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TRACKING MATRIX

Mobility in West and Central Africa

December 2020

MIGRATION & COVID-19 IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

*Examining the impacts of COVID-19 on travellers
across the region.*



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

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EXAMINING THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON TRAVELLERS ACROSS THE REGION

IOM West and Central Africa
November 2020

KEY RESULTS:

- 5,989 individual interviews conducted from July to September 2020 in 5 countries.
- COVID-19 was mentioned by 1 per cent of all travellers as the main reason for travel (to access health services, for fear of contamination, etc).
- 48 per cent of respondents indicated that limited mitigation measures were observed in public transport to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- 26 per cent indicated facing difficulties in continuing their economic activities since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 8 per cent of respondents reported that sending or receiving remittances has become a challenge since the start of the COVID-19 crisis.
- 51 per cent of respondents facing reduction in remittances indicated that they had to reduce food quality or quantity due to lower funds received.

1 Of the 352 Points of Entry assessed by IOM in ECOWAS, 66 percent (231) were completely closed and 26% were considered open to the transport of goods and / or return of nationals only. Only 15 PoEs were open across the region at the time of data collection. IOM, WCA,

INTRODUCTION: The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected mobility in West and Central Africa in the form of various travel disruptions on internal and international mobility and restrictions on movements¹, resulting in significant shifts in migration flows across the region.² To better understand the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has been impacting mobility in the region, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) analysed data collected at key transit points in West and Central Africa between July and September 2020.

This report focuses on the profile of migrants gathered at key transit areas in Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria using a questionnaire specifically designed to assess the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on travellers as well as travellers' awareness of the virus and of measures to fight the spread of COVID-19.

METHODOLOGY: Flow Monitoring is a tool set up by IOM DTM at key transit points across

Restrictions de mobilité liées au COVID-19 au sein de la CEDEAO (Juillet 2020) ([link](#))

² West and Central Africa — COVID-19 — Regional Flow Monitoring Report, September 2020 ([link](#))

West and Central Africa in order to better understand mobility trends and shifts throughout the region. Flow Monitoring was designed to collect data on the magnitude, provenance and destination, and profiles of flows in areas of high mobility.

The methodology includes an individual survey conducted with travellers crossing key transit areas in West and Central Africa. This report presents an analysis of surveys conducted in the 3rd quarter of 2020.³

DATA COLLECTED: From July to September 2020, IOM country missions in Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria conducted a total of 5,989 individual surveys with travellers (Table 1).

Table 1. SURVEYS CONDUCTED BY COUNTRY OF DATA COLLECTION	
Country	Surveys conducted
Cameroon	1,633
Chad	1,575
Mali	880
Niger	1,372
Nigeria	529
Total	5,989

³ More on the methodology of the flow monitoring points in Annex A.

⁴ Niger FMP February 2020 ([link](#)), Nigeria FMP February 2020 ([link](#)), Chad FMP February 2020 ([link](#)), Mali FMP February 2020 ([link](#))

TRAVELLER PROFILES

PROFILE OF TRAVELLERS: The population interviewed during this exercise was composed in majority of male travellers (80% of respondents) (Table 2), which is representative of the composition of flows prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2020.⁴

Table 2. GENDER DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTRY OF DATA COLLECTION			
Country	Female	Male	Total
Cameroon	32%	68%	100%
Chad	17%	83%	100%
Mali	14%	86%	100%
Niger	15%	85%	100%
Nigeria	21%	79%	100%
Total	20%	80%	100%

The age distribution of respondents in the five countries in which interviews were conducted highlights that a majority of travellers were between the age of 25 and 49 (74% of the sampled population), followed by respondents between the ages of 18 and 24 (23%) (Table 3). Respondents under 18 years old were largely under-represented in this survey.⁵

Table 3. AGE GROUPE DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTRY OF DATA COLLECTION					
Country ⁶	< 18	18-24	25-49	50+	Total
CMR	1%	27%	70%	2%	100%
CHAD	1%	24%	69%	6%	100%
MALI	1%	40%	59%	0%	100%
NIGER	0%	14%	85%	1%	100%
NIGERIA	0%	8%	92%	0%	100%
Total	1%	23%	74%	2%	100%

⁵ Due to the data ethics and protection imperatives of IOM, interviews with minors can only be conducted under strict rules (safeguards must be in place, referrals available, etc.) Should these rules not be applicable near the FMP (lack of infrastructure, staff), the enumerator is asked to skip this interviewee.

⁶ CMR = Cameroon

PROVENANCE AND DESTINATION: A total of 83 per cent of all respondents started their journey in Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, Mali, and Niger (Table 4), namely the countries where interviews were conducted. Two other noticeable countries of departure were Libya (4%) and Algeria (4%) highlighting the significant volume of flows from North Africa to West and Central Africa.

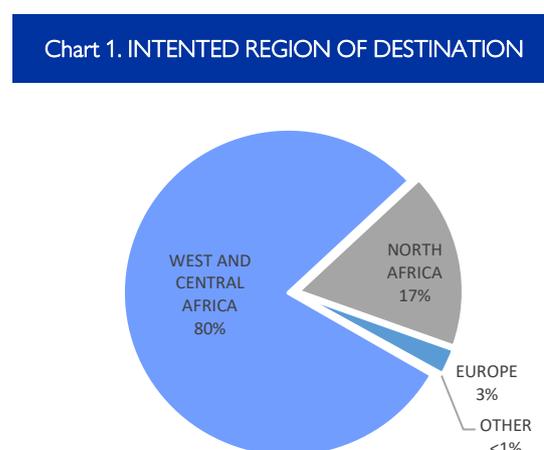
Table 4. MAIN COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE	
Country	% of respondents
Cameroon	30%
Chad	20%
Nigeria	15%
Niger	11%
Mali	7%
Libya	4%
Algeria	4%
Burkina Faso	2%
Guinea	2%
Other	5%
Total	100%

Chad, Cameroon and Niger represented the top three countries of final intended destination with a total of 60 per cent of all respondents (Table 5). A total of 17 per cent of interviewed migrants reported Libya and Algeria as their intended final destination. This shows the attractiveness of both Libya and Algeria to labour migrants from the West and Central Africa region.

Table 5. MAIN COUNTRIES OF INTENDED DESTINATION	
Country	% of respondents
Chad	33%
Cameroon	15%
Niger	11%
Algeria	10%
Nigeria	9%
Libya	7%

Mauritania	3%
Mali	3%
Europe	3%
Other	6%
Total	100%

Flows within the region account for a total of 80 per cent of all travel identified during this survey (Chart 1). Intended movements to North Africa account for 17 per cent of flows and travellers seeking to reach Europe make up 3 per cent of flows.



REASONS FOR TRAVEL: The main reported reason for the journey was in a large majority for labour and economic reasons (Table 6). Indeed, 64 per cent of respondents indicated that their movement was linked to an economic obligation (re-stocking, business trip, looking for another job, seasonal migration, etc.)

The main reasons for the journey reported by travellers varied significantly depending on the region of intended destination. Labour and economic reasons were more frequently indicated by travellers whose regions of intended destination were North Africa and Europe, while travellers moving within the West and Central African region reported a greater variety of responses (education, family, etc.)

COVID-19 was mentioned by 1 per cent of all travellers as the main reason of movements

(accessing health structure, buying Personal Protective Equipment, fear of contamination).

Table 6. MAIN REASON OF JOURNEY	
Main reasons of journey	% of respondents
Labour, Economic	64%
Other	11%
Family, Marriage, etc.	11%
Education	9%
Access to services	2%
Covid-19	1%
Targeted violence	1%
War / Conflict	<1%
Natural disasters	<1%
Grand Total	100%

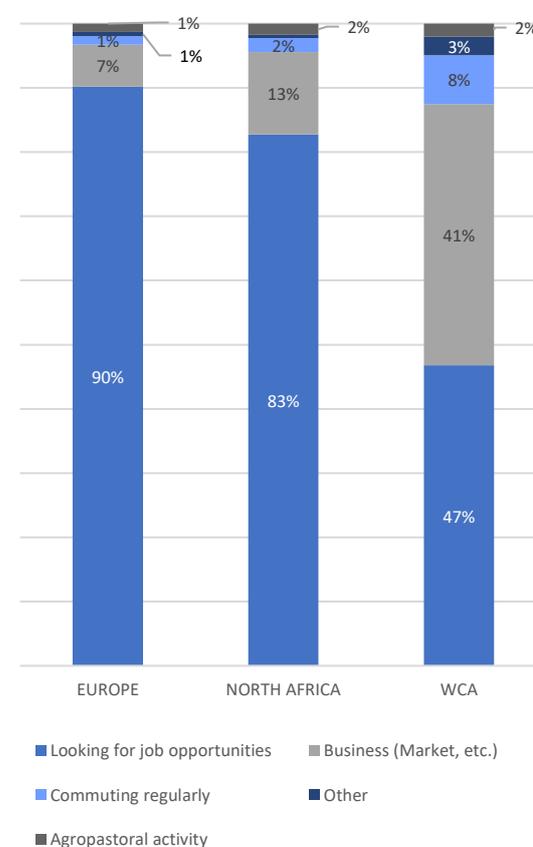
More than half (58%) of respondents who indicated the reason for their journey is economic were travelling with the purpose of seeking job opportunities (Table 7). This finding shows the strong dynamism of intra-regional labour migration, highlighting the density of labour mobility within West and Central Africa (to work in agriculture, mining, fisheries and forestry, among others).⁷

Table 7. JOURNEY REASON AMONG ECONOMIC MOVEMENTS	
Main economic reason	% of respondents
Looking for job opportunities	58%
Business (Market, etc.)	32%
Commuting regularly	6%
Other	2%
Agropastoral activity	2%
Total	100%

Within economic movements, the precise motives of travel varied significantly between regions of intended destination (Chart 2). Of all migrants that reported European and North African countries as their intended destination,

90 per cent and 83 per cent, respectively, cited the search for a job as their reason for travel, while only 47 per cent within West and Central Africa were seeking employment opportunities. Within West and Central Africa, 41 per cent of movements were business related (to buy or sell goods or services, conduct commerce or trade) and 8 per cent travelled on regular commutes (such as daily or weekly) for work.

Chart 2. REASON FOR TRAVEL AMONG ECONOMIC MOVEMENTS BY REGION OF INTENDED DESTINATION



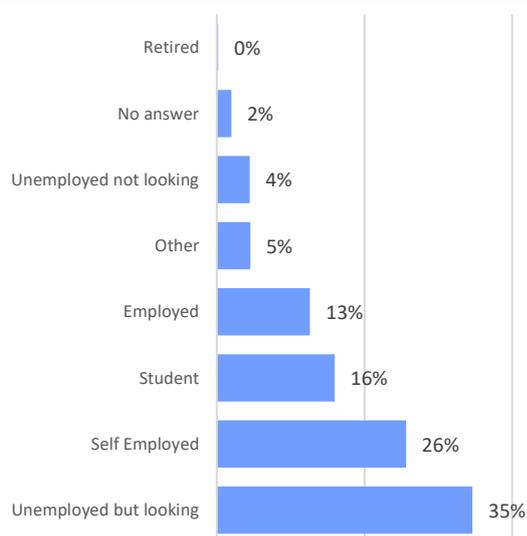
EMPLOYMENT STATUS: Most respondents (35%) were unemployed but looking for work. Other main categories of respondents were self-employed (26%) or students (16%), followed by those that were employed (13%).

Travellers interviewed throughout the West and Central Africa region by IOM teams at FMPs

⁷ West and Central Africa — COVID-19 — Regional Flow Monitoring Report, July 2020 ([link](#))

reported a similar employment status breakdown across countries of interviews. There were more distinct differences taking into account a gender analysis. More female respondents reported to be unemployed and not looking for work than male interviewees (14% among females, 2% among males) whereas more male respondents reported they were unemployed but looking for work (37% of male respondents, 25% of female respondents) or self-employed (28% of men, 16% of women).

Chart 3. EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS



As also shown in previous Flow Monitoring Survey exercises⁸, the employment status breakdown varied sharply depending on the final intended destination of respondents (Table 8). Intended movements to Europe and North Africa showed a large proportion of individuals unemployed but looking for work (81% of respondents travelling to Europe and 66% of respondents headed to North Africa). The movement of travellers within WCA showed a very different profile and characteristic of travel, highlighting a larger proportion of individuals who were employed and self-employed (40%)

and much lower proportion of individuals who were unemployed but looking for work (26%).

Table 8. EMPLOYMENT STATUS BY REGION OF FINAL INTENDED DESTINATION

Status	Europe	North Africa	WCA	Total
Unemployed but looking	81%	66%	26%	35%
Self Employed	14%	26%	26%	26%
Student	2%	1%	20%	16%
Employed	1%	3%	15%	13%
Other	0%	0%	6%	5%
Unemployed not looking	1%	1%	5%	4%
No answer	1%	2%	2%	1%
Retired	0%	<1%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

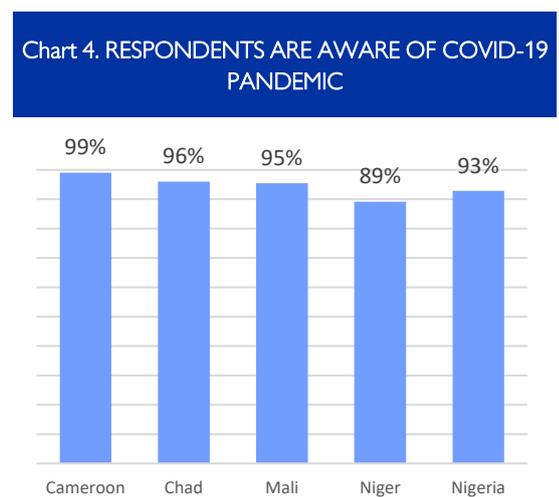
⁸ West and Central Africa – Regional Mobility Mapping, June 2020 ([link](#))

KNOWLEDGE AND IMPACTS OF COVID-19

KNOWLEDGE OF COVID-19: An overwhelming majority of respondents interviewed in all five countries indicated they were aware of the COVID-19 pandemic (95%) (Table 9).

Response	% of respondents
Yes	95%
No answer, doesn't want to answer	3%
No	2%
Total	100%

Knowledge of COVID-19 among travellers was fairly strong across the five countries, with only respondents in Niger indicating a slightly lower result (89%) compared with the other countries (Chart 4).



SYMPTOMS: Knowledge of the symptoms of COVID-19 was also fairly high across the board. However, beyond the main symptoms (fever, cough), respondents weren't aware of the full extent of potential symptoms related to

COVID-19 (Table 10). While 75 per cent of respondents indicated fever as one of the main symptoms, 67 per cent cough and 44 per cent sore throat, only 11 per cent indicated the loss of taste or smell as a potential symptom of COVID-19.

Symptoms	% of respondents
Fever	75%
Cough	67%
Sore throat	44%
Headache	41%
Shortness of breath	39%
Tired	32%
Chest pain	13%
Muscle pain	12%
Loss of taste or smell	11%

SOURCE OF INFORMATION: A majority of respondents who indicated knowing about COVID-19 (69%) indicated media as a main source of information on COVID-19, highlighting the role of social, broadcast and print media in the WCA region in disseminating information (Table 11). Local and national authorities were also identified as a main information source by 28 per cent of respondents aware of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sources of information	% of respondents
Media	69%
Authorities (local, national)	28%
Family and Friends	13%
Medical staff	9%
UN, NGO	6%
Civil Society	6%
Other	0%

MEASURES TAKEN DURING TRAVEL: During their travels, 48 per cent of respondents

indicated that mitigation measures were not observed in vehicles aboard which respondents were travelling (by themselves or by others involved in the travel) to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Table 12). In total, 43 per cent of all respondents indicated that face masks had to be worn in the public transport during the travel and 29 per cent had to wash their hands (soap or gel) before entering the vehicle used to travel (bus, taxi). A limit in the number of passengers allowed in public transport vehicle was only indicated among 18 per cent of interviewees.

Chart 12. MEASURES TAKEN BY RESPONDENTS DURING TRAVEL (multiple answers possible, except if "No measure")

Preventive measures taken	% of respondents
No measure taken	48%
Mask in public transport	43%
Hand washing or gel before entering vehicle	29%
Reduce passenger number	18%
Sensitization on COVID	15%
Disinfection of vehicle	6%
Other	0%

CHALLENGES DURING COVID-19: A majority of respondents, (53%) indicated having faced no challenges, but 47 per cent did mention they had faced issues since the start of the pandemic (Table 13).

Among all respondents, a total of 26 per cent indicated facing difficulties in pursuing their income generating activities since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This result highlights the economic challenges met by many because of the various restrictions (on mobility, on businesses, gatherings, etc.) implemented by countries⁹ and often preventing internal movements and trade. Migrants unable to cross borders for seasonal movements (agropastoral

movements, labour migration for mining activities or fruit and vegetable picking) or for business reasons (re-stocking, sale and purchase of goods, etc.) generates a loss in remittances sent and received across the region. The difficulty in sending or receiving remittances was indicated by 8 per cent of respondents as a key challenge encountered since the start of COVID-19.

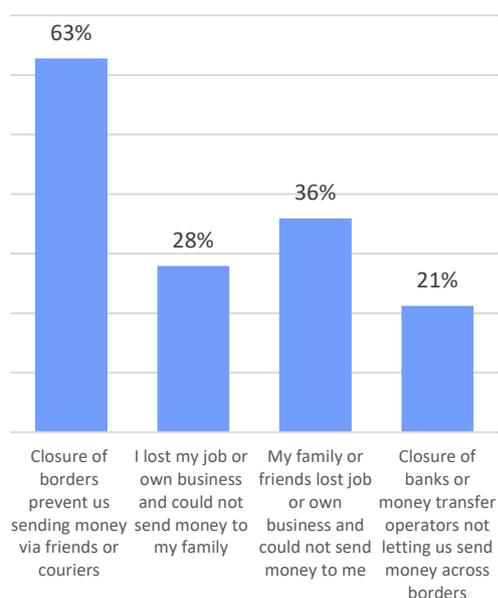
Table 13. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED SINCE START OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC AMONG RESPONDENTS (multiple answers possible, except if "No challenge")

Challenges	% of respondents
No challenge	53%
Difficult continuing economic activities	26%
Accessing PPE	14%
Access to basic services	12%
Quality of food worsened	9%
Difficulty sending or receiving remittance	8%
Difficulty accessing health services	7%
Diagnosed with COVID-19 but recovered	4%
Acquaintance contracted COVID but recovered	4%
Discrimination	3%
Acquaintance have died of COVID	3%

REMITTANCES: The main challenge reported by respondents facing difficulties sending or receiving remittances was the closure of borders preventing them from sending or receiving money via friends or couriers (63%) (Chart 5). The second issue related to sending or receiving remittances was the loss of income (either from the respondent or family and friends) preventing from sending or receiving additional funds (36%).

⁹ Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre — Restrictions de mobilité liées au COVID-19 au sein de la CEDEAO, Juillet 2020 ([Link](#))

Chart 5. DIFFICULTY EXPERIENCED SENDING OR RECEIVING REMITTANCES



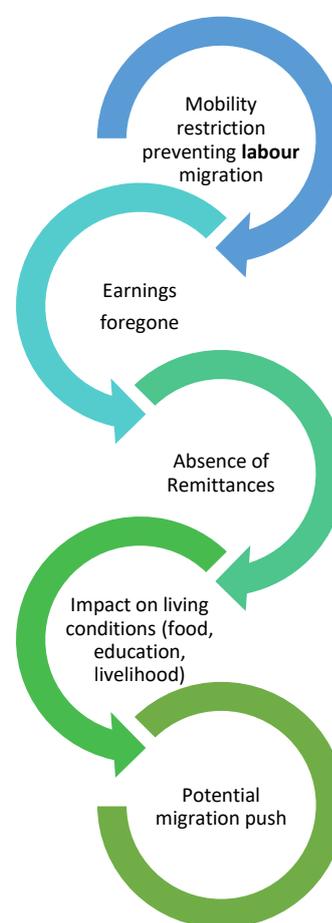
IMPACT ON LIVING CONDITIONS: Half of respondents facing challenges in sending or receiving remittance (51%) indicated that they could no longer afford food of good quality (Table 14) due to decreased income. Other reported not being able to pay for education fees (39%) and not paying rent or mortgages (38%).

Table 14. IMPACT OF DECREASED REMITTANCES ON INTERVIEWEES

Impacts	% of respondents
Can no longer afford good food	51%
Can no longer afford paying for education	39%
Can no longer pay for our house	38%
Can no longer repay our loan	28%
Can no longer pay for stocks	23%
Can no longer sustain our business	18%

CONCLUSION

Flow Monitoring Surveys conducted in West and Central Africa showed that the active mobility restrictions imposed in most countries in West and Central Africa engendered losses of income, which in turn led to decreases in remittances sent and received in the region. This decrease in remittance, in turn, negatively impacted access to food and housing, livelihood activities, and education enrolments. This could lead to further increased in migration movements in the future.



Annex

Flow Monitoring Methodology: Flow Monitoring, a tool of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), was set up to provide a better understanding and give an overview of mobility in West and Central Africa, through the collection of key data on the magnitude, provenance, destination, and profiles of flows of migrants in areas of high mobility throughout the region.

Flow Monitoring is a data collection activity which seeks to gather key information on mobility. The process begins by identifying zones where there are large flows of mobility, with the help of national authorities, after which strategic transit points are selected in coordination with local authorities, and Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs) are set up. At each FMP, teams of enumerators collect data highlighting the characteristics and journeys of travellers crossing these points. At each FMP, DTM conducts two main activities: **Flow Monitoring Registry (FMR)** and **Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS)**.

The FMR collects data at the FMPs through direct observation and interviews with key informants, including staff working at coach stations, border patrol officers, local authorities, bus drivers or travellers themselves. The FMR gathers data on the number of travellers crossing FMPs, as well as the place of departure, next destination, visible vulnerabilities and means of transport of travellers.

The purpose of the FMS is to collect detailed information on the profiles, migration journeys and intentions of migrants. Data is collected through interviews with a sample of randomly chosen travellers. Information is primarily gathered on the nationality, age, sex, education level, and professional status of travellers, as well as their reasons for travel, location of departure, intended destinations, and primary needs.

Enumerators collect data by filling out a form on the basis of information provided by key informants or travellers themselves, or gathered through direct observation.

For the purpose of this report, data was collected at the following FMPs:

Cameroon: Kousseri.

Mali: Benena, Gao, Gogui, Heremakono, Menaka and Timbuktu.

Niger: Arlit, Dan Barto, Dan Issa, Madama, Magaria, Seguedine and Tahoua.

Nigeria: Kano and Sokoto.

Chad: Binder, Faya, Fianga, Koutere, Lere, Ouniangna, Pont Bongor and Zouarke.