

IMPLEMENTATION OF GCR PLEDGES IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA DECEMBER 2021

Overview of the situation in Western and Central Africa

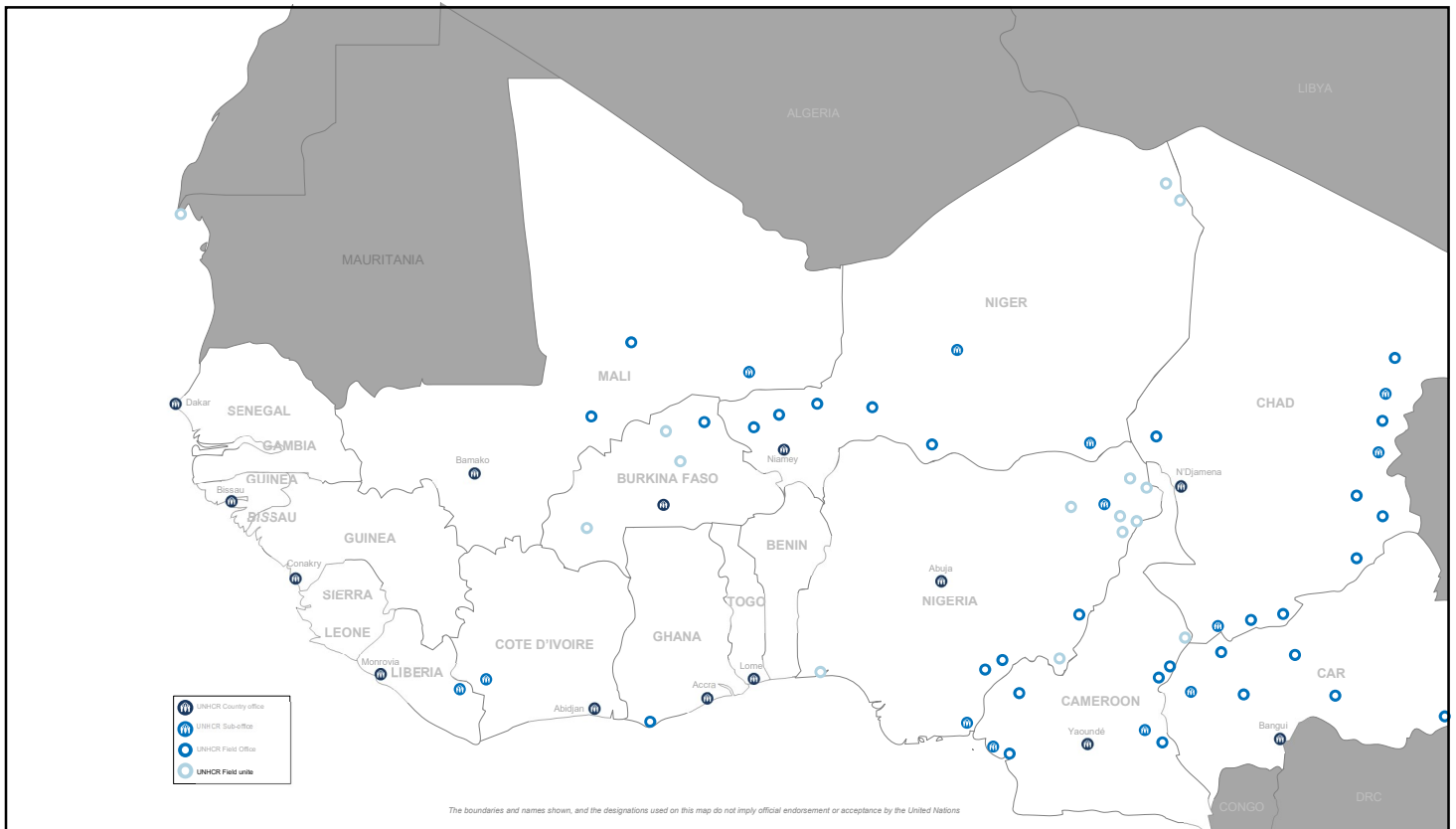
With about half a billion people, the sub-region of Western and Central Africa has seen its population multiplied by 4 in the last 50 years. According to the WB, Western and Central Africa hosts about a quarter of the world’s extreme poor with more than 70 percent of the region’s population living in fragile, conflict, and violence affected (FCV) countries. With 12% of its population being under the age of 15, the region has one of the youngest populations in the world. In addition to accelerated urbanization, with cities hosting 48% of the population; the region is also facing several challenges namely conflicts, food insecurity, population growth and the disruptive forces of climate change.

UNHCR interventions in the Region aims at supporting 11.8 million persons of concern to UNHCR including 7.2 million IDPs, 1.5 million refugees and asylum seekers, 1.28 million returnees (refugees and IDPs) and 1.65 million people at risk of statelessness. UNHCR Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa (RBWCA) supports people of concern in 21 countries. The Bureau deals with 3 major situations i.e the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin and the Central African Republic situations. The Ivorian situation is progressively coming to an end with interesting solutions prospects for the populations that were affected by the crisis.

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)

As of November 23rd, 2021, 146 pledges were recorded in the Global Dashboard regarding West and Central Africa. These pledges were made by various pledging entities including 18 States, 2 Regional Organizations and NGOs during the 2019 events (HLS and GRF) and beyond. A report on the implementation of pledges was issued in June 2020 regarding the implementation from January to May 2020. In December 2020, a stocktaking event was organized with a report on the findings on the implementation of pledges until December 2020.

The current report covers the implementation of GRF pledges from January to November 2021. It provides a breakdown of pledges by area of focus such as Education, Energy, Infrastructure and Multiple areas of focus, Jobs and Livelihoods, Protection capacity and Solutions. The report also provides an analysis on the overall situation of the GCR operationalization in the Region.



Education

Number of pledges: 12. **Pledging entities:** States (7), Regional Entities (2), NGOs (2)¹, **Implementation:** Fulfilled: 1; In progress: 5, In planning: 0²

Education situation in WCA

The West and Central Africa region hosts 11.4 million people forced to flee, including 1.4 million refugees and seven 7 million IDPs, over 55 per cent of whom are children. Education is at the heart of UNHCR's mandate to protect refugees and displaced populations and is central to our goal of finding long-term solutions to refugee crises. Yet, in 2021, more than half of the refugee children in the region are out of school. Despite access to quality education being a defined human right for all and an essential protection tool as articulated in the aim of Sustainable Development Goal 4, forcibly displaced communities face significant challenges in accessing quality early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary education, and, overall, lifelong learning opportunities.

Overview on GRF pledges

7 over 12 Education pledges in WCA, namely those made by States and the Regional Entity are related to inclusion of UNHCR children of concern into national education systems and therefore, the need to have these national systems reinforced.

The 3 NGOs pledges focus on the necessity to strengthen the capacities of forcibly displaced children and youth with trainings, discussions and activities to promote their enrolment and retention in education systems and programs.

All the 12 pledges specifically refer to refugees, while 3 (CAR, Nigeria, IRC/EAA) point out also the returnees and 3 mention internally displaced people (CEMAC, IRC/EAA, Nigeria). All the 7 States pledges refer to access to education at primary level on the same basis as nationals (Cameroon) but also at secondary level for Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia (junior high school). States such as Senegal and Chad have pledged to facilitate access to tertiary level and vocational training (Chad). The pledge of the Government of Liberia has a Livelihood and Economic inclusion aspect as the Government has committed to include qualified Liberian and refugee teachers working in refugee-hosting schools into the national payroll provided availability of funding.

The CEMAC pledged to develop a regional plan on education, to support inclusion of refugees and IDPs into education systems of CEMAC member States. Pledges by YALI are related to the integration of young refugees into training programs and integration of forced displacement issues into their projects implemented in 16 countries. IRC/EAA pledge is more specific to the situation in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Implementation and reporting

Chad was already reporting during the 2019 GRF that more than 100 schools were included in the national systems and 12 MoUs signed with Universities and Institutes for access to tertiary level with more than 1.000 refugees' students registered on the same basis as nationals. YALI has organized sessions on forced displacement for young leaders, as part of this initiative. Refugees in countries such as CAR, Cameroon, Chad and Côte d'Ivoire can benefit from the law on mandatory and free education at primary level. 5 pledges are currently in progress in the Global Database (Nigeria, Chad, EAA/IRC, Liberia and YALI) following the official sharing of progress reports.

Opportunities

Countries of the region are more than in favor of inclusion of forcibly displaced people in their education systems. Their legislation already guarantees them the access to national education systems. The WBG is currently supporting the inclusion of refugees in Cameroun, Chad and Niger thanks to projects funded under the Host Communities and Refugees facilities (RSW and HRW).

Challenges

The education systems in most countries of the region require substantial support especially in areas affected by forced displacement. Regional NGOs such as YALI need support for the implementation of their pledges.

¹ **States** : Liberia, Cameroun, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Nigeria ; **Regional Entity** : CEMAC (Economic Community of Central African States) ; **NGOs** : YALI ((Young African Leadership Initiative) and EAA/IRC (Education Above All and International Rescue Committee).

² Implementation stage as reported officially in the Global Dashboard.

Energy and infrastructure/multiple areas of focus³

Number of pledges: 9, Pledging entities: States (7)⁴, Implementation : Fulfilled : 1, In progress : 3 , In planning : 0

Sectoral situation overview

Access to basic services such as health and energy remains a major challenge in majority of countries in the region. The situation is often worse in regions affected by forced displacement which are often regions where development indicators are lower than other parts of the countries. In addition, forced displacement is also having an impact on urbanization in a few countries of the Region and cities welcoming forcibly displaced people have their capacities overstretched. Climate change in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin are among the drivers of fragility affecting populations. Forced displacement in the region is becoming more complex due to such factors and the impact on hosting areas. The broader Sahel — including the central border region between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, as well as the Lake Chad Basin of northeastern Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad — has become one of the world's fastest-growing humanitarian crises.

Health

2 pledges are specifically referring to health in this section (Cameroun and Senegal), though health related pledges can also be found in other sections dealing with areas of focus such as solutions. The Cameroun health pledge is related to the extension of the agreement signed in 2016 with UNHCR and the Senegal pledge is linked to the inclusion of vulnerable refugees into the national health insurance system.

Energy

Despite the challenges faced in the Region regarding Climate change, only 1 pledge specifically refers to energy in the region, which is the Chad pledge on access to solar energy for PoCs. It is however worth highlighting cursory mention to energy in other pledges such as the ECOWAS pledge.

Multiple areas of focus

6 pledges are registered in the database as with more than one area of focus. 2 pledges by the Government of Liberia. One on Jobs/livelihoods and solutions is the commitment by Liberian authorities to grant land to Ivorian refugees for agriculture and shelter, against the backdrop of the local integration strategy adopted by Liberia. The second is dealing with solutions and statelessness, with a commitment to integrate 5,000 Ivorian refugees through naturalization and long-term resident permits.

Implementation and reporting

Progress reports were received so far for 4 out of 9 pledges, namely the 2 pledges of Nigeria, the one's in Liberia and the Cameroon pledge which was fulfilled.

Opportunities

Freedom of movement and establishment in the ECOWAS region remains a real opportunity for the refugees living in West-Africa.

Challenges

The health systems in most countries of the region require substantial support especially in areas affected by forced displacement. Almost no energy pledge for a region facing a lot of challenges regarding climate.

³ Pledges labelled multiple areas of focus are pledges covering more than one area of focus and recorded as such in the Global Pledge Database

⁴ States: Cameroun, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo

Jobs and livelihood

Number of pledges: 5 **Pledging entities :** States (5)⁵, **Implementation:** Fulfilled: 1 ; In progress : 0, In planning : 0

Jobs and livelihoods situation in WCA

Western and Central Africa hosts about a quarter of the world's extreme poor. The Economic situation in WCA makes it difficult for people in general, especially the youth, to have access to livelihoods opportunities, even more for those affected by forced displacement, being host communities or displaced individuals. These people and their hosts often live in what is referred as "poor peripheries of poor countries"⁶ and cannot meet their basic needs. Urbanization is another factor to consider when it comes to jobs and livelihoods. Forced displacement has over decades been a rural phenomenon, but in certain instances such as Burkina-Faso, more and more displaced people are moving to urban centers for safety reasons. Furthermore, activities implemented in rural settings such as agriculture and agro-transformation must be reviewed in context where land is scarce or not adapted, roads are only functioning a couple months a year and security environment does not allow transport of goods.

Overview on GRF pledges

The 5 jobs and livelihood pledges in the region were made by States. The pledges are all looking at enhancing access of refugees to employment be it in the private sector (Chad), agricultural activities (Senegal, Chad). Refugee empowerment remains a priority for these countries and for other countries of the region. Besides, in the aim of the fulfillment of its Livelihoods pledge, Cameroon signed end of February 2021 a Convention pertaining to define a collaboration framework between UNHCR, ILO and the Cameroon Ministry of Jobs and Vocational Training targeting to support inclusion and integration of refugees into the job market in-country, though this update was reported in UNHCR pledges Dashboard.

In parallel, it is important to note that the Liberia's pledge on land allocation for agriculture and shelter purposes have a solutional aspect and, the one on TVET covers an educational dimension.

Persons of Concerns

Three of five pledges mention exclusively refugees (Cameroon, Senegal, Chad). In the case of Central African Republic and Liberia, they refer in addition to local population and host communities.

Implementation and reporting

Jobs and livelihoods seem to be the area of focus where non-significant steps have been done so far. Aside from Cameroon's pledge which has been fulfilled in February, no other progress report has been registered.

Opportunities

Social protection is gaining attraction in this region with the engagement of key factors such as the WBG, ILO, UNICEF, FAO and WFP. With the new way of working promoted by the GCR, involvement of a broader range of actors such as the private sector, remains critical to ensure people affected by forced displacement and host communities' benefit from social protection opportunities spanning from social safety nets to interventions facilitating access to jobs.

Challenges

The extreme poverty which is rampant in most hosting countries of the Region especially in areas affected by forced displacement is a major challenge. The lack of involvement of the private sector in forced displacement matters in the region is also another challenge to consider, especially with the need to find innovative livelihood opportunities in addition to agricultural activities.

⁵ **States:** Cameroun, Central African Republic, Chad, Liberia, Senegal

⁶ Beegle, Kathleen, and Luc Christiaensen, *Accelerating Poverty Reduction in Africa*, eds. 2019. Washington, DC : World Bank, p. 201

Protection capacity

Number of pledges: 18, **Pledging entities:** States (11), Regional Entities (1)⁷, **Implementation:** Fulfilled: 1; In progress: 3, In planning: 0

Protection Capacity situation in WCA

Countries in the WCA have a tradition of asylum and some refugees have been hosted by countries of asylum for several decades. Countries have also ratified the 1951 and 1969 Refugee Conventions and when relevant, the Kampala Convention. In most countries, institutional frameworks are in place to deal with asylum matters. However, the protection capacities are often overwhelmed because of the magnitude of the forced displacement situation they are facing, compared to resources available to handle the crisis. Issues such as documentation, freedom of movement, access to justice remain challenges in some forced displacement settings.

Overview on GRF pledges

The Protection capacity pledges cover variety of topics from legislation reviews (Cameroun) to reform of asylum systems (Niger, Senegal), Civil and/or biometric documentation (Burkina-Faso; Chad), Civil registration for refugees, IDPs and returnees (Mali), Domestication of Kampala Convention (Mali, Chad), Access to Justice (CEMAC) and ETM (Niger). In these pledges, entities have mainly highlighted institutional and legal issues to be solved to improve the protection environment for UNHCR PoCs.

Persons of Concern

Pledges on protection capacity address issues related to refugees, returnees, IDPs and host communities.

Implementation and reporting

The Republic of Chad has fulfilled its pledge regarding the adoption of an asylum Law. Besides, the pledge on access to documentation in Burkina-Faso is also reported as being in progress. Other pledges such as the one on the integrity of the asylum system in Nigeria and the inclusion of the acquired rights of refugees in the social rights legislation in Cameroun are being progressively implemented.

Opportunities

Existing asylum frameworks are opportunities in the WCA. The fact that countries have ratified the 1951 and 1969 Conventions without reservation is also an opportunity along with the strong interest for the Kampala Convention.

Challenges

As indicated for other areas of focus, gaps of national systems remain a recurring challenge for most countries in the Region, thus the need to support hosting countries to develop these systems, including the asylum's one.

⁷ **States:** Burkina-Faso, Cameroun, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia; **Regional Entity:** CEMAC

Solutions

Number of pledges: 25, **Pledging entities:** States (9), Regional Entities (1), NGOs (2)⁸, **Implementation:** Fulfilled: 0, In progress: 8, In planning: 0

Solutions in WCA

Forced displacement in WCA is characterized by mixed situations of both protracted and emergency displacements. Some refugee situations have lasted for several decades while some influxes were reported in 2021. More than 60% of UNHCR PoCs are Internally displaced people and some situations such as Burkina-Faso and Nigeria have more than 1 million IDPs each. Due to the complexity of factors involved in the region (insecurity, climate change and extreme poverty, mixed migration issues), solutions are often difficult to implement. However, hosting countries and regional entities are all in support of solutions with UNHCR's involvement.

Durable solutions

6 out of 25 pledges specifically refer to "traditional" durable solutions, namely voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and local integration. Those pledges by Burkina-Faso, CAR, Chad, Guinea, Mali and ECOWAS, focus on adoption/implementation of tripartite agreements, resettlement opportunities and naturalization. It is worth mentioning that 5 other pledges without specifically referring to local integration, make provision for access to services thanks to biometric documents (Guinea), freedom of movement and recruitment of refugees as national teachers (Benin), deliverance of a biometric card equivalent to a work permit and access to universal health coverage system (Cote d'Ivoire).

Local solutions

3 pledges in the Region, specifically refer to local solutions through the inclusion of refugees in local/provincial development plans and programs (Burkina-Faso and Chad), but also thanks to the transformation of camps into settlements (Chad). Besides, the Guinea have pledged to facilitate the inclusion of refugees into National Development Plans.

Reintegration

Mali and CAR pledged to facilitate the reintegration of Malian and CAR returnees with enhanced access to services in areas of return.

Solutions for IDPs

Mali and Nigeria have pledged to foster solutions for IDPs, including reintegration thanks to enhanced access to basic services. ECOWAS pledged to promote the domestication of the Kampala Convention.

Regional approaches

Nigeria has committed to organize the Third Regional Protection Dialogue on the Lake Chad Basin while one of ECOWAS pledges is on a Regional Action plan on the implementation of the GCR.

Implementation/Reporting

8 (32%) of pledges are reported to be in progress in the Global Data Base, namely 2 pledges of **Nigeria** on the third regional protection dialogue and durables solutions for refugees and IDPs. The Nigerian Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs (NCFRMI) started the Resettlement City Project to IDPs, refugees and returnees from Cameroon, Chad and Niger. **Chad** also reported that new refugees were hosted in the settlements and local authorities were sensitized. Also, on their pledge regarding voluntary repatriation, a cross border mission was organized with Sudan. **Burkina-Faso** reported the inclusion of refugees, IDPs and host communities in the National Social Safety nets projects. The State also reported these populations are included in the National Development Document (*Referentiel National de Développement 2021-2025*). On their pledge of voluntary repatriation, Burkina-Faso reported discussions for Tripartite meetings with Mali. **ECOWAS** also reported ongoing discussions with UNHCR on the draft action plan.

Opportunities

The engagement towards solutions for forced displacement by States and Regional Entities of WCA remains a great opportunity. Regional approaches are more and more promoted along with local solutions with a strong national leadership as in the case of Nigeria. Development actors such as WB are more and more involved in the search of solutions for people affected by forced displacement and the inclusion of UNHCR PoCs in their programs to foster socio-economic integration is an opportunity in several States of this region.

Challenges

The main challenge regarding solutions is the fact that some situations are ongoing and efforts to implement solutions are jeopardized by new crisis. Thus, local solutions require reinforced capacities at local level, especially to enhance socio-economic integration, but resources are insufficient in the countries of the region.

⁸ **States:** Benin, Burkina-Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria; **Regional Entity:** ECOWAS; **NGOs:** Caritas.