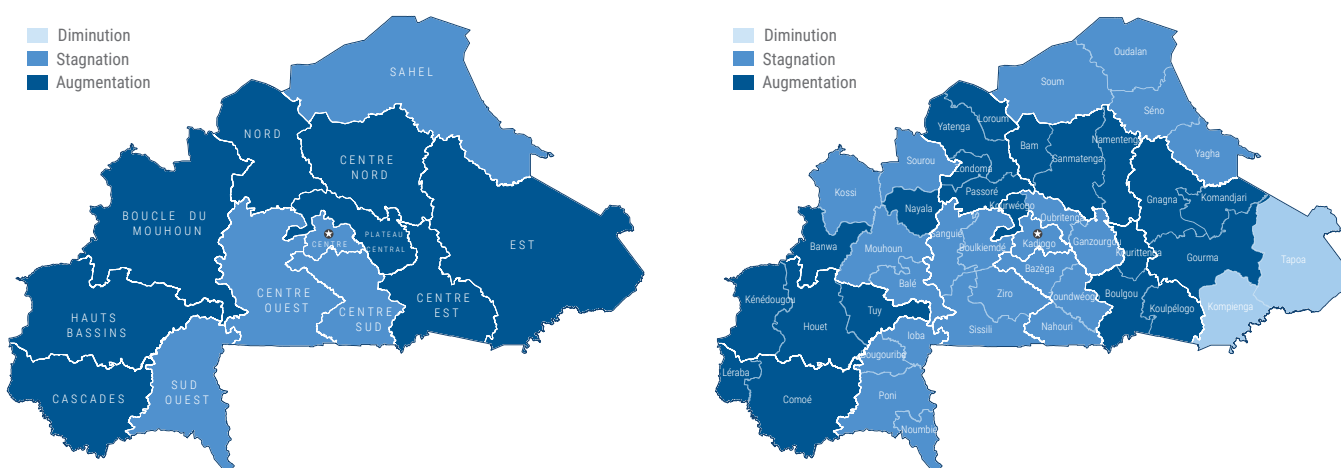
**Increasing violence drives soaring internal displacement in the Sahel.** As highlighted in sections 1.2 and 2, an increase in violent extremism, inter-communal tensions and general insecurity, coupled with the secondary effects of COVID-19, food insecurity, and limited shared resources has resulted in record-high displacement numbers in the region.

**Violence is moving south-wards.** While violence is believed to be spreading in an inland direction in Niger, the first half of 2020 also saw a considerable increase in violent attacks in Burkina Faso's southern regions and the borderlands

with Côte d'Ivoire. In the meantime, the south-ward spread of militant attacks from Burkina Faso's central regions downward towards Côte d'Ivoire continues.<sup>35</sup> Increasing violence has also been recorded in Mali's southern regions of Sikasso, Kayes, and Koulikoro.<sup>36</sup> Notably, the situation mirrors pronounced Jihadist ambitions to reach the Guinea Gulf countries via Burkina Faso and Southern Mali.<sup>37</sup> According to a December 2019 analysis by the International Crisis Group (ICG), the longstanding communal, religious, and socioeconomic linkages between Burkinabé and coastal centres could serve as a potential launching pad for jihadist operations throughout the region, benefitting particularly from the regions' gold mines and related trade routes to connected industries in the South.<sup>38</sup> As per KI reporting, a further worsening of the security situation in the Cascade and South West regions of Burkina Faso, which is currently ongoing (examples of recent security incidents in the region included insular attacks on the Ivorian army at a border post, as well as an attack on a gold mine in the region, resulting in two deaths) is particularly worrisome.

**Internal displacement appears to be increasing in and towards the southern regions.** UNHCR reported in December 2020 that an increasing number of IDPs were seemingly displacing to the countries' southern regions (Hauts-Bassin and Cascades),<sup>39</sup> joining an already considerable IDP population residing in those regions by then (20,571 and 8,098 respectively, according to the Global Protection Cluster as of 31 December 2020<sup>40</sup>) (see figure 3).<sup>41</sup> Indeed, in September 2020, the UNHCR and ICAHD International,<sup>42</sup> through their protection monitoring initiative in Cascades and Hauts-Bassin, recorded the arrival of some households, men, and women, who had reportedly been displaced from the Dabou department in the Centre-Nord region, due to feelings of insecurity and the resurgence of attacks in the region.<sup>43</sup> This trend may continue into 2021 and spill-over into Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

**Figure 3: Developments in the numbers of IDPs across Burkina Faso between September and November 2020, highlighting an increase in number of IDPs in southern Hauts-Bassin and Cascades regions (UN-OCHA & CONASUR November 2020)**



### 3.2.b. Situation in primary areas of (internal) displacement may make secondary movements more urgent

Resource scarcity, lack of durable solutions and limited livelihoods in sites of (internal) displacement may make secondary cross-border movements more urgent. At the time of data collection, several IDP camp leaders and local community leaders in and around Kaya flagged the limited resources available to IDPs in Burkina Faso, and the potential tensions with local communities that can ensue when large numbers of newly arrived IDPs come and settle in a new place, try to access services and find livelihood opportunities. According to the three IDP camp manager and

35 UNHCR (December 2020). [UNHCR Sahel Crisis Response September–October 2020](#).

36 ACLED (18 August 2020). [Ten conflicts to worry about in 2020: Mid-year update](#).

37 Le Monde (9 November 2018). [Au Mali, trois importants chefs djihadistes appellent à poursuivre le djihad](#).

38 ICG (December 2019). [The risk of Jihadist contagion in West Africa](#).

39 UNHCR (December 2020). [UNHCR Sahel Crisis Response September–October 2020](#).

40 Global Protection Cluster (31 December 2020). [Burkina Faso IDP Dashboard](#).

41 OCHA & CONASUR (November 2020). [Situation des personnes déplacées Internes \(PDI\)](#)

42 ONG Initiatives de Coopération et d'Appui aux actions Humanitaires et de Développement

43 UNHCR & ICAHD International (September 2020). [Rapport Mensuel de Monitoring de Protection](#).



community leaders interviewed in the locality, already at the time of data collection IDPs had to move on to meet their needs elsewhere. Should more people be internally displaced in the year to come – depending on the development of the security situation as a whole – the pressure to leave for secondary movements may increase.

**The role of environmental degradation, sudden weather shocks, and climate change was also raised by several KIs.** Most IDPs – and their hosts – predominantly rely on the land and its yields for livelihoods. As harvests have become more unpredictable in recent years – and competition for limited land has increased- this can also lead to a rise in social tension in primary areas of displacement, which could lead to secondary movements. The impact of sudden weather shocks, which have become more and more frequent in the region (dry spells, floods) may be a further concern here.<sup>44</sup>

### 3.2.c. Barriers to cross-border movements higher than ever?

**Restrictions on cross-border movement and the high cost of irregular migration might prevent large-scale cross-border movement into the coastal countries.** In June 2020, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) published a study on the “displacement continuum”, chronicling the relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movements. The study found that restrictive migration policies and the high financial cost of irregular migration are likely to prevent IDPs, who commonly have fully depleted financial resources,<sup>45</sup> from engaging in cross-border movements due to an inability to afford smugglers, while instead increasing the likelihood of repeat displacement internally.<sup>46</sup> This could be what is happening in the Central Sahel, too: testimonies of IDPs in Mali and Burkina Faso indicate that many fled from their towns and villages in a hurry, unable to bring anything of value with them.<sup>47</sup>

**Similarly, COVID-19 restrictions in place in Mali and Burkina Faso have led to many people working in the informal sector losing their sources of income,**<sup>48</sup> with already in August 2020 4.8 million people in the Sahel likely experiencing food insecurity.<sup>49</sup> While diaspora and family members abroad (notably in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana) may support internally displaced family members within Burkina Faso and/or Mali, no evidence was found of this during KI interviews. This may be due to the likely individualised nature of such support (and lack of comprehensive studies on the topic), or also because, in the case of family links, IDPs may be more likely join their family members in third countries informally, so as to be both safe and have access to livelihoods, as was the case for several of the secondary movements described by KIs.

#### Box 2: The invisibility of those individually displaced

One challenge in relation to the identification of refugees from Burkina Faso and Mali in Côte d'Ivoire may be tied to the perception of individualised arrivals by authorities – and individuals' self-perception - as refugees. Upon prompting why displaced Burkinabé individuals do not claim asylum once in Côte d'Ivoire, one NGO field manager in Kaya responded:

*' « Asylum seekers »... [respondent laughs] Generally, people in this country don't ask for asylum. They think that they reach a safe country and then they'll find their way around and provide for themselves. Of course, people come to work to Côte d'Ivoire, but the reason for them to be on the move in the first place is the conflict. Generally, because they arrive alone, settle with existing family... they are just not perceived – or seen – by the authorities as refugees. That's probably why we know so little about them.'*

Anecdotal evidence exists hinting that **the coinciding of conflict and COVID-19 restrictions are likely to drive changing displacement dynamics in the region.** For instance, the combination of border closures and violence moving further inland in Niger's Tillabéri and Tahoua regions reportedly led to people more commonly fleeing further inland instead of crossing the border,<sup>50</sup> as was for instance observed to have happened during the 31st of May 2020 attack at Niger's hosting site Intikane, forcing 10,000 people to seek shelter further inland, according to the UNHCR.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, resulting

44 REACH, [Pushed to the brink? The impact of COVID-19 on environmental migration in the Sahel](#), January 2021.

45 IMREF (July 2020). [Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on the vulnerabilities of migrants on the central Mediterranean route](#).

46 IDMC (June 2020). [Thematic Series: The Displacement Continuum, the relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movement in seven countries](#).

47 NRC (2-7 August 2020). [B-roll: A record one million people displaced in violence-stricken Burkina Faso amid Covid-19](#).

48 Refugees international (June 2020). [Mounting hunger in the Sahel: The unintended impact of COVID-19 prevention](#).

49 Ibid.

50 IDMC (October 2020). [The Sahel: A protection crisis aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

51 UNHCR (11 June 2020). [Time running out for civilians in Africa's Sahel region as attacks multiply](#).

from the travel restrictions, IDMC warns that it has become easier and more commonplace for armed groups to take control of key infrastructures, such as bridges,<sup>52</sup> potentially barring routes that would normally have been considered by people on the move. This could make cross-border displacement more urgent, but also more difficult.

### 3.3. Movement intentions of refugees and migrants on this route for 2021

Both SDR and KIs suggest that movement intentions of people traveling along the route will mostly depend on the evolution of the Sahelian conflict, both in terms of gravity and geographical scope. KIs did not foresee a change in the economic drivers of migration along the route for 2021 (nor did SDR consult). As such, the impact of the conflict will most likely shape the composition of flows and determine to what extent the proportion of conflict-induced displacement among overall flows (at the time of data collection deemed very low) may increase. The following elements and proxy indicators were identified to gauge the development of said conflict-related intentions:

#### 3.3.a. Safety and security in areas of origin and first displacement

**Safety and security appear to be the prominent motivation for displacement in Burkina Faso.** According to the UNHCR, the rapid rise of internal displacement results from 'widespread and indiscriminate violence' inflicted by armed actors,<sup>53</sup> often directly targeting communities and key public infrastructure.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, REACH Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) data indicates that Burkinabé IDPs' most common reason for settling in their current location was the security situation being better than in their previous location.<sup>55</sup> Individual interviews with displaced Burkinabé in Kaya town conducted by NRC in August 2020 further reflect this – interviewed people disclosed that they had fled their towns in a hurry during town raids by armed actors and came to Kaya for they believed it to be a big and safe city: *'C'est pourquoi nous avons décidé de venir dans une grande ville pour être en sécurité'*.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, October 2020 protection monitoring data gathered in Boucle du Mouhoun by UNHCR and INTERSOS<sup>57</sup> further attests to insecurity as the main driver of displacement, testifying how an entire village of 780 people was forcibly displaced from their town by an armed militia group, and how some households had reportedly displaced preventatively. The report concludes on the information that, indeed, insecurity appears to be the main driver of initial displacement: *'On retient que les déplacements s'effectuent après une attaque donc de l'insécurité de la zone. Les populations se déplacent donc par peur d'être la cible des attaques'*.<sup>58</sup>

**Security in areas of origin is also an important element to consider in potential secondary movements of IDPs towards the South.** We know from other displacement contexts that displaced persons frequently (initially) remain relatively near their area of origin, in the hope that the situation improves, and that they may be able to return soon. As such, how security in already impacted origin areas plays out may have an important role in shaping intentions for further cross-border movements. When asked under which conditions they would consider moving back to their regions of origin, IDPs interviewed for the REACH MSNA in Burkina Faso most commonly reported that the security situation would need to have improved, while the ability to move back into their home, receive adequate shelter, and access to livelihoods emerged as likely secondary reasons.<sup>59</sup>

#### 3.3.b. Socio-economic situation in areas of primary/internal displacement

A rise in intercommunal tensions – also in response to new IDP arrivals and subsequent pressure on resources – will likely shape intentions for the year to come. Available data for Mali already suggest significant tensions in areas of departure, which, as per KI reporting, is likely to be present – and be further accentuated – in areas of first displacement as well: the October 2020 flow monitoring assessment (IOM-DTM) found that 71% of interviewed IDPs reported their primary reason of displacement was 'intercommunal tensions', with a comparatively low 28% reporting 'armed conflict'.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, only three months prior, in the previous round in July 2020, intercommunal tensions had been reported to be the primary driver by a comparatively lower 51% of interviewed IDPs and armed conflict by 46% of interviewees.<sup>61</sup> This may hint at increased intercommunal tensions over time and the importance to address social cohesion as a means to reduce the risk of both initial and further displacement. While this data speaks to the situation in Mali specifically, KIs felt that similar trends are visible in Burkina Faso, and may increase, should limited access to public services, resources and livelihoods in sites of first displacement not be addressed.

52 IDMC (October 2020). [The Sahel: A protection crisis aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

53 UNHCR (11 November 2020). [UNHCR Sahel Crisis Response- Progress report January-September 2020](#).

54 ICG (9 November 2020). [Reversing Central Mali's Descent into Communal Violence](#).

55 REACH (September 2020). [Burkina Faso Multi-Sector Needs Assessment 2020: Dataset](#).

56 "This is why we decided to come to a big city, to be safe." (author's own translation). Source: NRC (2-7 August 2020). [B-roll: A record one million people displaced in violence-stricken Burkina Faso amid Covid-19](#).

57 UNHCR & INTERSOS (October 2020). [Rapport Mensuel de Protection – région de la Boucle du Mouhoun](#)

58 "Displacements happen after an attack, so they are due to the insecurity in the area. The population moves to avoid becoming victims of attacks." (author's own translation).

59 REACH (September 2020). [Burkina Faso Multi-Sector Needs Assessment 2020: Dataset](#).

60 IOM DTM (27 November 2020). [Mali Rapport de Déplacement Octobre 2020](#)

61 IOM DTM (2 September 2020). [Mali Rapport de déplacements Juillet 2020](#)

**Insufficient access to livelihoods in sites of displacement is likely to further spur movements along common labour migration corridors towards labour intensive areas in the south.** This phenomenon was already reported by KIs based in key transit sites along the route and/or locations of displacement (see section 3.1), and is likely to increase, should new IDP arrivals continue and the situation otherwise not drastically improve (in terms of humanitarian assistance and government support).

### **Box 3: How traditional labour migration patterns can turn into primary routes of displacement: the example of a village in the region of Gao**

*'It's since the 1960s that people from this village migrate to Ghana. In the past, this was seasonal migration, after the harvest and before the next seeds were planted. But since the conflict reached us many people here have left, and they don't come back, they only send money. They don't want to return, because there is no work, it's not safe, and with the harsh climate even agricultural work does not yield enough to provide for families.*

*People leave to Ghana, because they have lots of relatives there, it's a hospitable place, there's work and safety. Nowadays here if you have something of value, they take it away from you. Even if you try to work the fields, most are not safe to work on, armed groups take our cattle, or they tax the breeders. If you ask me, compared to the past, departures have increased ten-times. I believe that most who left this place this year did so because of the conflict.'*

**As told by the mayor of the village**

### **3.4. The impact of the recent Sahelian conflict on familial movement intentions and household compositions of refugees and migrants along the route towards the coastal countries**

As outlined in section 2, only few among the refugee and migrant population traveling along the route in 2020 appeared to be women and children and – based on anecdotal information shared by KIs – very few of them belonged to households or families traveling as a unit south-ward. The relates to – at the time - the predominant economic drivers of migration along the route, even when IDPs engaged in them as secondary movements.

When looking at familial migration intentions for the year to come, it is likely that similar elements are considered as the ones outlined in section 3.2., with the following specifications:

#### **3.4.a. Anticipated permanence of displacement**

IDPs frequently settle intermittently close to home – as they intend to return as soon as the situation allows. However, the longer people are displaced, and with it a sense that the situation will not improve, the more likely they wish to settle elsewhere with better conditions for the longer term. While at the time of data collection secondary cross-border movements by IDPs were primarily temporary, with young men and/or heads of households migrating to secure livelihoods for the family left behind, it may be that, in the coming year, more may decide to have their family join them in cross-border migration, should the situation not improve, as reported by four KIs.

#### **3.4.b. Available resources over time and diaspora support**

The intention to settle somewhere else with better economic opportunities may increase the longer the household is displaced, but longer-term displacement also depletes resources, reducing households' ability to move. Indeed, the resources needed – and potential dangers- for an entire household to relocate are not inconsequential, which is why this decision is not taken lightly. This is also likely why- as per the IDMC report<sup>62</sup> – most IDPs remain IDPs and do not engage in cross-border movements, as they lack the resources to do so. COVID-19 related movement restrictions may have added further barriers.<sup>63</sup>

Having said that, diaspora and family members settled already in Côte d'Ivoire or Ghana may be able to support such settlement if needed. Evidence of this is anecdotal. However, KIs with a particular knowledge of recent arrivals in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana were able to give some examples of households who migrated as a unit to either country over the past year, and most of them reportedly settled locally with family members who were already established in the country. Thereby, arrivals relied on family ties, but also remained under the radar of government (and international

62 IDMC (June 2020). [Thematic Series: The Displacement Continuum, the relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movement in seven countries](#).

63 Please see section 4 for more information.

organisations). At the same time, existing family ties may also make temporary cross-border settlement easier, as the barriers to migrating (and settling) are lower. As a result – and as was the case in some examples cited by KIs (see section 2.1.d) – even such movements may not be permanent, with households deciding to re-migrate or return later on.

## Section 4: Protection risks faced by refugees and migrants along the route

### 4.1. Protection risks faced by refugees and migrants along the route

The routes refugees and migrants travel along to reach Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana from Burkina Faso and Mali build on long-established migration patterns. Also, as raised by one KI, the borders can be described as somewhat 'artificial', as they formally separate two nation states, but do not mirror for the most part the lived experiences of people living and crossing the border regularly.<sup>64</sup> Despite this context, which may suggest well-travelled and, as such, safe routes, KIs and refugees and migrants interviewed cited several protection risks for people on the move along the route. Most protection risks reportedly occur at border crossings: all particularly dangerous locations cited by refugees and migrants interviewed<sup>65</sup> were located at the border (most reported: Dakola (mentioned by 5), Yendéré, Konni and Pô, each reported once).

Most KIs and refugees and migrants further cited that COVID-19 and related movement restrictions have exacerbated already pre-existing protection risks. Recent research in the region tends to support this view, tying further in the unexpected impacts of COVID-19 on already displaced populations. July 2020 findings from an assessment conducted with refugees and migrants in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso by the Independent Monitoring, Rapid Research and Evidence Facility (IMREF)<sup>66</sup> found that all displaced respondents reported facing fully depleted resources as a result of the movement restrictions and the economic fallout resulting from those. This, in turn appeared to considerably increased their vulnerabilities, limiting their ability to access sufficient food and healthcare, avoid sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and other forms of abuse and violence, while also straining relationships with local host communities.

#### 4.1.a. Heightened costs and risk of extortion at border crossing points

At the time of writing (January 2021) the land borders officially remain closed. According to the ICG, the full or partial closure of cross-border points of entry is commonly accompanied by an increase in patrolling along border areas to enforce legislation and prevent irregular crossing,<sup>67</sup> in turn **driving people on the move to engage in more remote and dangerous traveling itineraries to reach their intended destinations,<sup>68</sup> remain in transit hubs for prolonged periods of time,<sup>69</sup> or engage in repeat migration<sup>70</sup> – all options that increase exposure to risk and heighten vulnerability.**

64 The example the KI gave was that frequently members of a same tribe live across both sides of the border.

65 Nine respondents reported there being particularly dangerous locations on the journey.

66 IMREF (July 2020). [Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on the vulnerabilities of migrants on the central Mediterranean route.](#)

67 ICG (April 2020). [The impact of the pandemic on human-smuggling dynamics and migrant-protection risks.](#)

68 Schöfberger, I., Rango, M. (2020). [COVID-19 and migration in West and North Africa and across the Mediterranean.](#)

69 IMREF (July 2020). [Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on the vulnerabilities of migrants on the central Mediterranean route.](#)

70 IDMC (June 2020). [Thematic Series: The Displacement Continuum, the relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movement in seven countries.](#)

## Box 4: Refugees and migrants' views of protection risks & need for smugglers at the border

Nine refugees and migrants interviewed by the MMC reported that there were particular dangerous locations during the journey- all located at border crossing points. Most reported risks are presented in the table below. Most frequently reported perpetrators of rights violations were smugglers (reported by 6), authorities at the border (4), armed groups/ militias and criminal gangs (each 3), and other migrants (1).

Protection risks reported	#
Robbery	7
Bribery/extortion	5
Non-physical violence (racism, xenophobia, harassment, insults)	3
Physical violence	3
Death	2
Kidnapping	2
Sexual violence	1
Detention	1

There was large-scale agreement among refugees and migrants that **COVID-19 had exacerbated protection risks at the border**. Respondents agreed or strongly agreed that COVID-19 had exacerbated the risks of: extortion/bribery (reported by 23 out of 25), theft (22), arbitrary arrest and detention (20), denial of entry/ push-back for asylum seekers and those with the right to cross (20), labour exploitation (16) and the risk of sexual exploitation (13). Notably, while only few women reported the risk of sexual violence per se (due to its sensitivity, a notoriously under-reported risk), all women interviewed (5) confirmed that the risk of SGBV had increased with COVID-19, hinting at the likely much higher occurrence of such rights perpetrations.

Almost all refugees and migrants reported that the **need for smugglers had increased** since the emergence of COVID-19 and related movement restrictions (22 out of 25). Three out of four respondents felt that smuggling prices had increased (19 out of 25), and 18 respondents agreed/strongly agreed that the routes chosen by smugglers had become more dangerous as a result of border closures.

Indeed, all KIs interviewed confirmed that, while borders were officially closed, cross-border movements continued. While KIs reported that people on the move took smaller routes to circumvent official crossing points, most confirmed that the risk of **extortion** was still very high, with many (anecdotal) cases of refugees and migrants having to pay bribes to enter the territory. One IDP leader interviewed in Kaya reportedly knew of a case of an IDP being asked 50,000 CFA by a border control agent to cross into Côte d'Ivoire. Having said that, most KIs felt that the risk of extortion by government officials preceded border closures, citing it across the board as the most common protection risk. Five refugees and migrants interviewed reported bribery and the risk of extortion as particular protection risks.

In a similar vein, the use of smaller, unofficial routes – and the lack of the usual transport means – also reportedly significantly heightens the cost of the journey. This reportedly disproportionately impacts IDPs planning to /travelling along the route, as they tend to have less resources than other groups.

### 4.1.b. Risk of physical and sexual and gender-based violence

Several KIs (mostly IDP leaders and NGO workers) cited the risk of physical violence for men and SGBV for women along the route. The highest risk locations for such incidents were also reported to occur at border crossing points. This mirrors wider trends in protection incidents faced by people in mixed flows across the region, as several MMC resources confirm, as well as the views of refugees and migrants interviewed along the route.<sup>71</sup>

*'It's four days that I am here in Dakola, trying to cross. Every time they send me back [‘refoulé’]. Now I am organising the crossing with a smuggler. So yes, it is difficult.'*  
**22-year-old Burkinabé woman interviewed in Dakola**

71 See for instance: MMC (November 2020). [A Sharper Lens on Vulnerability \(West Africa\)](#)

Also, here KIs held that border closures following COVID-19 exponentially raise the risk of these incidents to take place, as with smaller, more hidden routes the risk of violence (and impunity) rises.

#### 4.1.c. Risks tied to attacks in border areas

In addition to COVID-19 induced border restrictions, the steady increase in militant mass-casualty attacks in the southern Sahel region<sup>72</sup> appears to have driven demand for counter-insurgency on the part of involved states, particularly along the violent border areas.<sup>73</sup> In June 2020, militants attacked a mixed army and gendarmerie post in Côte d'Ivoire's border town Kafolo<sup>74</sup> and similar attacks were observed in Mali's southern regions,<sup>75</sup> to which the Ivorian government responded by instituting a securitised military zone along its northern borders.<sup>76</sup> In September 2020, UNHCR and ICAHD observed three violent attacks by unidentified armed groups in the southern Hauts-Bassins and Cascades regions of Burkina Faso.<sup>77</sup> While the October 2020 update did not record any new such attacks, there had reportedly been threats of a similar attack on a school.<sup>78</sup>

### Irregular cross-border movements versus the ECOWAS Protocol on Freedom of Movement

In principle, the **ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of People** allows all people from the ECOWAS Community of states to engage in cross-border mobility to seek economic opportunities and thus contribute to the region's financial growth.

However, in practice, the ECOWAS Protocol does not always translate into freedom of movement, and people from ECOWAS states continue to cross borders via informal routes. This apparent contradiction has many causes. For instance, under the ECOWAS legislation, member states are required to grant citizenship rights to their populations, yet various inadmissibility laws installed by states have prevented people from specific segments and groups of the population to attain the right documents needed to legally cross the border under the ECOWAS protocol. Progress on right of residence and right of establishment has fallen victim of national provisions. When people are forcibly displaced or have otherwise left their previous location in a hurry, they might also have lost their identity documentation (ID) needed to formally cross borders.

Moreover, a lack of harmonization between various national legislations, an inability to properly enforce laws along porous and insecure borders, stronger migration control efforts, and a general securitization of border control have further downplayed adherence to the protocol.

Sources: Mukhtar, I. (2020). [ECOWAS free movement area: Interference of European policies and remedies](#). Kabbanji, L. (2017). Regional management of migration in West Africa: the case of ECOWAS and UEMOA. In: Nita, S., Pécoud, A., De Lombaerde, Ph., Neyts, K., Gartland, J. (eds.) (2017). [Migration, Free Movement, and Regional Integration](#).

For migrants and refugees on the move in these southern regions, who are already vulnerable to threats due to their precarious situation, an increase in violent extremism, riots, and violence against civilians, as well as the subsequent securitisation of border areas, are likely to further aggravate risks and vulnerabilities.

*'The conditions of the journey are difficult: some don't have all the money to pay for the trip, so they need to stop and work halfway. There is also the issue with lack of ID documents, some become victims to extortion, others are even detained, because people assume they are terrorists, just because they come from Mali...'*

**IDP interviewed in Bamako**

72 ACLED (18 August 2020). [Mid-year update: 10 conflicts to worry about in 2020](#).

73 ACLED (20 May 2020). [State atrocities in the Sahel: The Impetus for counterinsurgency results is fueling government attacks on civilians](#).

74 Koaci (Juillet 2020). [Cote d'Ivoire: Attaque de Kafolo, la Nation rend hommage aux 14 militaires tués, la liste complete des victimes](#).

75 ACLED (20 May 2020). [State atrocities in the Sahel: The Impetus for counterinsurgency results is fueling government attacks on civilians](#).

76 Connection Ivoirienne (14 Juillet 2020). [Défense: La Côte d'Ivoire crée une zone militaire opérationnelle au Nord](#).

77 UNHCR & ICAHD International (September 2020). [Rapport Mensuel de Monitoring de Protection](#).

78 UNHCR & ICAHD International (October 2020). [Rapport Mensuel de Monitoring de Protection](#).

## Box 5: Protection risks faced by transhumance herders

Various sources hint at the risks associated with the impact of COVID-19 movement restrictions and border closures on (agro)pastoral communities in the region, particularly highlighting an increasing risks of epizootic disease outbreaks and an uptick in localized violence due to limited resources – such as livestock feed which is reportedly facing shortages in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>79</sup> **In January 2021, the concentration of herds remained particularly high along the border on the Ivorian side, as well as on the northern border between the Burkina Sahel region and Tillabéri in Niger.**<sup>80</sup> In addition, movement restrictions have likely pushed more herders to travel via irregular, invisible routes, increasing their vulnerability to protection risks.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to the more direct, tangible effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on transhumance mobility across the region, IOM issued a crisis appeal in November 2020<sup>82</sup> to develop 'early alert mechanisms' and 'reinforce local conflict mitigation strategies', noting that the increasing insecurity and the impacts of climate change have caused structural shifts in transhumance movements, driving states to issue stricter border control measures and herders to increasingly regularly opt for more opaque, irregular (cross-border) routes. Based on SDR, these communities likely face additional threats from security forces, as well as host community stigmatisation, due to the common perception that they are militant recruits.<sup>83</sup>

## 4.2. Needs and vulnerabilities of refugees and migrants along the route

**Both SDR and KIIs yielded only limited insight into the needs and vulnerabilities of people in mixed flows along the route.** This likely points to the limited access humanitarian actors have to this population group, which is further accentuated by COVID-19 related mobility restrictions and refugees and migrants' ensuing need to remain under the radar and migrate irregularly.

### 4.2.a. Priority needs

Existing data on the needs of displaced people in the region more generally can be used as a proxy to estimate the needs and vulnerabilities of refugees and migrants in this specific migration corridor.

In addition to the protection threats facing people on the move, as detailed in the previous section, recent irregular drought-flood cycles, insecurity, and displacement have limited the ability of people to access and produce food – which is of concern particularly due to the high reliance on agriculture as a main livelihoods source across the region (an estimated 4 out of every 5 families). According to the Cadre Harmonisé for the Sahel July 2020 analysis, an estimated 7.4 million people in the region are likely to be food insecure (phase 3+), while close to 1 million children are thought to be **facing acute malnutrition.**<sup>84</sup> In addition, OCHA predicts in their Central Sahel Revised Needs and Requirements Overview (October 2020) that **access to basic services, including healthcare and education, has been eroded by the security and public health crisis** – approximately 150 health centres and 35,000 schools were reportedly closed in October.<sup>85</sup> Such access constraints are likely to be exacerbated for people on the move, as they are more likely than the general population to not have the right documentation and/or enough money necessary for accessing services. In addition, access to shelter (75% of the displaced people in Burkina Faso are believed to do without) emerged as a key need of people on the move in the region.<sup>86</sup>

These findings were corroborated with IDP households interviewed for the 2020 Burkina Faso REACH MSNA, who most commonly reported that **access to food and livelihoods, healthcare, shelter, and basic non-food items (NFIs)** were their top priority needs (in this order).<sup>87</sup>

KIs confirmed that the priority needs of people in mixed flows along the route were access to basic needs, such as food, water and shelter. Access to documentation (in the form of ID cards) was also raised by six KIs, who, however, specified that, due to the COVID-19 restrictions currently in place, these would probably not reduce the risk of extortion at the border.

79 Food Crisis Response Network/RPCA (2020). [Pastoral situation in the context of COVID-19.](#)

80 RBM & ACF (January 2021). [COVID-19 Pastoral Monitoring Dashboard.](#)

81 RBM & ACF (May 2020).

82 IOM (November 2020). [Sahel transhumance crisis response plan 2020.](#)

83 The Guardian (12 June 2020). [Militant crackdown in Sahel leads to hundreds of civilian deaths – report.](#)

84 OCHA (16 October 2020). [Central Sahel revised needs and requirement overview \(October 2020\).](#)

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.

87 REACH (September 2020). [Burkina Faso Multi-Sector Needs Assessment 2020: Dataset.](#)

#### 4.2.b. Particular vulnerable groups

IDPs, women and children and specific ethnic groups were identified by KIs as particularly vulnerable. In relation to IDPs, KIs associated their vulnerability to the more limited resources they are likely to have access to and thus more limited ability to respond to shock and absorb any unexpected costs during the journey. Women's vulnerabilities were heightened by risk of SGBV particularly on less travelled routes (the only ones accessible due to COVID-19 movement restrictions). Risks children were reportedly exposed to, according to four KIs, included the risk of trafficking and subsequent labour exploitation in farms and/or gold mines. Respondents from Mali particularly frequently reported that specific ethnic groups are targeted during the trip – and especially at border crossing points, because they are assumed to be part of terrorist groups. This makes them particularly vulnerable to poor treatment by border/government officials of all countries. The Peulh ethnic group was reportedly particularly affected by this.

## Section 5: Risks and challenges facing refugees and migrants upon arrival in the coastal countries

### 5.1. Protection risks faced by refugees and migrants in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana

The main protection risks identified for refugees and migrants originating from Sahelian countries in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana are (1) labour exploitation and risk of human trafficking;<sup>88</sup> and (2) access to documentation, as many do not formalise their stay within the required three-month timeframe.

#### 5.1.a. Labour exploitation and the risk of human trafficking

Labour exploitation and the risk of human trafficking was the most reported protection risk cited by KIs, and mostly reported in relation to Côte d'Ivoire. The most affected group were reportedly children and youth, often in both farms (cocoa, banana, palm oil) and in gold mining sites. Several KIs worry that because of COVID-19 this phenomenon had become even more out of reach of authorities and other (IO/NGO) actors, as any monitoring visits have been paused for the time being. Some also cited the risk of children being enrolled in armed groups. Secondary data confirms this view: over the year 2019, the government of Côte d'Ivoire reported having identified 1,004 potential victims of human trafficking and exploitation, the majority of whom (692) were found to be foreigners, mostly from Benin, Nigeria, Togo, and Burkina Faso. In addition to being forced to work in the agricultural sector (on cacao, coffee, pineapple, and cashew plantations),<sup>89</sup> 402 of the identified individuals had been victims of sex trafficking.<sup>90</sup> According to the United States Department of State's '2020 Trafficking in Persons'<sup>91</sup> report, most traffickers identified in Côte d'Ivoire work in well-established intra-regional networks relying heavily on social networks and social media, making the phenomenon particularly hard to track.

According to secondary data, in Ghana, too, refugees and migrants are at risk of being trafficked. Victims of trafficking are overwhelmingly found in the sex industry and domestic service, and almost always comprise children (boys and girls) and women from neighbouring countries. Similar to Côte d'Ivoire, trafficking and forced labour is hard to track and likely underreported.<sup>92</sup> Due to the well-established networks and rogue techniques employed by traffickers, the data presented by NGOs and governments therefore most likely only scrapes the surface of a much larger issue threatening many of the migrants and refugees seeking to enter the coastal countries.<sup>93</sup>

Other forms of labour exploitation were also cited by KIs, with evidence available in secondary data. Although slightly outdated, an assessment of forced labour risks in the **cocoa sector of Côte d'Ivoire** conducted by Verité in December 2016,<sup>94</sup> found that **forced labour is a risk particularly for recently arrived individuals**, who often enter the sector via third-party intermediaries, a system through which migrants immediately acquire recruitment-related debts. Such debt can bind them to a workplace and make them vulnerable to various forms of abuse. In addition to this 'debt-bondage', Verité found instances of deceptive recruitment, under- or non-payment of wages, and 'multiple dependency' on employers, for instance for housing, food, and transportation.<sup>95</sup> These risks are further

88 The US Department of State Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons defines trafficking in a broad sense as: "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery." US Department of State Department of Defense, [Glossary](#)

89 International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) (February 2019). [Assessment of forced labour risk in the cocoa sector of Cote d'Ivoire](#).

90 U.S. Department of State (2020). [Trafficking in Persons Report: Cote d'Ivoire](#).

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 Luda di Cortemiglia, V., Hauck, V., Knoll, A., Akinyemi, I., Diallo, A., Ward-Booth, S., La Boulch, M. (31 July 2018). [Needs assessment study for the development and implementation of legislation and strategies to counter migrant smuggling covering Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea, and ECOWAS](#).

94 Verité (February 2019). [Assessment of forced labor risk in the cocoa sector of Cote d'Ivoire](#).

95 Ibid.



exacerbated by the remoteness of many of the coca farms and other plantations where refugees and migrants end up working.

### 5.1.b. Access to documentation

Five KIs reported that, due to the informal nature of much movement between Sahelian and coastal countries, once arrived at destination, refugees and migrants frequently do not formally regularise their stay, even where they stay beyond the legally allowed three-month period. As a result, refugees and migrants can thereafter have only limited access to government-run services, including recourse to the police and other public services. Based on KI interviews, it further emerged that even individuals who may be entitled to international protection are unlikely to apply for asylum once in Côte d'Ivoire. This was reportedly as a result of a general sense that refugee status would not offer them any benefits.

In Côte d'Ivoire, a long history of (sometimes violent) attempts to define and shape citizenship and nationality have led to persistent confusion and discussion as to who can be granted citizenship and can hence receive the rights associated therewith. **As a result, statelessness is still prevalent in the country, affecting all sorts of subgroups in the society, such as (historic) refugees, returnees, communities living in border regions, trafficked persons, and newly arrived migrants arriving through irregular channels,**<sup>96</sup> limiting their access to essential public services, legal employment, and family reunification programmes, among others.<sup>97</sup> In this light, it should be noted that Côte d'Ivoire signed and adopted a Statelessness Determination Procedure on the 2nd of September, 2020 – marking it Africa's first such procedure.<sup>98</sup> The two regulations that were signed are aimed at enabling the regularisation of stateless people, which is in line with the country's National Action Plan.<sup>99</sup> At the time of writing (January 2021), the implementation of these regulations cannot yet comprehensively be assessed.

## 5.2. Socio-economic challenges faced by refugees and migrants in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana

Most refugees and migrants engaged in south-bound migration aim to access sustainable livelihoods once in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. As a result, the socio-economic situation and opportunities in both countries is of primary importance. Overall, while in both Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana a sizeable part of the population continues to live below the poverty line,<sup>100</sup> perceptions of wealth and opportunities are relative: when asked, all KIs confirmed that there continued to be good livelihoods opportunities for Burkinabé and Malians in both countries, and were unable to cite specific challenges beyond the protection risks outlined above. Côte d'Ivoire is a net-immigration country and has been among the top economic havens for migrants from across the West African region, most notably for Burkinabé (1,367,916 migrants in 2019)<sup>101</sup> and Malian migrants (522,146). This holds true for Ghana as well. As one KI put it: 'It's [the economy] not perfect to meet all their needs. There are challenges to earning a living. Having said that, even some of the host community have their own challenges. It is much better compared to where they come from.'

The full impact of COVID-19 is still to be fully felt in the region: although evidence remains preliminary at this stage, COVID-19 appears to have severely impacted the financial resilience of refugees and migrants in both Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. In May 2020, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) assessed the impact of COVID-19 contingency measures on the Ivorian and Ghanaian labour markets. Although the assessment did not particularly sample foreign populations, findings on the informal sector can be assumed to indicatively gauge the situation of refugees and migrants, due to their over-representation in the informal sector in both countries.<sup>102</sup> Findings univocally highlight a decline in labour demand and a rise in unemployment.<sup>103</sup> As a result, many migrant workers working in this sector, often without access to any type of social security benefits, may lose their only source of income, and with it, their ability to send home remittances.<sup>104 105</sup>

96 Adjamini, M. (December 2016). [Statelessness and nationality in Cote d'Ivoire](#).

97 La Coalition de la société Civile Ivoirienne Contre l'Apatridie (CIGA) & Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI). (May 2019). [Joint submission to the Human Rights Council at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Universal Periodic Review](#).

98 UNHCR (4 September 2020). [Cote d'Ivoire adopts Africa's first legal procedure to identify and protect stateless people](#).

99 Ibid.

100 46% in Cote d'Ivoire, WFP (October 2020). [Cote d'Ivoire, Country Operations Brief](#); 24.2% in Ghana.

101 UNDESA (2019). [International migrant stock data 2019](#).

102 Girsberger, E., Méago, R., Rapaport, H. (February 2019). [Regional Migration and Wage Inequality in the West African Economic and Monetary Union](#).

103 UNDP (May 2020). [News brief: How COVID-19 is affecting firms in Ghana](#). And: [Evaluation de l'impact du COVID-19 sur le secteur informel](#).

104 The World Bank (3 April 2020). [Remittances in times of the coronavirus – keep them flowing](#).

105 The World Bank (October 29, 2020). [COVID-19: Remittance flows to shrink 14% by 2021](#).

### 5.3. Social cohesion and community relations in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana

Social cohesion and community relations were described differently in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. According to a large majority of KIs, social cohesion and community relations between refugees and migrants and their hosts in Ghana are predominantly positive. Reasons for the good relations include:

- That arrivals build on long standing migration ties in the region and fill existing labour needs;
- That newly arrived refugees and migrants mainly settle with existing family/ friends, as such not putting pressure on existing resources;
- As arrivals do not come in big groups, there is no perception on the side of the host population of being overburdened.

At the same time, several KIs specified that relations were good, as, so far, the communities in question had not faced any issues (yet) in relation to resource scarcity and pressure on public services. Here, KIs cautioned that the situation may be different should large groups of arrivals (appear to) jeopardise local access to natural resources, jobs, and access to services.

For community relations in Côte d'Ivoire responses were more mixed. Overall, the points raised above were also mentioned as pre-conditions for relations to be good. However, several respondents – both speaking to the experience of Burkinabé and Malian arrivals – did raise that host-community relations in Côte d'Ivoire build on a difficult history, which is still present today. Indeed, both Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana look back at a complicated history in relation to social cohesion and acceptance of non-host populations (albeit Ghana to a lesser extent). **Exclusionary rhetoric and anti-foreigner community sentiments are often closely entwined (and sometimes conflated) with the political instrumentalisation of nationality and identity politics,**<sup>106</sup> both Ghana<sup>107</sup> and Côte d'Ivoire have seen particular instances of policy-induced violence against foreign-born minority groups. In Côte d'Ivoire, the concept of 'Ivoirité' is still being invoked in political campaigning today. Indeed, in the run-up to the 2020 national elections, anti-foreigner rhetoric, such as the idea that foreigners exploit the country's resources,<sup>108</sup> has been increasingly used in political discourse.<sup>109</sup>

As such, in contrast to the Ghanaian context, several KIs were able to give examples of recent tensions between foreign communities and their hosts in Côte d'Ivoire, tied to resource scarcity, perceived competition for work and resources and the instrumentalisation of foreigners as scapegoats during elections.

With this in mind, and considering the increased jihadist violence along Côte d'Ivoire's north-western borders (see section 3), the 2020 post-electoral violence,<sup>110</sup> and the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; the risk of a newly induced erosion of social cohesion and tensions might be a future scenario to consider, particularly should increasing numbers of people cross the borders from Mali and Burkina Faso into Côte d'Ivoire.

*'There are absolutely no tensions when these people come in. They are very well received by the host community and some of them offer them a place to stay in their homes. We don't have camps or similar, there's no tensions at all. The only problem of course would arise if facilities were overstretched, then we would have to deal with it, but for now we haven't seen this.'*

**Ghanaian government official**

106 Whitaker, E. (2015). [Playing the immigration card: The politics of exclusion in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana](#).

107 For instance, the Ghanaian Business Promotion Act No 334 of 1970, reserving certain employment sectors exclusively for nationals

108 Hojje, K (June 2019). [Ivory coast sees return to anti-foreigner rhetoric ahead of vote](#), Bloomberg.

109 Ibid.

110 HRW (2 December 2020). [Cote d'Ivoire: Post-Election Violence, Repression, Over 50 Killed since Presidential Poll: Dozen Opposition Leaders Arrested](#).

# Conclusion

The year 2020 saw a rapid increase in conflict, general insecurity, and displacement in the Sahel, particularly in Burkina Faso. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic and its secondary impacts, coupled with the impact of climate change on the majority agricultural economies further drove high levels of food insecurity in some regions. Against this backdrop, concerns were raised about the potential effects of the Central Sahel Crisis and a hypothesised subsequent increase in North-South mobility due to the relative stability of coastal countries.

This report aimed to make sense of these forecasted migratory dynamics by conducting a rapid review of the current state of knowledge on the topic, collected through a thorough secondary data review, 20 key informant interviews and supplemented by 25 interviews with refugees and migrants along the route.

In 2020 most cross-border movements from Burkina Faso and Mali towards Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana appeared to be motivated by economic considerations. However, several elements have pointed to the likely under-reported nature of conflict-induced movements among existing mixed flows. Reliable, comprehensive data on the composition of flows is lacking. To gauge how the situation and composition of mixed migration flows from Burkina Faso and Mali towards Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana may develop in 2021, the following elements should be considered:

- **A significant and growing IDP population** in Burkina Faso with unaddressed needs, which contend with increasing risk of resource scarcity and community tensions in primary areas of (internal) displacement. This is a particular risk if the security situation in the Central Sahel does not improve and displacement protracts.
- **Conflict dynamics which appear to move south-ward**, as the number of people displaced by conflict in the southern regions of Burkina Faso and Mali appears to be growing. Should violence in the central and northern regions persist, this may lead to increased cross-border south-bound displacements, including secondary movements of refugees and IDPs.
- **Pre-existing well-established migration patterns and diaspora links at destination** are likely to make cross-border movements both easier and more likely, despite increasingly depleted resources and COVID-19 movement restrictions.
- **Existing secondary movements of IDPs** into Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana may increase and become more permanent should needs in areas of first displacement not be addressed, and should conflict continue, thereby eradicating IDPs' hopes to return.
- **A lack of reliable, large-scale representative data on current refugee and IDP intentions** with regards to further, cross-border movements means that, beyond hypotheses, no reliable projections can be made. This is not the least because the dynamics outlined above are ongoing, but also gradual. The situation remains very much in flux, which means that the temporality of (possible) future events cannot be determined at this stage.

**Looking toward 2021**, the individualised nature of conflict-induced displacements observed – both in displaced people's travel and settling at destination – should serve as an indication of a **need to better monitor flows at key transit points, including at the border, as well as arrivals** in coastal countries. While information available remains anecdotal at this stage, findings do suggest the presence of people in need of international protection among existing flows, who currently go undetected. Given the lack of trust towards government-run structures by people in mixed flows, such monitoring should be done beyond existing official structures. While outside of the scope of the present report, crossing points towards Benin and Togo may also warrant increased attention, to gauge potential mixed movements towards Nigeria. Finally, irregular entries – currently unavoidable due to COVID-19 restrictions – may further increase vulnerable populations' need to remain under the radar of authorities, at the same time heightening their vulnerability – and need for identification and assistance.

# Voices of people on the move

*"I have been a victim of terrorist threats. I just had to leave. This is why we have left with my family for Ghana. We don't expect to return."*

**36-year-old Burkinabé man interviewed in the Centre-South region, Burkina Faso**

*"We are IDPs, we fled violence in the north to reach Cote d'Ivoire and now here the authorities don't let us enter. But we can't stay here, we have nothing. They say it's because of COVID-19 that we can't enter."*

**35-year-old Burkinabé man interviewed in the Centre-South region, Burkina Faso**

*"All the border closures [because of COVID-19] have done is to make extortion at the border much more frequent."*

**21-year-old Malian man interviewed in the Cascades region, Burkina Faso**

*"If it wasn't for COVID-19 we wouldn't suffer like this. I would never have taken this small route otherwise [to circumvent border patrols]."*

**30-year-old Malian man interviewed in Baguera, Loumana**

*"It's the difficult condition which have made us leave and come here. Now, instead of understanding us, they block us from entry. It has been three days that I am here waiting, trying to find a way to cross the border."*

**35-year-old Burkinabé man interviewed in the Cascades region, Burkina Faso**

*"When you are a woman, you suffer all types of violence along this route. This journey has really been horrible for me."*

**22-year-old Burkinabé woman interviewed in the Centre-South region, Burkina Faso**

# Annexes

## ANNEX 1: Regional regulatory policy framework regarding refugees and migrants

### Legal protections for refugees and migrants in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana

Both Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana are countries of destination, exit, and transit, and have related legislation in place to regulate the flow of people crossing borders. This section describes the migration governance frameworks and structures existing in both countries to highlight the legal protections and vulnerabilities facing refugees and migrants in both countries.

Both countries are signatories to most of the relevant international and regional conventions, such as the UN 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Additional Protocol and the Organisation of African Unity's (OAU's, now the African Union) 1969 Refugee Convention (for a non-exhaustive list, see table 1), through which both countries commit to respect and protect the rights of refugees entering their countries, including the right to essential services such as clean water, education, healthcare, and shelter, as well as freedom of movement, freedom of religion, and fair trial. In addition to refugee law, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana also ratified the 1979 ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Free Movement of Persons, which enables each person from the member states traveling with a valid traveling document and health certificate to enter another member state for up to 90 days on a free visa (15 days for those entering in a commercial vehicle). However, amid growing insecurity and illicit trafficking prevention campaigns, the protocol of free movement is not always enforced.<sup>111, 112</sup> Thereby, people crossing borders via irregular routes without identity documentation proving their status as an ECOWAS or African Union (AU) citizen cannot always rely on the Protocol's protections.

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111 Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) (2017). [Cote d'Ivoire Case Study](#).

112 Globetrotters Legal Africa (2020). [A General Introduction to Immigration Law and Policy in Ghana](#).

**Table 1: International Conventions on Migration ratified by Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana**<sup>113</sup>

International Conventions	Ratified (year of ratification)	
	Cote d'Ivoire	Ghana
ILO Convention n97 on Migrant Workers (revised convention), 1949	No	No
UN Refugee Convention, 1951 Additional Protocol 1967	Yes (1961) (1970 protocol)	Yes (1963) (1968)
UN Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons, 1954	Yes (2013)	No
UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, 1961	Yes (2013)	No
ILO Migrant Workers (supplementary provisions) Convention n143, 1975	No	No
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1981	Yes (1996)	Yes (1989)
UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child, 1989	Yes (1991)	Yes (1990)
The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CRMW), 1990	No	Yes (2000)
African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced People in Africa (Kampala Convention), 2009	Yes (2013)	No
The Organisation of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (OAU Refugee Convention), 1969	Yes (1998)	Yes (1983)
International Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000	Yes (2012)	Yes (2012)
ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration, 2008	Yes (signed)	Yes (signed)
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRW), 1999	Yes (2004)	Yes (2005)
ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Residence, and Establishment, 1979	Yes (1979)	Yes (1979)

### Migration Regulatory Framework in Cote d'Ivoire

Legislation on the identification and stay of “foreigners”<sup>114</sup> in Cote d'Ivoire is regulated by the country's 2004 Law on the Identification of Persons and the Stay of Foreigners in Cote d'Ivoire (Law 2004-303, in turn an amendment of Law 90-437) (see table 2), and are in line with the countries' signatures to international and regional legislative frameworks (see table 1). Yet, the country reportedly lacks a comprehensive migration policy, which has led to a fragmented migration management infrastructure relying on six different ministries and public institutions without a proper coordination framework.<sup>115</sup>

In addition, assessing the regulatory framework regarding migration issues in the country is further complicated by a lack of up-to-date migration statistical data; according to the IOM's 2019 Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) publication on Cote d'Ivoire, data on refugees and migrants remains sparse and is not sufficiently disaggregated by sex, education, age, disability, etc. Similarly, information on the de facto judicial protection and well-being of said populations in Cote d'Ivoire remains limited – although migraton legislation can be found in the Constitution Ivoirienne (2016) and in other laws (see table 2), the implementation of civil and human rights legislation is not regularly monitored and information is not commonly shared with international partners.<sup>116</sup>

113 To note, the below table is based on an in-depth internet-based public access review of legislation. It cannot be excluded that not all legal texts and signatories are updated on a regular level. Information here are presented as found in publically accessible online sources as of January 2021.

114 According to the UNHCR, the Nationality Code does not adequately define/distinguish who is to be considered “foreigner”. Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion & La Coalition de la Société Civile de Lutte Contre l'Apatridie, (2019). 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Universal Periodic review.

115 IOM (2019). Migration Government Indicators: Cote d'Ivoire

116 Human Rights Watch (HRW), (2019). [Cote d'Ivoire: A fragile human rights situation](#).

Asylum seekers crossing a border into Cote d'Ivoire fall under the primary responsibility of the country's Direction d'Aide et d'Assistance aux Réfugiés et Apatrides (DAARA) – or the Department of Support and Assistance to Refugees and Stateless Persons, which is tasked to rule on individual refugee status applications and is assisted by observers from the UNHCR and IOM.<sup>117</sup> However, according to the the IOM, the fragmentation of a migration management framework and an only limitedly digitized border monitoring system have led to leaks in the border control, identification, and registration ability of Cote d'Ivoire.<sup>118</sup>

Moreover, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MATD), which monitors visa overstays via the Office National de l'Etat Civil et de l'Identification (ONECI), is not fully enforced, in turn driving the risks of migrants falling into an irregular, hence criminalized, situation. Reportedly, this also leads to migrants in a protracted situation in Cote d'Ivoire, who traveled irregularly without their identity papers, at risk of statelessness.<sup>119</sup>

In recent years, in a bid to end statelessness in Cote d'Ivoire, the government has undertaken steps to improve the identification of stateless persons and to smoothen naturalization. An example thereof is the 2016 Constitution, which expanded the citizenship laws and now enables citizenship to those of foreign descent who have been residing in the country for more than five years, and the Abidjan and Banjul Declarations on the Eradication of Statelessness (2015 and 2017). In the last quarter of 2020, Cote d'Ivoire has established the stateless determination procedures becoming the first country in Western Sahara to have such measures in place. No up-to-date information is available on the extent to which these measures have been implemented thus far.

**Table 2: Cote d'Ivoire National Migration Regulations**

Ivorian National Regulations	
Law or Policy	(relevant, partial) Provision
Constitution Ivoirienne, 2016	Ratifies international human rights conventions, established the Commission Nationale des Droits de l'Homme de la Cote d'Ivoire (CNDHCI) tasked to independently protect and promote human rights law, grants citizenship to migrants through marriage, naturalization (after five years of living in the country, or two years for children born in the country), declaration, and adoption.
Law 2004-303 relating to the Identification of Persons and to the Stay of Foreigners in Cote d'Ivoire, 2004  Amendment 09-437, 2009	According to Art. 15, irregular stay constitutes a criminal offence, and Art.7 prohibits the facilitation of the stay of foreigners who are in an irregular situation in Cote d'Ivoire <sup>120</sup>
Law 2016-1111 on Combating Trafficking in Persons, 2016	Regulates protection of victims and witnesses of trafficking; includes a specific Chapter (4) focused on the trafficking of minors.
Law 2010-272 on the Prohibition of Child Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 2018	Prohibits child labour and requires protection of child victims of trafficking and forced labour.
Law 2015-635 on Education, 2015	Requires all children aged six and older residing in the country, regardless of status, to be enrolled in school
Abidjan Declaration, 2015 (regional)	Reifies national commitment to prevent and eliminate statelessness
Banjul Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness, 2017 (regional)	Legally binding reification of commitment to take concrete steps to eradicate statelessness by 2024

117 IOM (2019). Migration Government Indicators: Cote d'Ivoire

118 Despite the Law 2016-1111 on Combating Trafficking in Persons, the National Committee against Trafficking in Persons (CLNLTP) the IOM argues that the law is not sufficiently operational and that data and other information on the scope and type of trafficking is not regularly updated or shared.

119 Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion & La Coalition de la Société Civile de Lutte Contre l'Apatridie, (2019). 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Universal Periodic review.

120 IOM (2020) [Migration Governance in North and West Africa](#).

## Migration Regulatory Framework in Ghana

In 2016, Ghana's Ministry of the Interior, with support from the IOM, published its first Migration Policy for Ghana and the accompanying Implementation Plan, which serves as a strategy document to detail the country's commitments and guiding principles to manage national, regional, and international migration flows passing through the country.<sup>121</sup>

Nestled in the national legislative framework of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana and Ghana's 2000 Citizenship Act (Law 2000-591), 2003 Labour Act (2003-651), and Immigration Service Act (2012-848 Amendment) (see table 3), as well as the AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa and the 2008 Common Approach on Migration of the ECOWAS, Ghana's Migration Policy aims to facilitate "migrant equality achievable through integration practices; family reunification; respect for the physical integrity, dignity, religious and cultural beliefs of migrants; facilitating the free movements of persons, and the promotion of human development."<sup>122</sup> In this light, Ghana provides access to health, education, social security, and pathways to obtain permanent residency and citizenship to migrants and refugees who are legally living in Ghana.<sup>123</sup>

In addition, Ghana's Human Trafficking Act (2009-784 Amendment) in combination with the Anti-Human Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons Unit, mandated in turn by the Immigration Act, facilitates the prevention of human trafficking and the protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration of victims thereof. The Ghana Police Service also has a separate division to enact anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling activities.<sup>124</sup>

Through the migration policy framework, the Ministry acknowledged some legislative gaps in the country's approach to the protection of refugees and asylum seekers in particular. For instance, as of 2016, a legal policy framework for managing and supporting refugees and asylum seekers was still lacking in Ghana, which led the Ministry of Interior to urge the establishment of a national legislation – in line with international conventions – to ensure protection of refugees and asylum seekers in Ghana.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, borders reportedly remained porous and prone to irregular migration, as well as human trafficking and smuggling, while detailed entry and exit data was insufficient.<sup>126</sup> In addition to the implementation gaps highlighted in the new policy framework, a migration governance review published by the IOM in 2020 also reported that "comprehensive, timely, and quality data on migration in Ghana are rarely available from national sources, (...)" and that the little migration data available is often not sufficiently disaggregated by age, sex, skill level, and education, which in turn complicates efforts to regulate migration and protect migrants and refugees entering the country.<sup>127</sup> Some data from international sources exists, such as a 2017 study conducted in Egyeikrom Refugee Camp, one of the country's refugee camps, findings of which indicated that implementation gaps appear to remain, particularly in terms of access to education, safe shelter, and security.<sup>128</sup>

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121 IOM (August 2016). [Ghana Launches National Migration Policy](#).

122 Ministry of the Interior, [National Migration Policy for Ghana 2016](#). 2.1e: Guiding Principles, p.5

123 IOM (May 2018). Migration Governance Snapshot: The Republic of Ghana.

124 Ibid.

125 Ministry of the Interior, [National Migration Policy for Ghana 2016](#). 2 p.50

126 Ibid, p.47

127 IOM (2020). [Migration in Ghana: A country Profile 2019](#).

128 Kwarteng, A. (2018). [The application and practice of international refugee laws in Ghana: A case study of Egyeikrom Refugee Camp](#).



**Table 3: Ghana National Migration Regulations**

Ghanaian National Regulations	
Law or Policy	(relevant, partial) Provision
Constitution of Ghana, 1992 (Amendment 1996)	Grants citizenship by birth and marriage; 1996 amendment grants dual citizenship
Immigration Act n573, 2000; (Amendment n848, 2012)  Immigration Regulations, 2001	Provides admission rights, right of residence and employment, possibility of removal of foreigners
Immigration Service Act, 1989	Supports the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) to regulate and monitor entry, residence, employment, and the exit or removal of foreigners
Citizenship Act n591, 2000  Citizenship Regulations, 2001	Grants citizenship by birth, marriage, and registration
Labour Act n651, 2003  Labour Regulations, 2007	Grants permission for immigrant labour and other legally relevant industrial legal provisions
National Labour Migration Policy, 2020	Provides a further framework to guide labour migration management in Ghana.
Refugee Law, 1992	Grants refugees status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention and 1967 Protocol and the OAU 1969 Convention; Prohibits detention or expulsion of refugees; Permits family members to remain in Ghana under the same protections as long as refugee status endures; Established the Ghana Refugee Board to manage refugee affairs
Human Trafficking Act, n694, 2005 (Amendment n784, 2009)	Recognizes the 2000 UN Convention on Human Trafficking; Established a Human Trafficking Management Board
The Children's Act, n560, 1998	Grants children-specific rights, maintenance and adoption, regulates child labour; supervised by the Ministry responsible for gender, children, and vulnerable groups
Ghana Free Zone Act n504, 1995	Grants resident permits to foreign workers who wish to work in designated free zones
National Youth Policy, 2010	Recognizes youth as a national resource, acknowledges challenges of unemployment, rural-urban migration and urbanisation, recognizes youth propensity for internal migration and emigration

## ANNEX 2: Glossary

### Asylum seeker

UNHCR defines **asylum seekers** as “individuals who have sought international protection and whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined” (2017, 56).

### Climate change

“The change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.” Source: Foresight. (2011). Migration and Global Environmental Change: Future Challenges and Opportunities. Final Project Report. The Government Office for Science, London. Available from [www.gov.uk/government/publications/migration-and-global-environmental-change-future-challenges-and-opportunities](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migration-and-global-environmental-change-future-challenges-and-opportunities)

### Displacement / Forced migration

“A migratory movement which, although the drivers can be diverse, involves force, compulsion, or coercion.” The definition includes a note which clarifies that, “While not an international legal concept, this term has been used to describe the movements of refugees, displaced persons (including those displaced by disasters or development projects), and, in some instances, victims of trafficking. At the international level the use of this term is debated because of the widespread recognition that a continuum of agency exists rather than a voluntary/forced dichotomy and that it might undermine the existing legal international protection regime.” (IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019).

### Internally displaced person (IDP)

IDPs are defined as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.” (Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2.).

### Migrant

IOM defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is. Source: [www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant](http://www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant). Migration is defined accordingly, to include all types of movement, including within countries and across borders, with no distinction made as to the reason and temporality of movement.

### Migration

“The movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification.” Source: IOM, 2011, Glossary on Migration, 2nd Edition. *International Migration Law* No. 25, IOM, Geneva. Available at <http://publications.iom.int/>

### 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 different 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.” Source: [Mixed Migration Centre](http://www.mixedmigrationcentre.org/).

## Vulnerability

"The propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected. Vulnerability encompasses a variety of concepts including sensitivity or susceptibility to harm and lack of capacity to cope and adapt." ([IPCC, 2014b: 28](#))

## Refugee

According to the [1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol](#) refugees are persons who flee their country due to "well-founded fear" of persecution due to reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, and who are outside of their country of nationality or permanent residence and due to this fear are unable or unwilling to return to it. UNHCR includes "individuals recognized under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol, the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, those recognized in accordance with the UNHCR Statute, individuals granted complementary forms of protection, and those enjoying temporary protection. The refugee population also includes people in refugee-like situations." ([UNHCR, 2017](#)).

## ANNEX 3: List of acronyms and abbreviations

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
AU	African Union
CFA	West African CFA (Communauté financière d'Afrique) franc [currency]
COVID-19	SARS Coronavirus
DAARA	Direction d'Aide et d'Assistance aux Réfugiés et Apatrides
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICAHD	Initiatives de Coopération et d'Appui aux actions Humanitaires et de Développement
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
II	Individual Interview
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMREF	Independent Monitoring, Rapid Research and Evidence Facility
(I)NGO	(International) Non-Governmental Organisation
IO	International Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IOM-DTM	International Organisation for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix
KI (I)	Key Informant (Interview)
MATD	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization
MMC	Mixed Migration Centre
MSNA	Multi-Sector Needs Assessment
NFI	Non-Food Item
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
ONECI	Office National de l'Etat Civil et de l'Identification
RBM	Réseau Bilital Marobé
SDR	Secondary Data Review
UN-DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN-OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

## ANNEX 4: 4Mi data collection

The Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi) is the Mixed Migration Centre's flagship primary data collection system, an innovative approach that helps fill knowledge gaps, and inform policy and response regarding the nature of mixed migratory movements. The recruitment of respondents normally takes place face-to-face. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face recruitment and data collection have been suspended or paused for different periods of time in all 20 countries where the 4Mi is being implemented across seven regions.

MMC has responded to the Covid-19 crisis by changing the data it collects and the way it collects it. Respondents are recruited through a number of remote or third-party mechanisms; sampling is through a mixture of purposive and snowball approaches. A new survey focuses on the impact of Covid-19 on migrants, and the surveys are administered by telephone by the 4Mi monitors in West Africa in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Given that 4Mi's methodology is adapted to target people on the move – a population whose fluidity makes it both challenging to reach and difficult to count – 4Mi data collection uses a non-probability sampling approach, and therefore, is not intended to be representative of the overall volume or characteristics of people on the move in the region. Although measures have been put in place to check and – to the extent possible – control for bias and to protect personal data, the switch to remote recruitment and data collection results in additional potential bias and risks, which cannot be completely avoided.

The Mixed Migration Centre deployed early January 2021 five monitors in Burkina Faso to identify refugees and migrants from Burkina Faso and Mali on the way to cross-borders with Côte d'Ivoire (18) or Ghana (7). At the time of interview, respondents were in: Dakola at the border with Ghana (10), Niankorodougou (4), Mangodara (6) and Loumana (5) at the border with Cote d'Ivoire. Monitors based the interviews on the current Covid-19 4Mi survey with a modified sampling methodology in order to meet the target group for this research. Therefore, the current survey does not allow to be specific on whether respondents were IDPs or seasonal migrants.

**Table 4: Data collection locations by respondents' countries of origin and destination**

Location when interviewed	Country of origin		Country of destination	
	Burkina Faso	Mali	Côte d'Ivoire	Ghana
Dakola	7	3	3	7
Niankorodougou	3	1	4	0
Mangodara	4	2	6	0
Loumana	2	3	5	0

See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at [www.mixedmigration.org/4mi](http://www.mixedmigration.org/4mi)



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). Global and regional MMC teams are based in Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Tunis, Bogota and Bangkok.

**For more information visit:**  
[mixedmigration.org](https://mixedmigration.org) and follow us at @Mixed\_Migration

