



MMC West Africa

QUARTER 4 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 Danish Refugee Council (DRC) regional offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Geneva and Brussels. 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 engaged in mixed migration 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. Mixed migration describes refugees and migrants travelling along similar routes, using similar means of travel – often travelling irregularly, and wholly or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

Front cover photo credit:

Jean-Baptiste Joire (2017)

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

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Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: West Africa

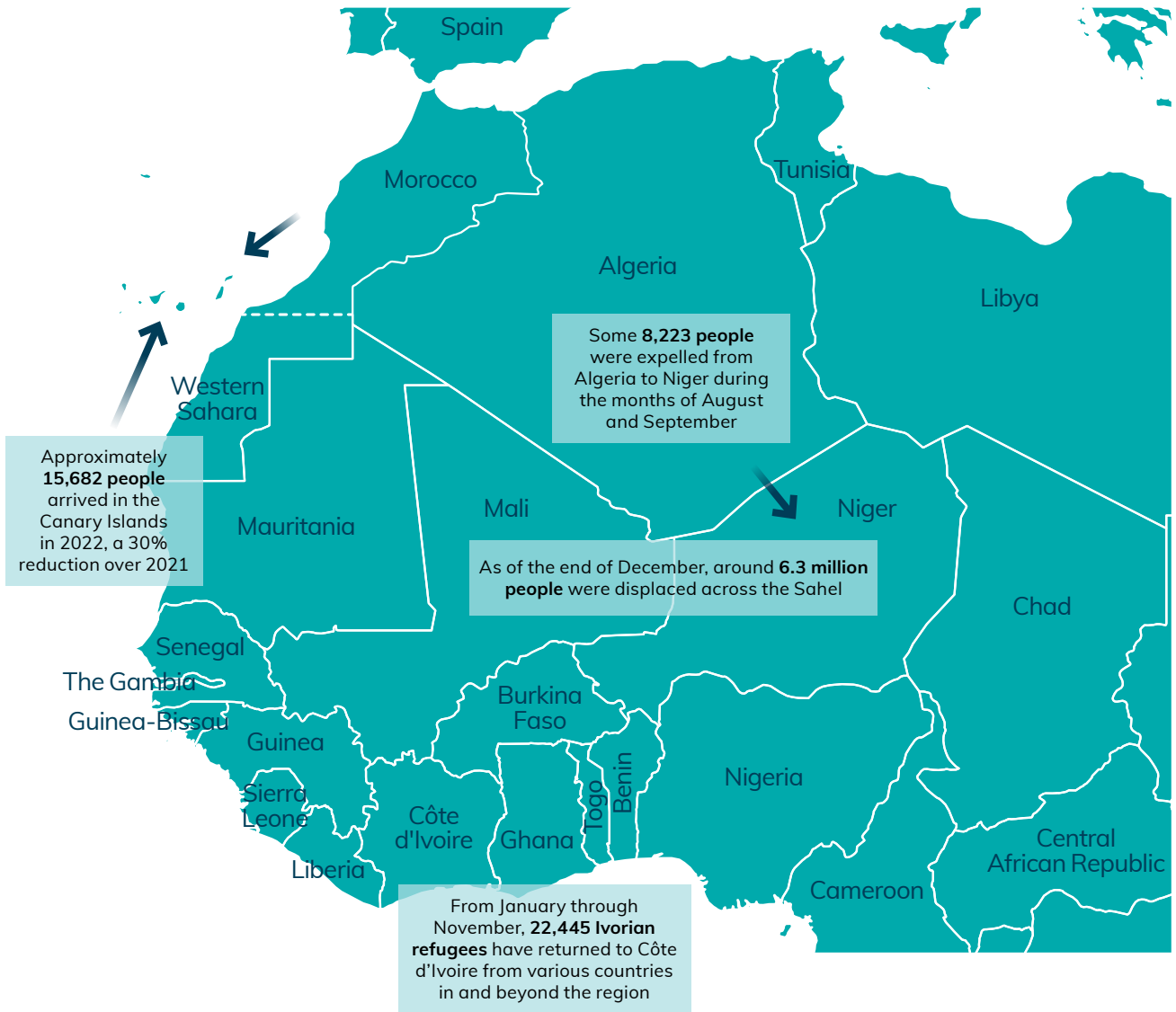
Quarter 4 - 2022

Key Updates

- Regional displacement on the rise:** As of the end of December, around [6.3 million people](#) were displaced across **the Sahel**; an increase of 300,000 persons since the end of the second quarter of the year. Numbers of internally displaced persons remained stable in **Nigeria**, but increased in **Burkina Faso, Mali** and **Niger**. According to [UNHCR](#), as of the end of November, the **West and Central Africa region** hosted 1.6 million refugees, an increase of 7% since September 2021.
- Spain – Mauritania security and migration accord:** During his third visit to Mauritania, the Spanish Minister of the Interior signed a [security accord](#) with the President of Mauritania that, according to the [Agence Mauritanienne d'Information](#), would enable Mauritania to access 'logistical and technical means' to combat irregular migration as well as trafficking and other types of organized crime.
- Decrease in Canary Islands arrivals:** The Atlantic Route to the Canary Islands counted almost [30%](#) fewer irregular arrivals in 2022 compared to 2021. In total, the Ministry of Interior documented [15,682 arrivals](#), compared to [22,316](#) in 2021 and [23,023](#) in 2020. While overall arrivals to Spain have [decreased](#) three years out of the last four, this is the first year since the 'reactivation' of the Atlantic Route in 2019 that arrivals to the Canary Islands have shown a notable decrease.
- Expulsions to Niger:** During the fourth quarter, multiple waves of expulsion of refugees and migrants took place from **Algeria** to **Niger**, with at least 8,223 people expelled, according to estimates from NGO [Alarme Phone Sahara](#) (APS).¹ This brings the total number of people expelled in 2022 to at least 25,328. According to [APS](#), one migrant death was recorded during these expulsions, which they termed "chaotic."

¹ These totals are calculated from the following Alarme Phone Sahara sources of [21 October](#), [4 December](#), and [24 December](#), reviewed on 22 January 2023.

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 the end of December, the number of displaced people across the Sahel had reached some [6.3 million](#); an increase of 300,000 since the middle of the year. Numbers of internally displaced persons remained stable in **Nigeria**, but increased in **Burkina Faso**, **Mali** and **Niger**. According to [UNHCR](#), as of the end of November, the **West and Central Africa region** hosted 1.6 million refugees, an increase of 7% since September 2021.

The third quarter of the year had seen a slight decline in [internal displacement](#) in **Burkina Faso** (down from 1,902,150 people as of 30 April to 1,719,272 as of 30 September). However, numbers increased over the fourth quarter, with 1,882,391 people internally displaced as of 31 December. In a September [update](#), UNHCR highlighted the ongoing phenomenon of onward (cross-border) movements of Burkinabè IDPs. The [Report of the Secretary-General](#) on the Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel covering 23 June – 30 December underscored how worsening security conditions in Burkina Faso and challenging humanitarian circumstances in the Sahel have increased displacement to coastal countries. As of the end of October, 943 Burkinabè refugees had been recorded in **Benin** and 4,958 in **Togo**. While as of the end of the year, no new refugees from Burkina Faso had been documented in **Côte d'Ivoire** or **Ghana** since July, at the time of reporting they had registered 4,042 and 2,000, respectively. Additionally, figures published by UNHCR as of November 2022 documented [24,527 Burkinabè refugees](#) in **Mali**, compared to [14,924](#) as of January 2022.

As of the end of November, [voluntary repatriations](#) to **Côte d'Ivoire** showed a fairly sharp decline compared to earlier quarters of the year, with a total of 356. That figure brings overall voluntary repatriations in 2022 to 22,445.

Policy, diplomacy and legal updates

Implementation meeting on ECOWAS visa regime

From 11-13 October, the **ECOWAS Commission** organized a [meeting](#) in Abuja to convene regional experts around the implementation of a harmonized ECOWAS-wide visa for non-ECOWAS nationals. This initiative is intended to boost tourism and lead to more foreign investment and private sector engagement. The experts deliberated on [issues](#) related to visa cost, duration, entry, and payment modalities, as well as how income from the visa will be shared; security and various technical support systems for implementation. The experts agreed to harmonize the visa regime and made a series of recommendations regarding its implementation.

Spain-Mauritania cooperation

In early November, the Minister of the Interior of **Spain** made his third visit to **Mauritania** to “continue strengthening effective cooperation with immigration source and transit countries,” according to a [press release](#) published by the office of the president of the Government of Spain and the Council of Ministers. The Minister met with the President of Mauritania and several government ministers, and visited the Spanish National Police and Guardia Civil detachments in Nouadhibou. The Guardia Civil, in conjunction

with Mauritanian security counterparts, conducted 351 actions in the second quarter of the year alone, intercepting 28 migrant boats and 4,344 migrants. Such actions have led to a clear decrease in irregular arrivals in Spain (Canary Islands) from Mauritania, with only 166 in 2022 compared to 1,957 in 2021. The Spanish Minister of the Interior welcomed these developments, and spoke of [continuing collaboration](#) which could be deepened with support from the EU. This may include a [status agreement](#), which is being discussed with FRONTEX and, according to the [press release](#), “would allow its troops to provide operational support in preventing irregular departures and combating migrant trafficking.” The Minister and the Mauritanian president signed a [security accord](#) that, according to the [Agence Mauritanienne d'Information](#), would enable Mauritania to access ‘logistical and technical means’ to combat irregular migration as well as trafficking and other types of organized crime.

Niger calls for pathways for regular migration to Europe

On 1 December, the [President of Niger](#) participated in the “**Italy-Niger: Europe-Africa: Two continents, One destiny**” conference. He was joined by the Italian Ministers of Defense and Interior. Speaking on the [sidelines of the conference](#), the Nigerien president called for the establishment of a mechanism to encourage regular migration. Believing that [existing agreements](#) – such as those decided at the Valletta Summit in 2015 and based around ‘root causes’ thinking – are no longer appropriate, he stressed the need to try new “[recipies](#).” Noting that there are real labour needs in Europe, he mentioned the establishment of quotas for African workers based on these needs. The president also reiterated his commitment to [fighting irregular migration](#), stating that Niger “strictly applies” migration agreements.

Arrest of suspected smuggler in joint operation

On December 20, a joint operation by **French, Spanish and Nigerien** police officers, financed by the **EU**, resulted in the [arrest](#) of a **Libyan** man in Agadez, Niger. The 29-year-old man, now detained in Niamey, is suspected of being the head of a migrant smuggling network. He told investigators that for seven years he had smuggled about 60 migrants a week to Algeria and Libya, en route to Europe. This amounted to a total of nearly [22,000 migrants](#), each of whom he charged between 1,500 and 2,000 euros. His network had reached out to prospective migrants online, and despite promises of a better life in Europe, they ultimately faced sexual and labour exploitation.

Mixed migration from West Africa towards North Africa and Europe

Western Mediterranean and Atlantic Route

Figures from the [Spanish Ministry of Interior](#) indicated that 31,219 refugees and migrants arrived irregularly in Spain via land and sea (Atlantic Route + Western Mediterranean Route) over the course of 2022. This is a decrease of 26% compared to 2021. The Atlantic Route to the Canary Islands showed the most notable decrease in 2022, with almost [30%](#) fewer irregular arrivals compared to 2021. The decline was most prominent in the fourth quarter; as of the end of the third quarter there had only been a [5%](#) year-to-date decrease compared to 2021. In total, the Ministry of Interior documented [15,682 arrivals](#) in the Canary Islands in 2022 compared to [22,316](#) in 2021 and [23,023](#) in 2020. While overall arrivals to Spain have [decreased](#) three years out of the last four, this is the first year since the ‘reactivation’ of the Atlantic Route

in 2019 that arrivals to the Canary Islands have shown a notable decrease. In contrast to arrivals to Spain on both the Atlantic Route and Western Mediterranean Route, the other major irregular [migratory routes](#) into the EU have shown increased arrivals in 2022 compared to 2021, with a 51% increase on the Central Mediterranean Route, a 108% increase on the Eastern Mediterranean Route and a 136% increase on the Western Balkan Route.

According to the European Commission's [Report on Migration and Asylum 2022](#), the main countries of origin for people arriving in Spain along the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic Routes are Morocco, Algeria, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. However, MMC calculations based on [Frontex](#) data show that nationalities vary considerably by route, with Moroccans and Algerians by far the most common nationalities of arrival via the Western Mediterranean Route, whereas sub-Saharan Africans and Moroccans are substantially represented among Atlantic Route arrivals.²

The [Spanish Ministry of the Interior](#) explains the fall in arrivals as the result of a two-pronged strategy, namely "promoting cooperation with countries of origin and transit" and "strengthening the fight against mafias that smuggle people," although as [El País](#) reports, Spain has not shown hard evidence to support this latter prong. According to the [Ministry of Interior](#), their approach has contributed to the prevention of around 40% of departures for Spanish territory at the point of departure. On the basis of a confidential report of the European Commission (EC) it obtained, [El País](#) confirms that the decrease in departures is noticeable in all countries with irregular migration routes to Spain. The EC report gives specific figures for departures from Mauritania (218 in 2022 compared to 2,000 in 2021)³ and Senegal (274 in 2022 compared to 500 in 2021), attributing the decreases to increased police collaboration, which also receives substantial funding from Spain ([see page 5](#) for more information on the November visit of the Spanish Minister of the Interior to Mauritania).

According to reporting from [El Diario](#), of the 31,219 people who arrived irregularly in Spain in 2022, 25,308 of them transited Morocco. However, this is a 29% decrease in the number of presumed departures from Morocco compared to 2021, which many attribute to increased policing on the part of Morocco following a resumption in [diplomatic relations](#) with Spain in March. NGOs and activists also note Moroccan authorities' increasingly aggressive measures against migrants along migratory routes in Morocco and Morocco's disputed region of Western Sahara.⁴ According to the founder of the NGO Caminando Fronteras, as quoted in [El Diario](#):

“There is an increase in violence. The conditions of the routes and the control is terrible. There are more deaths in land areas. We have documented an increased use of firearms by Morocco. We have documented two cases, but other organizations report more. Systematic and arbitrary detentions have also increased.”

2 Data accessed on 19 January 2023 covering the period January – November 2022 showed the top five nationalities of arrival in the Canary Islands to be Moroccans (6,254), "unspecified sub-Saharan Africans (4,296), Senegalese (897), Guineans (769) and Ivorians (660). Malians, who have generally been one of the [top nationalities](#) of arrival, were the sixth most numerous in 2022 (339) according to the Frontex data, but the extent of their representation in the category "unspecified sub-Saharan Africans" and therefore their representation in the overall total of arrivals is unknown.

3 A slightly different figure for arrivals to Spain based on departures from Mauritania was given by the Spanish government in relation to the Interior Minister's visit to Mauritania.

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

As reported in [El Diario](#), a variety of commentators have pointed to a shift in the pattern of departures to the Canary Islands following the resumption of diplomatic relations between Spain and Morocco. [Boats](#) no longer leave from Western Sahara, which had been the primary departure point in the previous two years, but is now more tightly controlled by the Moroccan authorities. Instead, departures have shifted to southern Morocco, typically from Tan-Tan or Laayoune (about 100-150km away from Lanzarote). As of October, there had been [4,919 arrivals](#) on the island of Lanzarote since the beginning of the year, the most of any island in the archipelago. Indeed, 57% of arrivals as of October were to Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, which are the nearest islands to the African continent. At times, there has been a [high intensity](#) of arrivals in very short periods, making it difficult for authorities to cope.

The NGO Caminando Fronteras has documented the deaths and disappearances of [1,784 people](#) on the Atlantic Route in 2022 (1,677 missing and 107 deceased), compared to [4,016 people](#) in 2021 (3,840 missing and 176 deceased). Although the numbers have decreased significantly, the Atlantic route is still one of the most dangerous to navigate. Caminando Fronteras documented [61 shipwrecks](#) on this route in 2022, likely an underestimate given that many shipwrecks are not reported. One of the reasons for the lethality of this crossing is the use of [inflatable boats](#) (less safe and more fragile), which has increased. Since 2018, [70% of the deaths](#) that have taken place on the different migratory routes into Spain have occurred on the Atlantic Route to the Canary Islands. Defying the odds, in late November [three Nigerians](#) were found in Las Palmas balanced on the rudder of an oil tanker that had left from Lagos. They had been at sea for 11 days, and were treated for hypothermia and dehydration.

Southbound mixed migration

Returns and evacuations within and to the West Africa region⁵

Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM)

At the beginning of November, [174 asylum seekers](#) were evacuated from Libya to Niger under UNHCR's Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM). Since the end of 2017, almost 4,000 people have been evacuated to Niger under this program.

On 1 November, the [AU-EU-UN taskforce](#) met to discuss cooperation on the protection of refugees and migrants stranded in Libya. The Special Envoy of the AU Commission Chairperson pointed to the mobilization of African states (notably Niger and Rwanda) to evacuate vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers under the ETM as an important achievement of the taskforce.

Assisted Voluntary Returns

In keeping with the trend seen throughout 2022, in the fourth quarter, substantial numbers of people were assisted by IOM to return to **Mali**. In October at least [38 Malians](#) returned from **Niger**; during November, the figure was [489](#); and in December, at least [149](#). At least [105 international migrants](#) were also assisted to return from Mali during the quarter.

⁵ This overview does not necessarily capture all return activity within the region.

During the quarter, several Voluntary Humanitarian Return operations took place between **Libya** and **Nigeria**, with flights returning [126 people](#) on 13 October, [137 people](#) on 24 October, and [117 people](#) approximately one week later. As of mid-October, IOM had assisted more than [3,000 Nigerians](#) to return from Libya since the beginning of the year. Other return operations to Nigeria in the quarter included two from Chad; one of [73 people](#) on 20 October and one of [105 people](#) in mid-December. In early October, 180 people were assisted to return by bus from Niger.

Additionally, [149 migrants](#) were supported to go back home to **Sierra Leone** from **Niger** in November.

Expulsions from Algeria

During the fourth quarter, multiple waves of expulsion of refugees and migrants took place from **Algeria** to **Niger**, with at least 8,223 people expelled, according to estimates from NGO Alarme Phone Sahara (APS).⁶ This brings the total number of people expelled during the year to at least 25,328. According to [APS](#), one migrant death was recorded during these expulsions, which they termed “chaotic.”

“Official convoys,” primarily of Nigeriens

During the quarter at least eight mass expulsions to northern Nigerien towns took place. These were “official convoys”, and primarily comprised Nigeriens. These totalled some 4,950 people, including an expulsion on [29 October](#) in which 1,124 people were said to be on the convoy but only 818 were ultimately registered in Assamaka, with nobody able to verify what happened to the other 306 people. These eight expulsions included 717 minors. This kind of expulsion by “official” convoy, which is based on a [2014 agreement](#) between Algeria and Niger, typically just involves Nigerien citizens, but during the last quarter, multiple convoys also carried non-Nigerien nationals – a total of at least 126.

“Unofficial convoys” of non-Nigeriens

Also during the quarter, at least seven mass expulsions of non-Nigerien nationals took place via “[unofficial convoy](#).” People expelled by this means are left in the desert near the Algeria/Niger border, approximately 15km from the nearest town. These convoys comprised some 3,273 people, including 77 minors. Guineans and Malians were the two most common nationalities, and most of the other nationalities represented were also from West and Central Africa. However, several people came from other regions in Africa or from Asia. These included three Syrians, 11 Yemenis, one Bangladeshi, one Ethiopian and one Egyptian. Among these [extra-regional and extra-continental migrants](#), six Yemenis, two Syrians and one Egyptian were not allowed to enter Niger on 16 November and four Yemenis were not allowed to enter Niger on 2 December due to their non-ECOWAS status.

⁶ Numbers in this section are based on MMC calculations made drawing on the following Alarme Phone Sahara sources of [21 October](#), [4 December](#), and [24 December](#), made on 22 January 2023.

Thematic Focus:

The role of social media platforms in facilitating the migration journey (as perceived by travel facilitators)

In August 2022, MMC West Africa carried out qualitative research on the experiences of migrants and refugees with social media during their migration journey.⁷ At the same time, the study also shed light on how social media is used by people who facilitate movement in the Central Sahel. While this perspective is not frequently foregrounded, facilitators see communication as fundamental to their work, and social media as fundamental to communication.

Overview of interviewees

For this study, travel facilitators comprised a broad category of interviewees who facilitate mobility in a variety of ways. It includes people working in transport (e.g. working for bus companies or at bus depots),⁸ as well as people who would consider themselves to be smugglers or engage in activities that meet the definition of smuggling.⁹ It is worth noting that in the West African context, the boundary between the two can often be blurred, as was likely the case for some of the respondents in this study.

Nine facilitators (three per country), all men, were interviewed. They were chosen for their knowledge of migration dynamics in the region and their ability to provide a perspective on the use of social media by refugees and migrants on the move. All the facilitators interviewed in Mali were Malian; in Burkina Faso two were Burkinabè and one was Nigerien; and in Niger two Liberians and one Guinean were interviewed.

Social media facilitating communication and outreach...

Interviewees described WhatsApp in particular, as well as Facebook, as key methods of communication, both with migrants prior to migration and with fellow travel facilitators en route. According to one Malian travel facilitator:

7 The full study was based on the perspectives of 30 interviewees (migrants and refugees, key informants and travel facilitators) in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali.

8 Among the specific roles identified by interviewees were the following:

- *Convoyeur*: a transport company staff person who works on the bus making announcements and giving information to passengers, overseeing tickets, communicating with colleagues at transit hubs, negotiating with authorities etc.
- *Chef de gare*: the first person in charge of the bus station. He ensures the management and the good functioning of the station, and all the employees of the station are under his responsibility.
- A *chef d'escale* has the same function as a *chef de gare*, but whereas a *chef de gare* operates in large cities, the *chef d'escale* operates in small towns that are often a stopover point for the company's buses.

9 Smuggling of Migrants is "the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident" (Art. 3 of the UN Smuggling of Migrants Protocol). Producing, procuring, providing and possessing a fraudulent travel or identity document for the purpose of enabling smuggling of migrants and enabling someone to irregularly stay in a country are smuggling-related offences, as per Art. 6.1 of the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol, provided that they are carried out in order to obtain a financial or material benefit.

“It’s our only means of communication, if I said no, I would be lying because without it we can’t communicate. We have been in this business for many years, and we communicate thanks to these applications. When these applications arrived, it made everything easier for us because before, you had to go to a phone booth, give money, call and if you are not near the landline, it’s annoying. But now, with mobile phones and the applications that have come out, social media, it makes our work easier. It’s all advantages, not disadvantages for us.”

Convoyeur, Bamako, Mali

For some of the facilitators interviewed, Facebook, as well as WhatsApp groups, appear to be a means for reaching out to and finding migrants; one travel facilitator shared, “On this account, what I share a lot are my advertisements what we do in transport.” (Chef de gare, Burkina Faso) Another facilitator, interviewed in Niger, said:

“What I use (is) WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, it makes it easier for us because it helps us to get a lot of customers, people who want to travel, you can contact them to see if they are ready with the same social media.”

Facilitateur 3, Niger

...but not driving connections

Digging deeper, however, it appears that even with social media as a tool to facilitate connections, it is often personal contacts – ie family and friends – who mediate initial contact between facilitators and migrants. Quantitative data from the MMC’s ongoing 4Mi data collection found that when asked how they got in touch with smugglers specifically, only 1% of 4Mi respondents said that the smuggler approached them directly over social media and only 2% of respondents said they approached the smuggler directly over social media. However, 47% of respondents said they had been put in touch with their smuggler(s) by family and friends. While qualitative interviews were carried out with facilitators more broadly and did not only target smugglers, several of the interviewees talked about migrants they had assisted in passing on their social media contacts to others within the migrants’ social networks. According to one facilitator in Burkina Faso:

“As it is our job, sometimes we help people [the migrants] like that. (...) They have our contact, sometimes they contact their friends and they give them our contact so that they can reach us on WhatsApp or Facebook and then we work like that.”

Facilitateur 1, Burkina Faso

Social media as a tool for information sharing and organization

Social media communication en route appears to play an important role for facilitators in arranging the journey, communicating about logistics, sharing information on risks, and making connections between stages along the route, as illustrated by a facilitator in Burkina Faso:

“Yes, we use social media! If someone comes with a migrant, the person who is going to put him on the bus will use social media to communicate with you. If the person is in Burkina and you are already on the Côte d’Ivoire border, he is obliged to communicate through social media so that you know that he has put someone on the bus who is coming in your name, and you will help him to get through. **”**

Facilitateur 1, Burkina Faso

Notably, social media is not just for facilitators to communicate with each other, but can also be useful for facilitators to provide information directly to migrants, be it contact numbers for other facilitators (bus company agents, smugglers etc) further along the route, or information about how to navigate the journey. In a region rife with checkpoints and extortion,¹⁰ such information can be extremely important. As one facilitator interviewed in Niger put it:

“Before we leave, we’re going to tell them [the migrants] what they must do on the road. At least, if there are barriers, on the barriers how they will pay, or how to avoid the barriers. At any moment they can fall into the hands of the security, so always before starting you must have well explained. That’s what you’re going to do until you get to your destination. **”**

Facilitateur 3, Niger

Transnational benefits

Similar to the reasons provided by migrants for using social media platforms, the ability to communicate cheaply over platforms like WhatsApp was described as an advantage. Around half the facilitators interviewed also specifically mentioned that WhatsApp easily facilitates transnational communication, a very important advantage in a business that is fundamentally about people moving over great distances and international borders. As a facilitator interviewed in Mali pointed out, “WhatsApp is not expensive, whereas communication by telephone is expensive between countries” (Convoyeur, Sikasso, Mali). Another facilitator interviewed in Burkina Faso elaborated on this transnational dynamic:

¹⁰ MMC (2020) [A Sharper Lens on Vulnerability \(West Africa\) A statistical analysis of the determinants of vulnerability to protection incidents among refugees and migrants in West Africa](#)

“For example, a client who wants to travel to Agadez from Senegal needs social media because he does not know us. We don’t know them ourselves. It’s from their point of departure, from there, that we have to connect with them to be able to tell them things that they will follow until they arrive at our meeting point. At our meeting point too, we will give them numbers to Niamey. Once they arrive in Niamey, they will take the bus to Agadez to continue to Algeria.”

Facilitateur 3, Burkina Faso

Drivers for using social media: both clandestine and mundane

Several interviewees also alluded to the use of social media in relation to data and identity protection, and in some cases in relation to the clandestine nature of their work. Three mentioned WhatsApp specifically for safeguards in relation to data and access, with one saying:

“It’s for our safety. It protects us. [...] I said it protects us, it means nobody knows what we say to each other with our clients, it’s between me and the client.”

Facilitateur 3, Niger

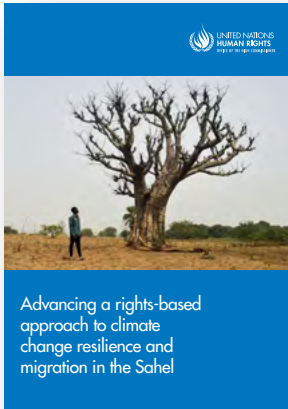
A facilitator from Mali stated that he did not use Facebook much because of its public nature, and he also said that he needed to use a fake identity on social media accounts, explaining:

“Because we have been struggling for a year with the authorities who think that it is not a good thing to facilitate the journey for our brothers and sisters who leave a neighbouring country to come here. There are many who don’t do it in a normal way. I explain: for example, there are certain papers here – the vaccination booklet for example – that you have to do officially and in a normal procedure to travel. Some smugglers buy this paper directly from printing companies and give it to their clients. All this is being fought in the country. [...] And so, for that, we do it secretly. It’s done, but it’s not done openly. That’s why we have to hide our identity.”

Convoyeur, Bamako, Mali

However, even in the case of several facilitators who spoke of the need for discretion in their work in a way that suggested they may be smugglers or engage in smuggling activities from time to time, the ease and affordability of WhatsApp was still emphasized as a major advantage.

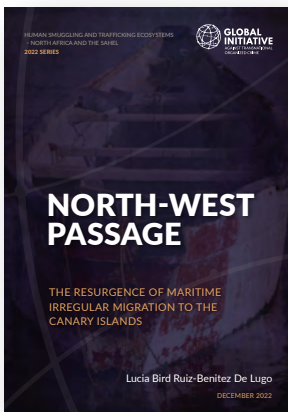
Highlighted New Research and Reports



[Advancing a rights-based approach to climate change resilience and migration in the Sahel](#)

OHCHR | November 2022

This OHCHR report follows previous studies that have examined the connection between climate change and migration. To refine the knowledge on this topic, three communities from Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria affected by climate change-induced migration were studied. Aiming to demonstrate the main challenges they face, this report first outlines all the threats to human rights in the Sahel. It also outlines the different resilience strategies and coping mechanisms put in place by these communities. Four main recommendations are addressed to the Sahel States and the international community and emphasize the need for concrete actions to protect human rights in a context of climate change.



[North-West Passage : The resurgence of maritime irregular migration to the Canary Islands](#)

Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime | December 2022

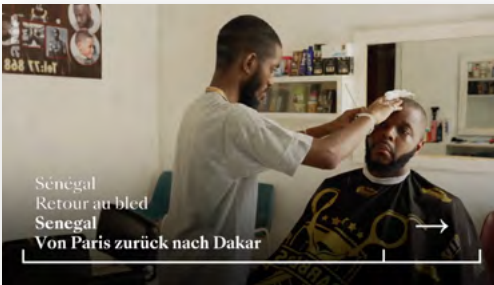
The North-West African route - better known as the Atlantic route - was drastically more used between 2020 and 2022. Indeed, more than six times as many entries were recorded in two years than in the previous 10 (9,520 between 2009 and 2019, against 60,427 between 2020 and 2022). Informed by 120 interviews with key informants including migrants, refugees, government officials, civil society leaders, local journalists, activists and aid workers, this report seeks to understand and explain this sharp increase by first taking a historical approach. The study then looks at migrant smuggling and mobility to the Canary Islands, detailing the areas of departure by country. Beyond the traditional economic reasons, this study seeks to understand the factors that drive migrants to the Canary Islands. It addresses various themes such as the impact of the pandemic, the decline of local industry, social pressure, and the perceptions of migrants prior to the trip.



[Changing climate, changing realities: migration in the Sahel](#)

British Red Cross | November 2022

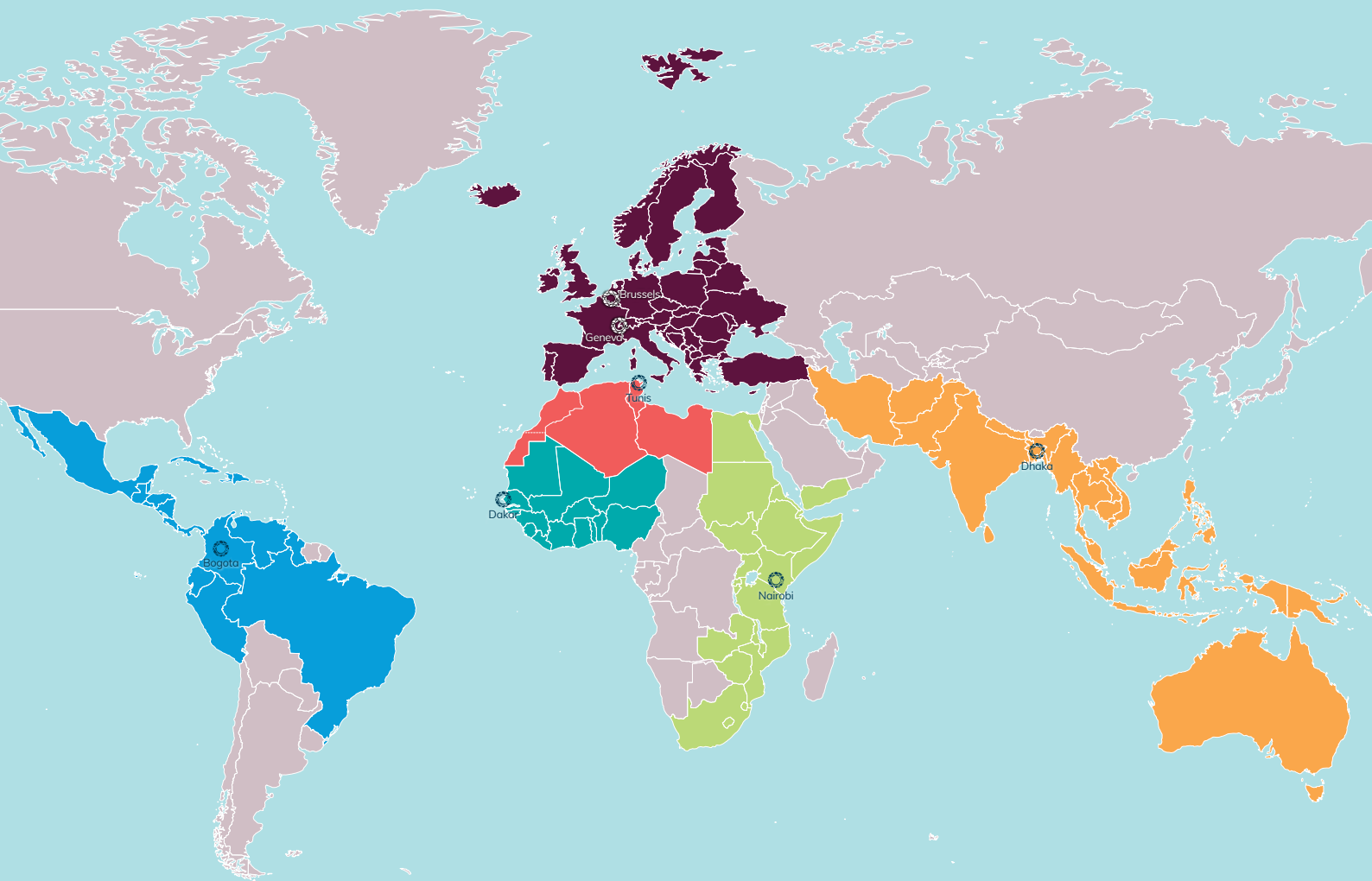
Aware of the crucial impact that climate change will have on migration in the Sahel, the British Red Cross sought to deepen the knowledge on the link between climate change, migration and humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities. This research was initiated with the ambition of being complementary to existing studies, which are often limited to the short-term impacts of sudden climate shocks. Taking the specific cases of Mali and Sudan, the analysis examined respondents' perceptions (of environmental change, impacts and vulnerabilities), key migration patterns and changes, survival and adaptation strategies, as well as migration outcomes and plans for return.



[Sénégal : retour au bled](#)

ARTE Reportage | November 2022

This ARTE documentary features French Senegalese born in France who decide to make the same journey as their parents in the opposite direction and take their chance in Senegal.



MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs hosted in Danish Refugee Council regional offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Geneva and Brussels.

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 the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

For more information visit:
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