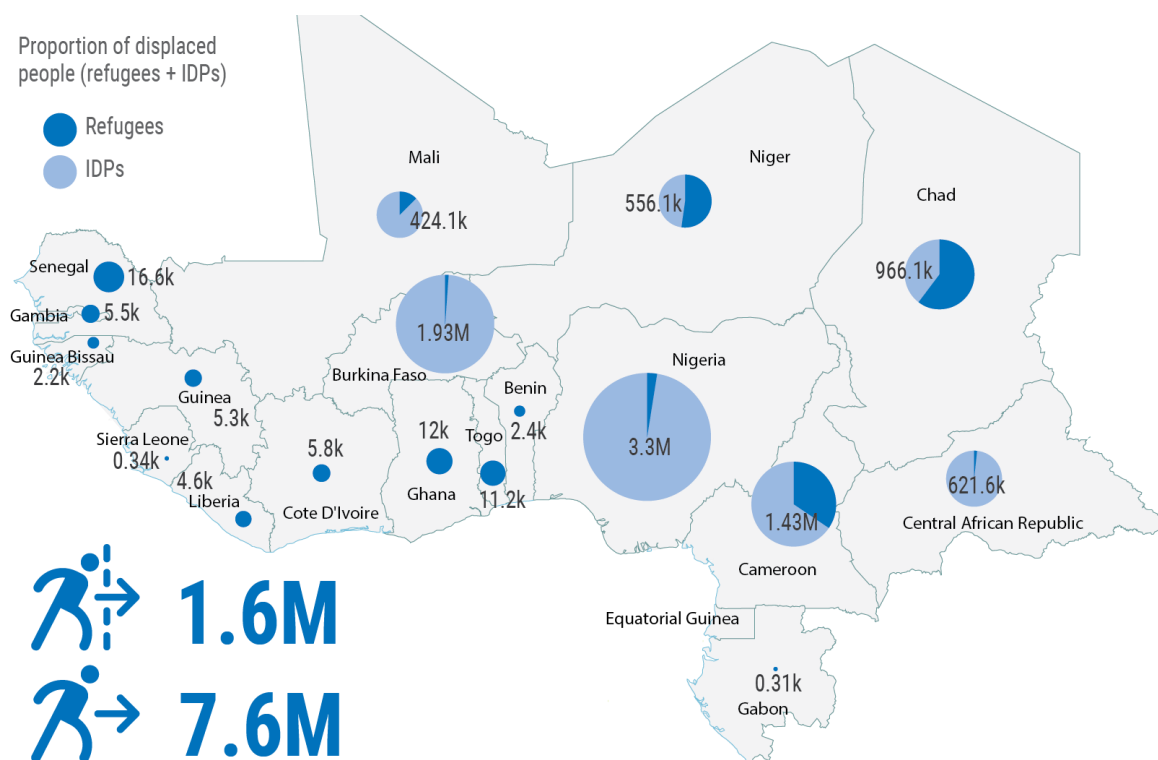


# EDUCATION UPDATE

2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

## Regional Overview and Education Trends

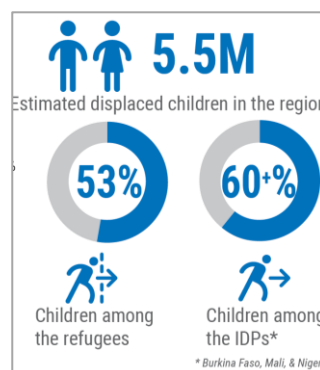
### OPERATIONAL CONTEXT



### Escalating conflicts intensify large-scale forced displacement

The West and Central Africa (WCA) region currently hosts over **13 million** persons of concern to UNHCR, including **1.6 million refugees** and **7.6 million internally displaced people**. The region counts **5.5 million forcibly displaced children** (refugees and IDPs)<sup>1</sup>.

The main conflicts affecting the region – in central Sahel, the Central African Republic, the Lake Chad Basin and North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon – show no signs of abating and continue driving up humanitarian needs while humanitarian access remains a recurring challenge.



<sup>1</sup> UNHCR RBWCA, [Monthly Statistics – July 2022](#).

During the past year, improving the protection environment for all displaced populations was a top operational priority, including child protection; prevention of gender-based violence and assistance to survivors; education and livelihoods; and strengthening community-based protection systems to reinforce self-reliance and social cohesion. Despite this, **the number of children in need of humanitarian assistance has multiplied, as has the share of unmet needs.**

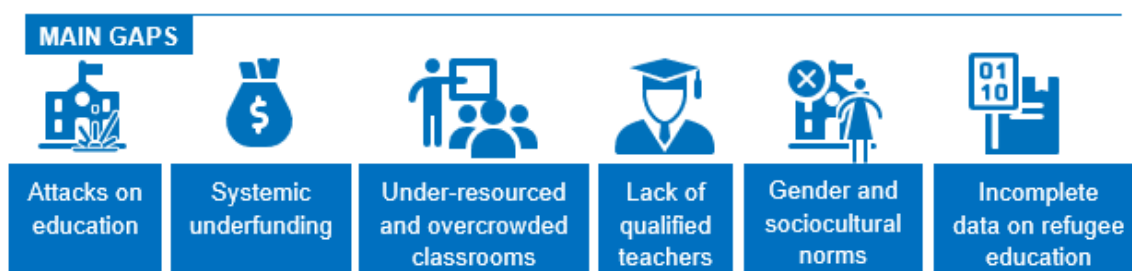


**57 million children, adolescents and youth** are barred from attending school in the region, representing **a quarter of the 236 million out-of-school** worldwide<sup>2</sup>. This figure is all the more alarming when considering that it is twice the region's share of the global population of children of the corresponding age (6 to 18 years old – 12.05 per cent)<sup>3</sup>. In Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Niger **more than half of all children and adolescents do not have access to education.**

Many countries in the region are facing increased insecurity, with cross-border spillover of conflicts and intercommunal violence having a major impact on the protection of children and youth, including on their access to education and vocational training. By the end of the 2021-2022 school year, **over 12.400 schools were closed in eight countries of the region**, either because they are a direct target of attacks by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) or because teachers have fled leaving no-one to teach, or because parents are too frightened to send their children to school or are themselves in a process of repeated forced displacement to safer areas<sup>4</sup>. The spread and intensification of conflict is having an increasingly devastating effect on access and continuity of learning for all children, and particularly for forcibly displaced children<sup>5</sup>.

When they do have access to education, refugee children often learn in **overcrowded and under-resourced environments** (lack of infrastructure, learning materials, sanitation facilities, etc.). Data on teachers is fragmentary but shows that teacher/pupil ratios in refugee-hosting schools are well above recommended ratios, which has a negative impact on both teaching and learning experiences. In addition, the **refugee or community teachers** who make up most of the workforce in these schools are often inadequately supported, trained and paid. There are few opportunities for them to gain recognition of qualifications obtained in their country of origin and/or to access national qualifications that would allow them to be included in the national education system of their asylum country.

The further refugees progress through the education system, the higher the barriers become, as evidenced by the **significant drop in enrolment rates** between primary and secondary and between secondary and tertiary education (see next page).



<sup>2</sup> UNESCO GEMR and UIS (2022): <https://education-estimates.org/>

<sup>3</sup> UNPD/DESA (July 2022), Population Estimates 2022: <https://population.un.org/wpp/>

<sup>4</sup> [Education Under Attack in West and Central Africa: 2022 Update](#).

<sup>5</sup> See page 4 for links to country dashboards which show that refugee education access rates at all levels are consistently lower than national access rates.

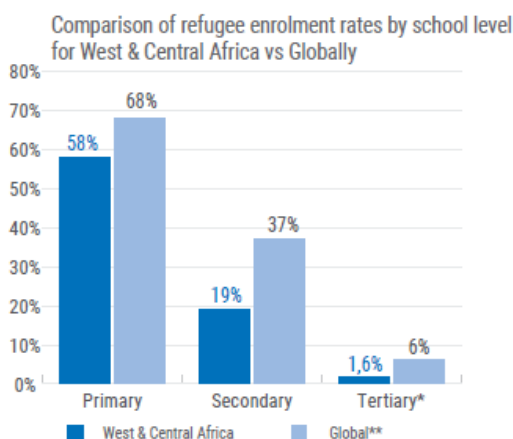
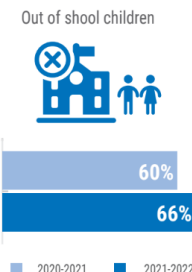
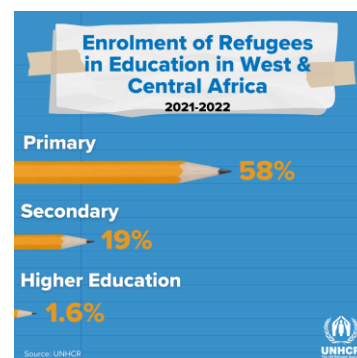
## Welcoming but woefully under-resourced national education systems to make refugee inclusion an effective and sustainable reality

Data from **15 countries**<sup>6</sup> in WCA illustrates how refugee children and youth are falling behind their non-refugee peers when it comes to access to an inclusive quality education. Across the region, UNHCR is supporting the **inclusion of refugees in national education systems** from the onset of an emergency refugee inflow through protracted displacement situations and in longer-term development planning. Among other things, this requires more support for teacher training and salaries, new infrastructure, adequate and relevant learning materials, safe transport to and from schools, access to examinations and certification, and closing the digital divide affecting refugees.

In the 2021-2022 school year, according to data collected by UNHCR Operations, **216,785 refugees** attended school across the region from pre-primary to secondary (out of a total population of **706,597 refugees** aged 3 to 18). **Girls** represent almost **49 per cent** of the refugee school population, which can be considered a major achievement in a region where girls are largely discriminated against in terms of access to education

Average refugee gross enrolment rates (GER)<sup>7</sup> for the region stand at **58 per cent** for **primary** level, **19 per cent** for **secondary** level, and only **1.6 per cent** for **tertiary** level. These figures represent a **slight increase** over the previous school year for the **secondary and tertiary levels** (which were respectively at 15 per cent and 1.2 per cent), while primary enrolment is down by one point (from 59 to 58 per cent).

Yet, challenges remain stark as **66 per cent** of refugee children of primary and secondary school-age (i.e., **381,259 children**) **did not attend school** during the past year. This represents an increase from the previous school year, when the out-of-school rate was 60 per cent. This can be explained not only by the increase in the number of new refugees in the region (+14 per cent between June 2021 and June 2022) who have not yet been able to return to school, but also by the growing insecurity that has led to the closure of many schools, secondary displacement, and consequent school dropouts in several countries in the region.



In addition, access rates to education for refugees in the region remain significantly **lower than the global access rates**, which stand at 68% for primary, 37% for secondary, and 6% for higher education respectively<sup>8</sup>.

**Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Niger** are the countries with the lowest enrolment rates (primary and secondary levels combined), while **Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, and Ghana**<sup>9</sup> are the countries with the highest ones. The average regional net enrolment rate (NER)<sup>10</sup> is significantly lower than the average regional GER (28 per cent against 43 per cent), indicating a large proportion of **over-age children** in the classrooms.

<sup>6</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo.

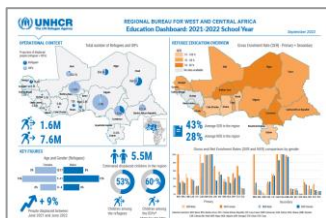
<sup>7</sup> The gross enrolment rate (GER) is the total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education. The GER can exceed 100% because of early or late entry and/or grade repetition (UNESCO-UIS).

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR Education Report 2022. [All Inclusive: The Campaign for Refugee Education](#). Global enrolment rates refer to the 2020-2021 school year.

<sup>9</sup> In some of these countries (Benin, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana), enrolment data is not available for the entire school-age refugee population, which may overestimate enrolment rates. Some of these data have therefore been excluded from the calculation of regional percentages.

<sup>10</sup> The net enrolment rate (NER) is the total number of students in the theoretical age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.

## EDUCATION DASHBOARDS – 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR



Access the full **education data dashboard for the West and Central Africa region** for the 2021-2022 school year [here](#).

Also access the **national<sup>11</sup>** and **sub-regional dashboards<sup>12</sup>** by clicking on the maps below:



Children in front of outdoor blackboards near to a school in Burkina Faso. ©UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau

<sup>11</sup> National dashboards are available for countries with sufficient reliable and comprehensive data.

<sup>12</sup> Sub-regional dashboards are available for the central Sahel countries and for the ECOWAS countries.



# UNHCR's Education Response

Supporting refugees' access to safe and quality education and promoting continuity of learning for all

During the 2021-2022 school year, UNHCR provided ongoing support to Ministries of Education in the region to facilitate the inclusion of forcibly displaced children and youth in national education systems, at all school levels, to enable them to have equitable access to safe and quality education in both emergency and protracted displacement situations.

Over the entire school year, a total of **255,000 children and youth** benefitted from UNHCR education support (compared to 201,000 the previous year), including 178,500 refugees, 58,650 IDPs and 17,850 host community members.



Primary school in Kaya, Burkina Faso, welcoming IDP children.  
 ©UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau

To facilitate this inclusion in national education systems, UNHCR and its partners undertook activities throughout the school year to strengthen the reception capacity, safety, and quality of learning environments in schools hosting refugee, IDP and host community children:

- **351 classrooms** were built or rehabilitated in 8 countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Ghana, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria), allowing thousands of refugee, internally displaced and host community children to access safer and better equipped school environments in which improved quality education can be delivered.
- **532 schools** in 9 countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria) were supported with Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) interventions (such as water points, latrines, hygiene committees, etc.) enabling schools to be safer while increasing access and retention of children and teachers.
- **4,590 teachers** were trained on pedagogical approaches to education in emergencies and displacement, but also on child protection, and psychosocial support in 8 countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Liberia, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria) to improve the reception and care of children, with the aim of improving their retention in school as well as their learning outcomes.
- **111,781 school kits** were distributed to children in 11 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal) and **12,282 children** were assisted with cash-based interventions in 10 countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo), with the aim of improving access to education for the most vulnerable children and youth.
- **1,053 refugee students** received higher education scholarships in 13 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo) to support their university or vocational studies, including through in-country university enrolment, UNHCR tertiary scholarship programme ([626 DAFI scholars](#)), technical and vocational education and training, connected higher education, and third country scholarships.



## HIGHLIGHTS OF UNHCR EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS IN THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR



Click on each image to access the full monthly newsletter featuring UNHCR's education interventions in the region.

<p><b>UNHCR</b> The UN Refugee Agency</p> <p>SEPTEMBER 2021</p> <p>REGIONAL BUREAU FOR WEST &amp; CENTRAL AFRICA EDUCATION NEWSLETTER</p>  <p><b>A New School Year for the 5 Million Forcibly Displaced Children in the Region</b></p> <p>The 2020-2021 school year has been completed for all countries in the West &amp; Central Africa region, despite some delays and adjustments to the academic calendar due to the effects of Covid-19 closures that delayed the start of the school year in many countries.</p> <p>During the 2020-2021 school year, more than half of refugee children in WCA did not attend school, with a drastic drop between primary and secondary (from almost 60% enrolled in primary to only 15% enrolled in secondary), while just over 1% of the 15-24 had access to higher education and vocational training. Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali and Nigeria were the countries with the lowest average enrollment rates, while Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana were the countries with the highest ones.</p> <p>This confirms the findings of UNHCR's 2021 global education report, <a href="#">"Building the Future"</a>. This challenge is to ensure that refugee education, which focuses on secondary education, the crucial yet critically under-invested stage for refugees towards greater independence and improved prospects in life.</p> <p>Despite these challenges, refugee learners who have the chance to go to school are more than motivated to succeed. The proof is in their end-of-year exam results, which are as good as or even better than their national peers (see following page).</p> <p>Read more about the situation of refugee education in the WCA region in the <a href="#">2020-21 regional annual update</a> and access all the available data in the <a href="#">regional annual statistics</a>.</p>	<p><b>UNHCR</b> The UN Refugee Agency</p> <p>OCTOBER 2021</p> <p>REGIONAL BUREAU FOR WEST &amp; CENTRAL AFRICA EDUCATION NEWSLETTER</p>  <p><b>Protecting Education from Attack in the West &amp; Central Africa Region</b></p> <p>From 25 to 27 October 2021, the <a href="#">28th International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration</a> was held in Abuja, hosted by the Government of Nigeria, together with the Governments of Argentina, Norway, Spain, as well as the African Union Commission and the <a href="#">United Nations in Peace Education Initiative</a> (UNPEI).</p> <p>The three-day Conference was an opportunity for states to galvanize action on protecting education in armed conflict by taking stock of progress by states in endorsing and implementing the <a href="#">Safe Schools Declaration</a> and related <a href="#">Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict</a>, sharing good practice in advancing the commitments in the Declaration, and encouraging greater collaboration across borders to ensure that all students and educators can learn and teach in safety. A major outcome of the Conference was the adoption by the UN Security Council of a first of its kind resolution – <a href="#">S/RES/2676(2021)</a> – strongly condemning attacks against schools and urging safeguarding of right to education.</p> <p>In preparation for the conference, the <a href="#">Regional Education in Emergencies Working Group</a> prepared an <a href="#">Advisory Note on Attacks on Education in WCA</a>, providing a comprehensive overview of the regional situation, the impact on schooling and learning for children and youth (and community, internally displaced and refugee children) and outlining a number of recommendations to improve the protection of education and the continuity of learning in conflict situations.</p>	<p><b>UNHCR</b> The UN Refugee Agency</p> <p>NOVEMBER 2021</p> <p>REGIONAL BUREAU FOR WEST &amp; CENTRAL AFRICA EDUCATION NEWSLETTER</p>  <p><b>Refugee Education and Climate Action in the West &amp; Central Africa Region</b></p> <p>Globally, 50% of refugees under UNHCR's mandate and 70% of people internally displaced by conflict are from countries that are among the most vulnerable to climate change. The <a href="#">UNFCCC</a> held in Glasgow in November brought parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.</p> <p>Climate change may not be seen as a direct catalyst for conflict, but it is often the root cause, leading to forced displacement or exacerbating conflict dynamics. Climate change undermines the ability of vulnerable communities to enjoy their basic rights, such as the fundamental right to education, and thus to cope and adapt as best they can. All the adverse effects of climate change directly and indirectly affect the provision and accessibility of quality education, particularly for refugee children. The impact is likely to be seen most immediately in disruptions to education provision.</p> <p>This is already the case in the region where periods of excessive heat already prevent students from attending school, as do increasingly more common floods, and where severe weather can also damage school infrastructure. While the cumulative effect of these disturbances on students' education performance is not well known, it is certain that displacement, can only have detrimental consequences for learning outcomes, reducing the likelihood that young people – especially girls – will be able to break the cycle of poverty.</p> <p>Yet, education is also part of the solution. While building up the resilience of education systems, it is critical to focus on the role education itself plays in adapting to climate change. During a webinar on <a href="#">Climate Education Goals</a> organized during the COP 26 by ECOW and UNHCR, panelists have all emphasized the crucial role that education can – and must – play in climate action.</p>
<p><b>UNHCR</b> The UN Refugee Agency</p> <p>JANUARY 2022</p> <p>REGIONAL BUREAU FOR WEST &amp; CENTRAL AFRICA EDUCATION NEWSLETTER</p>  <p><b>Over 60% of refugee children are out of school in West &amp; Central Africa</b></p> <p>January 24 marked the fourth <a href="#">International Day of Education</a> – a day when all world leaders and education advocates claim the value of education and in breaking the cycle of poverty, improving health, and bringing about social stability.</p> <p>Education is one of the most important investments a country can make in its future and is essential to every one of the 17 sustainable development goals.</p> <p>However, education systems in fragile and crisis-affected contexts continue to feel the strain of trying to provide quality education to all children, including the most vulnerable such as refugees and forcibly displaced.</p> <p>In West &amp; Central Africa, more than 300,000 refugee children still do not have the chance to go to school or access any kind of education.</p> <p>With more than 12,000 schools closed due to insecurity across the region, the capacity of countries of asylum to include young refugees in their education systems is shrinking rapidly. The commitment of governments and all stakeholders is urgently needed to increase emergency and sustainable funding to ensure equitable access to quality education for all.</p> <p>Education transforms lives, but it has yet to fulfil the dreams of hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced children and youth in the region.</p>	<p><b>UNHCR</b> The UN Refugee Agency</p> <p>FEBRUARY 2022</p> <p>REGIONAL BUREAU FOR WEST &amp; CENTRAL AFRICA EDUCATION NEWSLETTER</p>  <p><b>Language Considerations in Refugee Education</b></p> <p>February is the month in which we celebrate <a href="#">International Mother Language Day</a>.</p> <p>In the field of refugee education, this day has particular significance as language is often one of the first obstacles faced by refugee children who have to adapt to a new school environment without mastering the main learning medium.</p> <p>Policies and provision of language instruction for refugees vary across countries. Current practices of inclusion within national education systems only partially attend to refugees' linguistic needs and many countries struggle to provide appropriate language support for new arrivals. Language-of-instruction issues thus impact millions of refugee children, contributing to low academic achievement and high drop-out rates.</p> <p>In response to refugee inflows, host country education systems are forced to use whatever learning resources are readily available. In such contexts, refugee teachers are a key resource, and it is essential to support them as they have the potential and most often an incredible will to contribute to the education of children in their community – and in the host country – to support their integration (see next page: <a href="#">Cameroon refugee teachers in Chad</a>).</p> <p>Fluency in the local language not only impacts the ability to learn, but also influences the pace and degree of social and cultural cohesion with the host community that is so essential to adapting to a new context. It is therefore the cornerstone of an effective inclusive refugee education policy.</p>	<p><b>UNHCR</b> The UN Refugee Agency</p> <p>MARCH 2022</p> <p>REGIONAL BUREAU FOR WEST &amp; CENTRAL AFRICA EDUCATION NEWSLETTER</p>  <p><b>Higher Education Pathways for Refugees</b></p> <p>Higher education has many advantages for refugees, both in terms of personal development, socio-professional integration, and self-reliance, and in terms of their contribution to the society of their country of asylum and/or origin. However, higher education opportunities remain very limited for most young refugees worldwide, particularly in West and Central Africa.</p> <p>UNHCR is committed to achieving enrolment of 15% of young refugee women and men in higher education by the year 2030 – <a href="#">(see 15x30 target)</a>. Based on current population data, achieving 15% enrolment in 2030 will mean that approximately half a million young refugee women and men will be participating in an enriching academic life, compared to only 90,000 today.</p> <p>To support progress towards the 15x30 target, UNHCR has developed a <a href="#">digital toolkit</a> built around five higher education pathways, to offer strategies for optimizing, coordinating, and expanding opportunities: (i) national university enrolment; (ii) technical and vocational education and training (TVET); (iii) corrected higher education programmes; (iv) tertiary education scholarships; and (v) complementary education pathways for admission to third countries.</p> <p>Among initiatives to improve refugees' access to higher education, <a href="#">connected learning</a> holds great promise for durable solutions for refugee youth. Join the <a href="#">Refugees Connected Education challenge</a>.</p>
<p><b>UNHCR</b> The UN Refugee Agency</p> <p>APRIL 2022</p> <p>REGIONAL BUREAU FOR WEST &amp; CENTRAL AFRICA EDUCATION NEWSLETTER</p>  <p><b>Sport for Refugee Protection and Inclusion</b></p> <p>The <a href="#">International Day of Sport for Development and Peace</a> (IDSDP), which takes place annually on April 6th, presents an opportunity to recognize the positive role sport and physical activity play in communities and in people's lives across the globe.</p> <p>Sport has the power to change the world. It is a fundamental right and a powerful tool to strengthen social ties and promote sustainable development and peace, as well as solidarity and respect for all. In recognition of sport's broad influence, the global theme of IDSDP 2022 was <a href="#">"Securing a Sustainable and Peaceful Future for All"</a>. The Contribution of Sport, which creates an opportunity for the Day's celebrations to promote the use of sport as a tool to advance human rights and sustainable development.</p> <p>Sport in refugee settings is a powerful tool to improve protection and development outcomes for displaced young people and their communities. The <a href="#">Global Compact on Refugees</a> recognizes the important role that sports can play in social development, inclusion, cohesion, and well-being, particularly for refugee children (both boys and girls), adolescents and youth.</p> <p>An integrated approach to education and protection should consider sport as a key means of improving social cohesion and psychosocial well-being for all children and youth, both in and out of school. Sport can also contribute directly to increasing school enrolment and retention rates, as well as improving gender equality and preventing sexual and gender-based violence.</p>	<p><b>UNHCR</b> The UN Refugee Agency</p> <p>MAY 2022</p> <p>REGIONAL BUREAU FOR WEST &amp; CENTRAL AFRICA EDUCATION NEWSLETTER</p>  <p><b>The Future of Millions of Children Threatened by Attacks on Education in West and Central Africa</b></p> <p>In Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, insecurity and forced displacement are on the rise and the figures are frightening: nearly 13 million internally displaced persons and 1.5 million refugees are registered, more than 55% of whom are children. In addition, the beginning of 2022, nearly 12,000 schools were closed due to insecurity in these countries, forcing more than one million children to interrupt their education.</p> <p>In the context, thousands of children, especially vulnerable ones such as refugees and IDPs, are exposed to multiple protection risks and may never return to school.</p> <p>The GCFEA's report <a href="#">Education under Attack 2022</a> covers attacks on schools, universities, students, and educators from January 2020 to December 2021. It profiles 23 conflict-affected countries (almost 1/3 in WCA) with a systematic pattern of attacks on education and military use of educational facilities and identifies trends in attacks on education.</p> <p>In the WCA countries, nearly 2,000 attacks on schools and students, teachers or other education personnel have been reported over the period 2020-2021. <a href="#">GCFEA</a> also identified reported incidents of the military use of schools, as well as incidents of sexual violence and child recruitment at, or on the way to or from, school.</p>	<p><b>UNHCR</b> The UN Refugee Agency</p> <p>JUNE 2022</p> <p>REGIONAL BUREAU FOR WEST &amp; CENTRAL AFRICA EDUCATION NEWSLETTER</p>  <p><b>Transforming Education for Refugee Children and Teachers</b></p> <p>In September, the <a href="#">Transforming Education Summit</a> (TES) will be held in New York, convened by the UN Secretary General to mobilize political ambition, action, solutions and solidarity to transform education worldwide.</p> <p>This week, the <a href="#">2nd Summit</a> was organised in Paris to generate greater momentum and commitment. Refugee youth representatives spoke in 10 formal sessions and many side events, bringing to bear their lived experience. UNHCR spoke alongside the World Bank, UNICEF, GPE, ECW and member States on issues of inclusion into national systems, teachers of refugees, data in emergencies and crisis settings, connected education, and creating safe schools.</p> <p>The summit and the commitments it will need to bring are more relevant than ever, as the latest <a href="#">ECW report</a> finds that about 222 million school-aged children are affected by crises globally and need education support. This study also shows that 78.2 million children are out of school, 54% of whom live in areas of protracted crisis, and that nearly 120 million are in school but do not reach the minimum level of proficiency in maths or reading.</p> <p>June also saw the celebration of World Refugee Day and the Day of the African Child – See pages 4 and 5 for UNHCR's activities to mark the two days and highlight the education of refugee children and youth during the celebrations.</p>



## DONOR CONTRIBUTIONS

UNHCR is grateful for the support of donors who contributed to its education response in the West and Central Africa region with unearmarked and earmarked funds:



And private donors including Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Spain, and the United States.



Refugee teacher giving an outdoor class to Sudanese children in a refugee camp in eastern Chad.  
©UNHCR/Colin Delfosse

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