



MMC West Africa

QUARTER 2 2022

Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: West Africa



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

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

MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs hosted in DRC regional offices in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, and a small global team in Geneva. For more information on MMC, the QMMUs from other regions and contact details of regional MMC teams, visit mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

MMC's understanding of mixed migration

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

Front cover photo credit:

Jean-Baptiste Joire (2017)

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

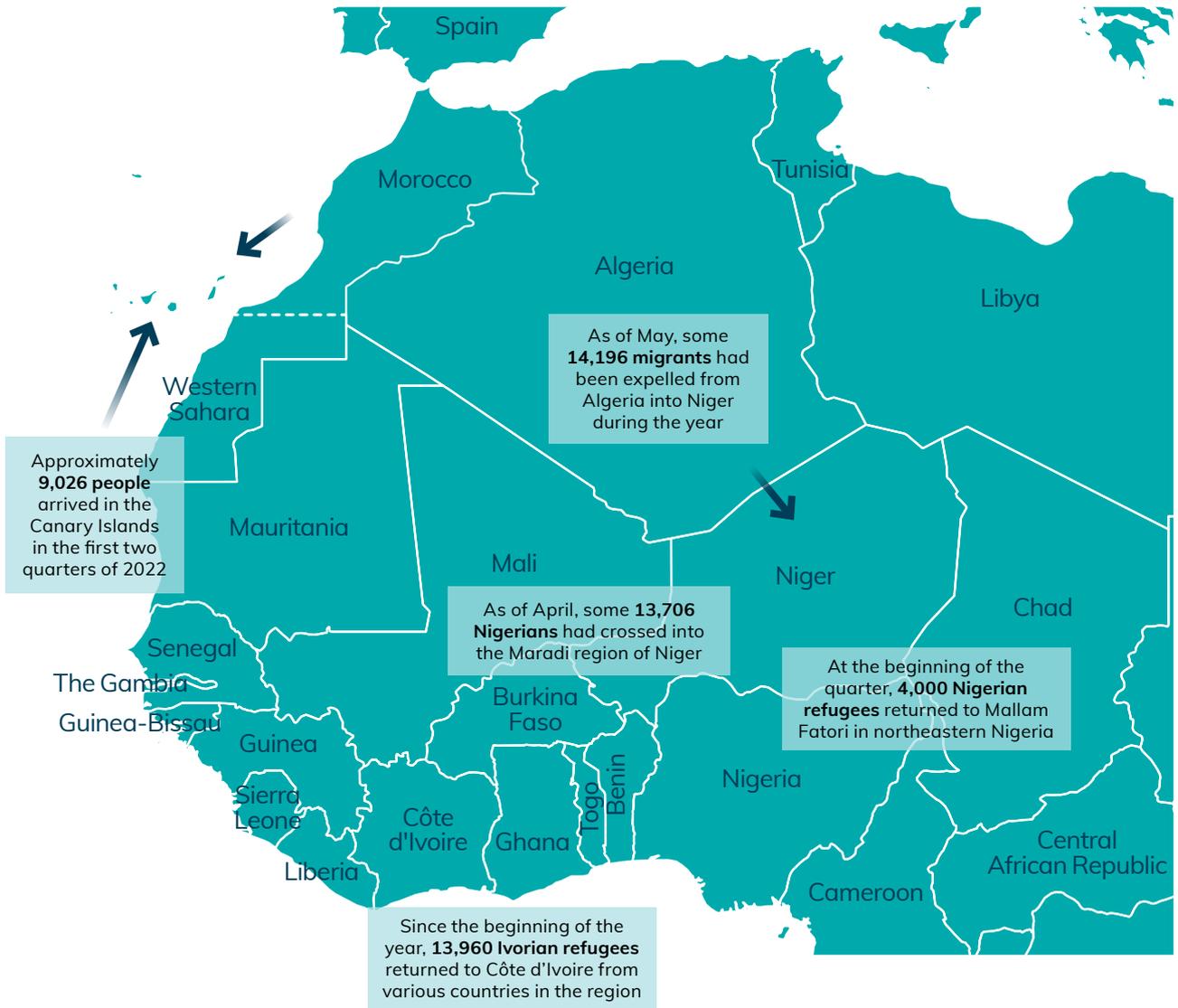
Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: West Africa

Quarter 2 - 2022

Key Updates

- **Return of Nigerian refugees:** At the beginning of the quarter, approximately 4,000 Nigerian refugees returned to Mallam Fatori in northeastern Nigeria. This return raised questions for some humanitarian actors, who highlighted challenges related to [security](#) and [access to basic needs](#) in the area of return.
- **Resumption of Spain-Morocco relations:** a thaw in diplomatic relations between Spain and Morocco which was formalized in early [April](#) saw the increase of migration cooperation and enforcement on the part of Morocco, leading to, among other things, a return to [deportations of Moroccans and Saharawis](#) from the Canary Islands and increased [arrests](#) with significant effect on sub-Saharan African migrants. In this context, at least [37 refugees and migrants](#) were killed in an attempt to enter the Spanish enclave of Melilla on [24 June](#).
- **Côte d'Ivoire cessation clause:** On 30 June, the cessation clause ending refugee status for Ivorian refugees took effect. At that point, approximately 96% of the more than [300,000 people](#) who had fled the country over the previous two decades had returned to Côte d'Ivoire. Some [4,717 Ivorians](#) returned during the second quarter (as of 10 June).
- **Atlantic Route to the Canary Islands:** As of the end of the second quarter, an estimated [9,026 refugees and migrants](#) had arrived in the Canary Islands (Atlantic Route), a 29% increase over the same period in 2021. During the same period, IOM recorded [344 deaths and disappearances](#) along this route.

Regional Overview*



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

Mixed Migration Regional Updates

West Africa region

As of 30 April, an estimated [1,902,150](#) people in Burkina Faso were internally displaced, almost [10% of the population](#). However, the rate of internal displacement had slowed somewhat in March and April compared to the first two months of the year, in which a [14% increase](#) in internal displacement had been registered.

According to UNHCR, as of April 2022, [13,706 people](#) from **Nigeria** had entered the Maradi region of **Niger** since the beginning of the year, fleeing violence and banditry in northwestern Nigeria.

On 31 March and 1 April, approximately 4,000 Nigerian refugees (500 households) returned to Mallam Fatori in northeastern Nigeria. According to the [Protection Sector Northeast Nigeria \(PSNN\)](#), these returns occurred outside the framework of a Tripartite Agreement, and to a location where the security situation remained precarious. The PSNN also questioned the adequacy of information provided to refugees before their return. A spokeswoman for [Nigeria's INGO Forum](#) stated that “we are concerned about the untimely repatriation,” and other aid workers expressed doubts about access to basic needs in Mallam Fatori.

There has been a longstanding plan on the part of Nigerian and Nigerien authorities to repatriate the Nigerian refugees living in Diffa, with a proposed initial deadline of 31 December 2021 for this to occur. However, as of 31 May, [129,835 Nigerian refugees](#) remained in Diffa.

From the beginning of April through 10 June, [4,717 Ivorians](#) had returned to **Côte d'Ivoire** from a variety of countries across the region. This brought the total number of voluntary repatriations to Côte d'Ivoire in 2022 to 13,960 ahead of the 30 June cessation of refugee status for Ivorians (see Policy, diplomacy, and legal updates section for more information).

Policy, diplomacy and legal updates

On 15 April, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced its decision to provide, for the first time, [Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\)](#) for people from **Cameroon**. According to the DHS Secretary, “The United States recognizes the ongoing armed conflict in Cameroon, and we will provide temporary protection to those in need.” TPS allows nationals of a country deemed too dangerous for immediate return to remain in the US with a temporary, legally protected status. Prior to this designation of TPS status, [Human Rights Watch](#) had documented abuses perpetrated against dozens of people who were deported from the US in 2019 and 2020 following their return to Cameroon.

At the end of April representatives of the governments of Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Chad and Sudan, along with UNHCR, met in Yaoundé for a ministerial conference on “Solutions in the Context of Forced Displacement related to the **Central African Republic Crisis**.” They issued the [Yaoundé Declaration](#), which seeks to support a regional approach to solutions for those displaced from CAR through a variety of means.

Continuing a recent trend¹ of high-level diplomatic visits to **Niger**, in early May the [UN Secretary-General](#) paid a visit during a [mission](#) that also included stops in Senegal and Nigeria. While calling for solidarity with and humanitarian support for Niger in general, the Secretary-General also specifically visited [Ouallam](#), a municipality which hosts approximately 28,000 IDPs and 31,164 refugees from Mali. Niger has received more than [36,000 refugees](#) from neighboring countries in the first four months of the year.

On 30 June, the cessation clause ending refugee status for Ivorian refugees took effect. Over the course of two decades, more than [300,000 people](#) had fled violence linked to political strife in **Côte d'Ivoire**, and approximately 96% of those refugees registered across the region have returned home. The [occasion](#) was marked by a visit from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and a ceremony attended by the President of Côte d'Ivoire and representatives from countries which had hosted Ivorians. Not all Ivorian refugees will decide to [return](#), and the [Abidjan Joint Declaration](#) signed by representatives of host countries and UNHCR lays out objectives for the facilitation of permanent residency in host countries in such cases (see "West Africa Region" section for details on returns to Côte d'Ivoire in the second quarter.)

Mixed migration from West Africa towards North Africa and Europe

Western Mediterranean and Atlantic Route

As of 3 July, [UNHCR](#) reported that there had been a total of 14,543 arrivals by land (Ceuta and Melilla) and sea (Spanish mainland, Canary Islands, Balearic Islands, Ceuta and Melilla) to Spain so far during the year. This was a 5% increase over the same period in 2021, driven by the fact that arrivals in the Canary Islands (**Atlantic Route**) had increased by 29%, for a total of 9,026. According to data available from [Frontex](#), people from West Africa and Morocco comprise the majority of arrivals in 2022. As of the end of the second quarter, [IOM's Missing Migrants project](#) had recorded 344 deaths and disappearances along this route since the beginning of the year.

At the same time, arrivals to Ceuta, Melilla, the Balearic Islands and mainland Spain (**Western Mediterranean Route**) showed a 19% decrease over the first two quarters of 2021, with [5,517](#) total recorded as of 3 July.

Diplomacy and deterrence

Resumption of relations between Spain and Morocco

A [high-level meeting](#) between the King of Morocco and the Spanish President in April marked the end of a year-long [diplomatic rupture](#)² between the two countries, signaling, among other things, a renewed [cooperation on migration](#). This has led to crackdowns targeting refugees and migrants on the part of Moroccan authorities in a variety of locations across Morocco and Morocco's disputed region of Western

1 Among others, visits were made by the heads of IOM and UNHCR, as well as the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, in [February 2022](#), and by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in [December 2021](#).

2 See [North Africa Quarter 2 2022 Quarterly Mixed Migration Update](#) for more details on Spanish-Moroccan relations and on the attempt on Melilla.

Sahara.³ Specifically, [arrests](#) of migrants have occurred in Rabat, Tangier, Nador, Tarfaya and Laayoune.

People arriving in the Canary Islands typically [depart](#) from Morocco or Western Sahara. While the numbers of these arrivals have been rising in the months since the accord between Morocco and Spain, the senior chief of the National Police in the Canary Islands, as reported by the news outlet [Cope](#), has stated that Morocco is controlling boat departures to a greater extent. He attributed the increase in arrivals to the fact that refugees and migrants have noted the increased enforcement and are seeking to depart Morocco for the islands while they can.

For his part, the [President of the Canary Islands](#) is reported as saying in regards to the recent agreement between Spain and Morocco that “there is no possible or signable or real agreement” that will be able to prevent migration. In the same week, in the context of a meeting on migration cooperation held in the Canary Islands, the [Spanish Secretary of State for Migration](#) stated his belief that the migratory phenomenon “will be less and less cyclical and increasingly structural,” and that preparation and response would need to account for that reality.

Deportations of Moroccans and Saharawis from the Canary Islands re-commence

Following the thaw in diplomatic relations, weekly deportation flights of Moroccans and Saharawis resumed from the Canary Islands in late March. Local reporting from [El Diario](#) documented the case of four returnees – apparently minors – who were not given access to their personal lawyer before their deportation. A local court refused a complaint which sought to postpone the deportation flight, saying that these migrants had access to court-appointed lawyers. The article cites the Ministry of the Interior as saying “all the returns are taking place with all the legal guarantees.”

Spain’s international migration diplomacy

In recent months Spain has made a major diplomatic push to address migration from Africa, both in terms of engagement with African countries and by urging its partners in NATO and the European Union towards greater solidarity and cooperation on the issue. According to [Reuters](#), Spanish and EU officials have been concerned that food insecurity exacerbated by decreased grain access due to the war in Ukraine will cause “chaotic migration” from the Sahel and sub-Saharan Africa.

Spain hosted a NATO summit in late June and used the opportunity to make its case for the inclusion of “[hybrid threats](#)” – which include irregular migration – in NATO’s Strategic Concept, its document which identifies security challenges and the means to address them. The [2022 Strategic Concept](#) ultimately spoke of “authoritarian actors” using “hybrid tactics” which include efforts to “instrumentalize migration.”

Spain also sought greater NATO attention to Europe’s [southern](#) neighbors in the Maghreb and Sahel. Prior to the summit, the [NATO Secretary-General](#) said in an interview that the Alliance would “strengthen (its) cooperation with southern countries,” with a particular mention of Mauritania in this regard. The [Strategic Concept](#) coming out of the summit stated “Conflict, fragility and instability in Africa and the Middle East directly affect our security and the security of our partners. NATO’s southern neighbourhood, particularly the Middle East, North Africa and Sahel regions, faces interconnected security, demographic, economic and political challenges.”

³ Western Sahara has been on the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories since 1963.

According to [Politico](#), Spain now seeks to build on its NATO achievement by urging the EU to agree on new rules for processing and relocating asylum seekers and irregular migrants.

The [Spanish Prime Minister](#) is also reaching out to African partners to address migration. He has made visits to nine African countries since last year, and in the weeks before the NATO summit, held meetings with heads of state and officials from Mauritania, Morocco and Nigeria, discussing border control among other things.

Attempt on Melilla

According to the Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid, at least [37 people died](#) when some [2,000](#) refugees and migrants – the majority of whom were from [sub-Saharan Africa](#) – tried to cross the high wire fence separating Melilla from the northern Moroccan border town of Nador.

The head of the African Union Commission has [denounced](#) the "violent and degrading treatment of African migrants" trying to cross from Morocco into Spanish territory and has called for an investigation into the incident.

The Spanish Public Prosecutor's Office [announced](#) that it had "requested an investigation to shed light on what happened," hours after the [UN](#) demanded an independent inquiry into the tragedy, the deadliest ever recorded on the borders between Morocco and the two Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, the EU's only borders on the African continent.

For its part, the UN called on both countries to ensure "an effective and independent investigation" and denounced "excessive use of force" against migrants. "This is unacceptable," said the [UN spokesman](#), noting that the excessive use of force has been observed by the UN "on both sides of the border." He went on to say:

"We were shocked by the images of violence seen at the border between Morocco and Spain this weekend and which resulted in the death of dozens of human beings, asylum seekers, migrants."

Southbound mixed migration

Search and rescue

At the beginning of April, IOM and the Nigerien Directorate General of Civil Protection found [25 Nigeriens](#) – among them women and children – who had been left in the [desert](#) by their smuggler. At the time of their rescue, they had gone three days without food and water.

Returns within and to the West Africa region⁴

Internationally facilitated returns

IOM-assisted returns to Mali appeared to be on the rise throughout the quarter with [723 Malians](#) being returned from Algeria, Libya and Niger during the month of April alone. Additionally, as of mid-June, a local media source indicated that eight flights, carrying [1,200 migrants](#), were expected from Niger in the near future.

During the month of June, multiple IOM **Assisted Voluntary Return** operations took place between Niger and Mali, with at least 420 Malians assisted to return from Niger in June. Flights between Niger and Bamako returned [140](#) migrants on 7 June, [139](#) on 14 June and [141](#) on 21 June. At least one IOM **Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR)** also occurred, bringing [174 Malians](#) back from Libya on 10 June.

During the quarter, multiple VHR operations also took place between Libya and Nigeria. This included the return of [158](#) stranded migrants from Nigeria on 19 April, [178](#) on 22 June and [131](#) on 28 June.

On 19 May, IOM The Gambia facilitated the return of [193 migrants](#), the most it has received in one day since the opening of the mission in 2017. The majority (184) returned by charter flight from Libya, with an additional 45 coming by commercial flight from Niger.

Nationally facilitated returns from Ghana to Niger

Continuing with its [stated objective](#) of ending the practice of Nigerien citizens begging abroad, on 8 June the Nigerien authorities organized a charter flight which repatriated [558 Nigeriens](#) from Ghana. This group comprised 202 adults and 356 minors and hailed predominantly from the regions of Zinder and Maradi in the south of Niger. According to Niger's Minister for Humanitarian Action, such migration had previously been directed towards Algeria, but this is no longer the case given Algeria's "untimely refoulement" of refugees and migrants.

Expulsions from Algeria

In this quarter, Algerian authorities continued to forcibly expel Nigeriens and other people of sub-Saharan African origin – primarily West and Central Africans. According to [MSF](#), from January to May 2022, some 14,196 migrants have been expelled from Algeria to Niger, including 6,749 non-Nigeriens.

On 18 June, [Alarm Phone Sahara](#) reported that 191 people arrived in Assamaka via an official convoy and 46 people arrived on foot coming from an unofficial convoy. While the official convoys include only Nigerien citizens and are based on an agreement between Algeria and Niger, the unofficial convoys include all other citizens, who are left in the desert in the border region and must walk 15 kilometers to the next village.

⁴ This overview does not necessarily capture all return activity within the region.

Thematic Focus: Dangerous locations and risks in West Africa

Between February 2021 and March 2022, MMC conducted 10,177 surveys with refugees and migrants in North and West Africa, 65% of whom were men and 35% of whom were women. **Overall, 62% of respondents (n=6,273) cited at least one dangerous location along their journey.**

Contrasting regions – perception of dangerous locations

Figure 1. Perception of dangerous location(s) within countries transited⁵



As Figure 1 shows, a higher proportion of respondents perceived risks in North African countries than in West African countries. Just under half (48%) of respondents transiting a North African country cited at least one dangerous location there, while around one third of respondents who passed through the three West African countries indicated that they considered at least one location within that country as dangerous.

Whereas in West Africa, the three countries were overall comparable, in North Africa a clear contrast appears between countries. Around two thirds of respondents who passed through Algeria (65%) and Libya

⁵ The above table shows proportions of people who transited a particular country who perceived at least one dangerous location in that country. While a respondent can cite multiple dangerous locations in one country, this analysis aggregates such mentions; it therefore shows the proportion of respondents who perceive anywhere in that country as dangerous. For a weighted analysis, see below section on "Top risks cited in West Africa: robbery, physical violence and bribery/extortion" in which all mentions of specific risks associated with dangerous locations in a given country are accounted for.

(64%) perceived at least one location within those countries as dangerous, but only 9% of respondents who passed through Tunisia indicated that they perceived any locations within the country to be dangerous.

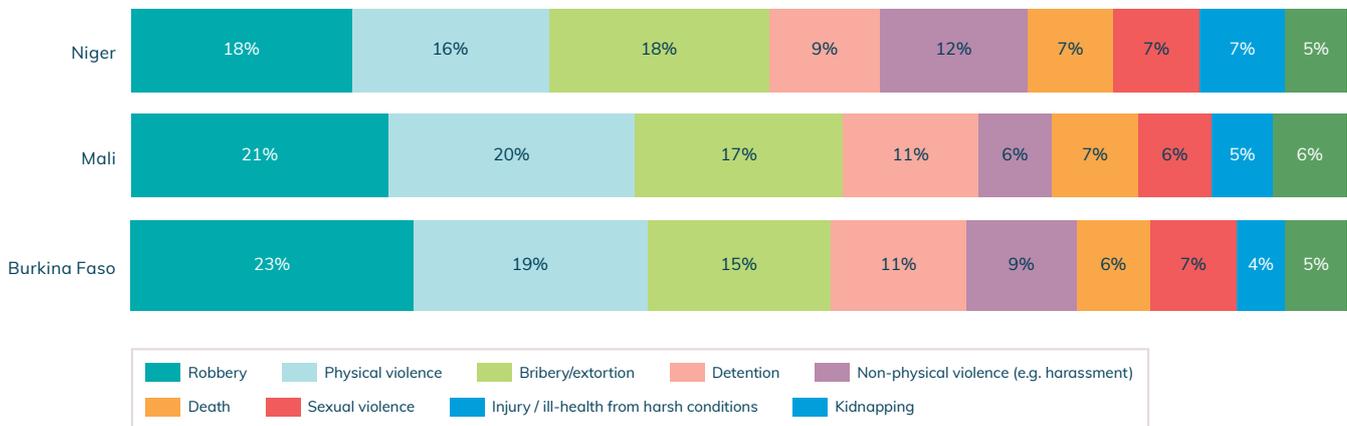
It is also notable that differences between genders tend to be minimal across all countries; this is to say that similar proportions of men and women who passed through a given country perceived at least one location in that country to be dangerous. This is particularly the case in West Africa.

Top risks cited in West Africa: robbery, physical violence and bribery/extortion

The above analysis is based on respondents who passed through a given country and mentioned at least one dangerous location and corresponding risks perceived in that location. However, since respondents could mention multiple dangerous locations and perceived risks in those locations – ie mention a particular type of risk associated with multiple places in that country – it is also useful to examine how frequently a particular type of risk is cited compared to all risks mentioned in a given country.

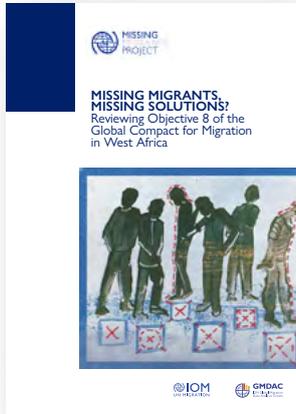
In West Africa, robbery, physical violence and bribery/extortion are the most commonly perceived types of risk. Although there are some country-level variations in the perceived importance of the various risks, these tend to be relatively small. Overall, it appears that the relative importance of risks mentioned by people in transit is fairly similar between these three West African countries.

Figure 2. Perception of specific risks as proportion of total risks mentioned by country of transit



Gender differences also tended to be minimal, meaning that the perception of risks in these countries is similar between men and women – except for sexual violence. However, when asked if they **directly experienced** incidents, analysis for a forthcoming MMC study for UNODC and OHCHR found that women more frequently reported multiple types of incidents than men.

Highlighted New Research and Reports



[Missing Migrants, Missing Solutions? Reviewing Objective 8 of the Global Compact for Migration in West Africa | Migrants Disparus, Solutions Inexistantes? Examen de l'Objectif 8 du Pacte Mondial sur les Migrations en Afrique de l'Ouest](#)

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) | April 2022

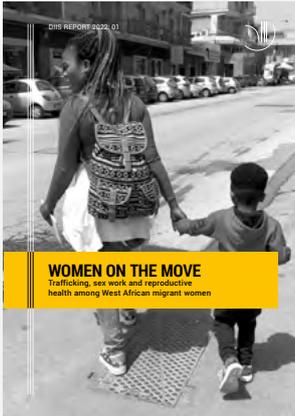
This report examines the implementation of Objective 8 of the Global Compact on Migration in West Africa, which is to “save lives and to establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants.” It finds that insufficient political and programmatic efforts have been made to address this objective in the region. This has limited the documentation of migrant deaths, which in turn hampers evidence-based programming to save lives. Among other things, the report recommends de-linking the implementation of Objective 8 from efforts to prevent irregular migration, as securitization of migration has increased risks for people on the move.



[Human Smuggling and Trafficking Ecosystems: North Africa and the Sahel](#)

Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) | June 2022

This series of briefs seek to map human smuggling and trafficking trends and dynamics in 2021 from and through Libya, Tunisia, Niger, Chad, and Mali. Based on data collected through semi-structured interviews with smugglers, migrants, and key informants, the briefs examine how the prevailing political and security situation has impacted these phenomena in a post-Covid context, and in the face of relative peace in Libya.

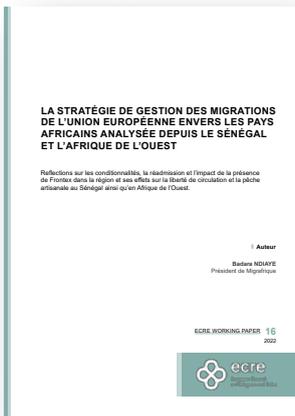


[Women on the Move: Trafficking, sex work and reproductive health among West African migrant women](#)

Danish Institute for International Studies | May 2022

The report aims to explore the different experiences of women on the move in West Africa, including from Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire to Niger, Tunisia, Libya, the Mediterranean, Italy and Northern Europe. Taking a critical approach to human trafficking, the report notes that these women show active agency in their own migratory journeys – seeing themselves as “women looking for safety and business opportunities” – even in spite of the many vulnerabilities

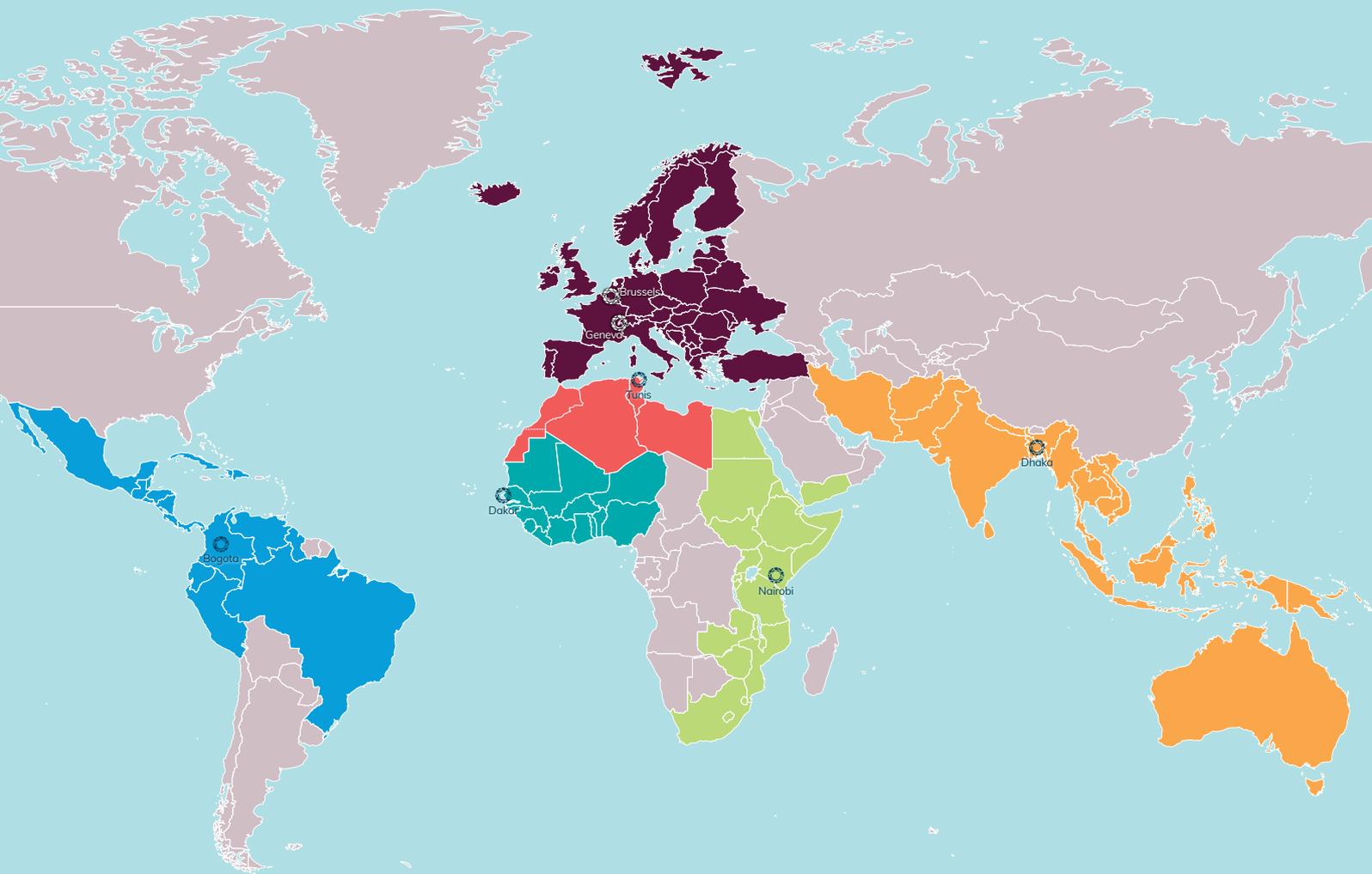
they face. The report calls for accessible and safe spaces for women, reproductive health services made available across the entirety of the migratory journey, and for a reform of policies in relation to banking and debt, sex work and migration.



[La Stratégie de Gestion des Migrations de l'Union Européenne Envers les Pays Africains Analycée Depuis le Sénégal et l'Afrique de l'Ouest](#)

European Council on Refugees and Exiles | May 2022

The working paper aims to provide an overview of conditionalities, readmission and the impact of Frontex's presence in the West African region. It analyzes the impact of EU policies on the outsourcing of border management and their effects on visas and intra-African mobility.



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MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise. 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. MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

MMC is part of and governed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Global and regional MMC teams are based in Brussels, Geneva, Dakar, Nairobi, Tunis, Bogota and Dhaka.

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

