

# IOM REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

2025-2029



IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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Cover photo: Players from Conakry's FC Bolonta in Guinea celebrate during a football tournament, part of IOM's 16 Days campaign to raise awareness about gender-based violence.  
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Migration is a vital part of West and Central Africa's history and future, driving development, resilience, and opportunity. IOM is committed to working with stakeholders in the region to address increasingly complex migration challenges, foster regional collaboration and assist communities to reap the benefits of migration.

Amy E. POPE  
IOM Director General



# FOREWORD BY THE IOM DIRECTOR GENERAL

Migration is an ever-present force that shapes the lives of millions—in the regions people leave behind, the places they journey through and the ones in which they arrive.

The growing complexity of the migration landscape, resulting from various factors—from climate change to conflict to economic disparities—means that cooperation between neighbouring States and regional actors is essential to ensure that migration is safe, orderly and regular.

This *West and Central Africa Strategy 2025–2029* builds on the *IOM Strategic Plan 2024–2028* and highlights how IOM will work with partners throughout the region to meet migration challenges. By building on local capacities and knowledge, we can craft solutions that address the specific needs of the West and Central Africa region while promoting sustainable outcomes for migrants and communities alike. This reflects IOM's vision of delivering on the promise of migration, enabling it to serve as a force for development and prosperity.

We must be collaborative and agile to achieve that vision, working together to protect the most vulnerable, address the root causes of rising displacement and facilitate the regular migration pathways that meet the greater demand for migrant workers. The implementation of this Regional Strategy will ensure that we continue to work across borders, supporting migrants through a coordinated, inclusive approach that aligns with both regional and global priorities.

Together with our partners, IOM will continue to deliver on the promise of migration, ensuring its benefits are shared and that no one is left behind.



Amy E. POPE  
IOM Director General



Pastoralists with their herd of cattle crossing fields in Adamawa State, Nigeria. © IOM 2022 / Mohamed Aly Diabaté

# FOREWORD BY IOM REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Migration has always been a cornerstone of the rich history of West and Central Africa, and will continue to shape its future. The region's migration flows, characterized by labour mobility, cross-border trade, and deep community ties, hold immense potential for driving economic growth, fostering social and cultural development and strengthening regional cooperation.

Yet this dynamic region also faces profound challenges. Conflict, instability, natural disasters and the escalating impacts of climate change continue to drive both internal and cross-border mobility and displacement. In 2023 alone, nearly 8 million people were displaced internally due to conflict and violence. Climate-related events—droughts, floods and desertification—reached historic levels in 2024, further testing the resilience of communities already under strain. Confronting these challenges and finding solutions with the people of West and Central Africa is essential to building safer, more resilient and more prosperous societies, while safeguarding those most at risk.

The *IOM Regional Strategy for West and Central Africa 2025–2029* emerged from this complex landscape of challenges and opportunities. It is the product of an inclusive and consultative process, involving governments, regional bodies, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), civil society and the region's vibrant diaspora. This collaborative effort reflects a shared vision for the region's future: one where migration is harnessed as a force for positive change, with IOM

working alongside and in support of our Member States, as part of the United Nations system, and in close collaboration with our partners.

At the heart of this Strategy, and in line with the *IOM Strategic Plan 2024–2028*, are three core priorities: saving lives and protecting people on the move; driving solutions to displacement; and facilitating pathways for regular migration. These priorities are designed to strengthen labour mobility, support community resilience and promote sustainable development. Our approach also focuses on tackling the underlying causes of forced displacement, ensuring that migration benefits the entire region and contributes to a stable and prosperous future.

As one of the world's most mobile regions, West and Central Africa will continue to experience the movement of its inhabitants; whether they are seeking opportunities or education, or responding to environmental and sociopolitical pressures. Our collective ambition is to ensure that when they do, they can move safely and with dignity, and that their journeys contribute to the development and well-being in both their countries of origin and destination.

This Strategy is not just about managing migration; it is about unlocking the region's potential, strengthening its resilience, and ensuring that migration is a pathway to stability, prosperity and opportunity for all. Together, we can transform migration into a catalyst for sustainable development across West and Central Africa, ensuring that no one is left behind.



Sylvia Ekra  
IOM Regional Director for West and Central Africa



Participants engage in a crisis simulation exercise at the Côte d'Ivoire-Guinea-Mali border, enhancing preparedness and cross-border collaboration for displacement scenarios. Odienné, Côte d'Ivoire. © IOM 2022 / Mohamed Aly Diabaté

# ABOUT IOM

Established in 1951, IOM is the leading United Nations agency on migration and the principal intergovernmental organization in the field of migration.

IOM works closely with its key stakeholders—migrants and Member States—to promote safe, orderly and regular migration. This involves providing services and advice to governments, migrants and other stakeholders in order to maximize the benefits and opportunities of migration and reduce its challenges. As of December 2023, IOM had 175 Member States, offices in over 580 field locations and more than 20,900 staff, 90 per cent of whom were deployed in the field.

The Organization's work at all levels is shaped by the three objectives set out in the *IOM Strategic Plan 2024-2028*: saving lives and protecting people on the move; driving solutions to displacement; and facilitating pathways for regular migration. As recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, migration and sustainable development are inextricably linked. The Sustainable Development Goals—and the commitment to leave no one behind—will not be met without due consideration for migration. Additionally, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is grounded in the 2030 Agenda and promotes a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to address this link.

In addition to assisting IOM country offices, the Organization's regional offices play a critical role in supporting regional migration processes by facilitating dialogue, cooperation and capacity-building among countries within their regions to address migration challenges and harness the benefits of migration. The Regional Strategy for West and Central Africa will bring greater coherence and impact to IOM's activities in the region and allow for a joined-up approach to the way the Organization designs and delivers its operations. It brings new perspectives and new approaches, allowing the IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa to contribute to the Organization's vision to deliver on the promise of migration, while supporting the world's most vulnerable.

# IOM IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

There are 22 IOM Member States in West and Central Africa and the Organization has offices in 22 countries and 53 field locations, and more than 2,200 staff. The Regional Office, based in Dakar, covers Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. In 2023, IOM had over USD 295 million in programming in the region, encompassing: migrant protection; peace and recovery; humanitarian response; immigration and border governance; migration and health; labour mobility and social inclusion; migration, environment and climate change; policy coordination and migration data and research.

The IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa provides technical support and oversight to its country operations. It works closely with government representatives from national, regional and subregional entities to facilitate good migration governance and deliver positive outcomes for migrants and their communities. Supranational institutions that IOM works with include the West African Economic and

Monetary Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Liptako-Gourma Integrated Development Authority, the Mano River Union and forums focusing on the Sahel, among others.

Together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa is the co-chair of the Regional United Nations Network on Migration, which aims to facilitate effective, timely and coordinated United Nations system-wide support to Member States on migration policy, including on the implementation, follow-up, and review of the Global Compact. The Organization also has partnerships with a range of civil society and academic partners at the national and regional level. Through these collaborations, IOM aims to foster a holistic understanding of migration dynamics in the region, emphasizing the interaction between different thematic areas, such as border governance, policy, humanitarian assistance, health and development, through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.



# MIGRATION OUTLOOK FOR THE REGION

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The migration outlook for West and Central Africa over the next five years will be shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including socioeconomic conditions, changing migration policies, climate change, instability and conflict. IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) data show that 74 per cent of individuals surveyed in 2023 in West and Central Africa were travelling within the region for labour or economic reasons. Looking forward, the primary motivation for migration is projected to remain economic, with people continuing to move to obtain employment and a better standard of living. However, an increasing number of migrants in situations of vulnerability, including displaced people and refugees, are expected to be fleeing conflict or natural disasters, and will have significant humanitarian and protection needs. This dynamic will require solutions that respond to the evolving nature of mixed migration flows, where economic migrants, refugees and other displaced populations move alongside each other, often using the same routes, but with different legal statuses and needs.

According to the DTM, an estimated 93 per cent of migration flows in 2023 were internal to the region, and the vast majority of international migrant flows in West and Central Africa are likely to remain intraregional. Migrants from countries with low per capita incomes will continue to move to relatively more developed and stable neighbouring countries, or towards the higher-income coastal countries in the southern part of the region. Internal migration flows will be characterized by urbanization in all countries, due to the economic and social opportunities available in cities. This points to the need for nations to better plan and regulate urban growth so that the development potential of rural–urban migration can be maximized.

Existing commitments to promote trade, boost economic growth and foster unity through freedom of movement protocols led by the African Union and regional economic communities hold immense potential, facilitating regular migration pathways and unlocking the developmental benefits of migration within the region. However, to fully realize this potential, enduring obstacles must be addressed. These

include differing national migration policies, security concerns, limited access to legal identity documents for some populations and the infrastructural readiness of Member States to manage increased cross-border movement. Tackling these challenges will require enhanced engagement and regional dialogues on migration.

Labour migration within West and Central Africa will continue to be heavily influenced by the region's significant agricultural and extractive industries. Seasonal labour migration will remain crucial for both subsistence and commercial agriculture. Similarly, the extractive industries will drive a substantial amount of labour migration to often remote areas that are rich in natural resources but poor in social infrastructure. As evidenced in recent years, the opening of new sites of natural resource extraction has the potential to transform sending countries into destination countries, lending an unpredictability to migration flows. Transhumance, involving cross-border seasonal movement of livestock, remains vital for the livelihoods of millions and, if properly managed, will increasingly act as a form of adaptation to climatic, economic and security challenges in the region.

The prospects for an increase in regular migration pathways beyond the region will depend primarily on the political climate, labour market needs and migration policy reforms in destination countries, especially those in Europe and the Gulf States. While most countries in West and Central Africa have not traditionally been systematically approached as a source for labour migrants, this is likely to change as the demand for skilled labour increases in high- and middle-income countries with ageing populations. In addition to negotiating bilateral labour migration agreements that protect their nationals, governments will need to develop a raft of migration and development policies, plans and strategies to effectively support migrants throughout the migration continuum, encompassing pre-departure, migration and return and reintegration.

While irregular migrants will remain a small proportion of overall migration flows, irregular migration will

continue to be associated with serious protection risks for migrants, undermining immigration and border management regimes in origin, transit and destination countries, and contributing to anti-migrant sentiment. These risks include exposure to exploitation, violence and human trafficking, particularly for vulnerable groups, such as women and unaccompanied minors. Irregular migration from West and Central Africa often occurs along the Central Mediterranean, Western Mediterranean and Western Atlantic routes.<sup>1</sup> IOM flow monitoring shows that while the volume of migrants moving along particular routes can fluctuate, the routes themselves do not significantly change. This points to a need for strong protection-oriented route-based approaches.

Nationals from West and Central Africa represented 37 per cent of all irregular arrivals to Europe in the first quarter of 2024.<sup>2</sup> Irregular migration from sub-Saharan Africa towards Europe, and within West and Central Africa, is expected to increase unless underlying causes are addressed. These include income gaps between countries, political instability and conflict, environmental challenges, limited legal migration pathways and criminality and corruption linked to the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking. Collaborative international efforts and investments in sustainable development and migration management, such as the Africa–EU Strategic Partnership, are critical for tackling these root causes. By fostering stability, promoting opportunities for education and employment (particularly for the youth), and creating regular migration opportunities, the push factors that lead to irregular migration can be significantly reduced.

In 2023, 8.1 million people in the region were internally displaced by conflict and violence.<sup>3</sup> The outlook regarding the impact of inter- and intra-State conflict and instability on migration within West and Central Africa points towards a continuing and possibly increasing trend of both internal and international displacement. Persistent and emerging conflicts, coupled with political instability in other countries, will be significant drivers of human displacement. The presence of non-State armed groups, including violent extremist organizations, will likely remain a

significant driver of insecurity leading to displacement. As many of these situations have little hope of rapid resolution, the pattern of displacement will persist unless durable solutions for displaced populations, violence prevention and broader stabilization efforts are implemented.

Climate migration and displacement will become increasingly prominent in West and Central Africa, where adverse environmental conditions leading to increased natural disasters will directly and indirectly influence human mobility. The Lake Chad Basin in the Sahel Region and coastal areas of West Africa are among the most vulnerable to climate change impacts. These regions will suffer from significant environmental stresses, such as drought, desertification and sea-level rise, which will threaten local agriculture, water resources and livelihoods. Climate migration will not only have immediate humanitarian implications, but will also pose long-term challenges for urban planning and regional stability, as migrants will move to cities already struggling with health care and other social resources and infrastructure.

Gender, age and ethnicity will continue to play a critical role in defining the experiences and outcomes of migrants. Gender impacts every stage of migration. Men principally migrate as a result of economic pressures, seeking employment in more prosperous regions or industries that promise higher wages and better working conditions. While women likewise migrate in search of better socioeconomic opportunities, they also do so to escape gender-specific adversities. Ethnicity affects migration because historical, social and familial ties influence migration routes and destinations, with ethnic conflicts occasionally forcing entire communities to relocate. Migration motives differ according to age: younger individuals often migrate for education or jobs, while older adults move for family reunification or retirement. Unaccompanied children face high risks of exploitation, requiring protective interventions. These factors create a complex mosaic of migration dynamics in West and Central Africa, requiring policies that address the varied needs of diverse and mixed migrant groups.

1 IOM, “Displacement Tracking Matrix: West and Central Africa”, web page, accessed 22 October 2024.

2 IOM, “Displacement Tracking Matrix: West and Central Africa—Irregular Migration Routes to Europe (January–March 2024)”, 2024.

3 International Displacement Monitoring Centre, “Global Report on Internal Displacement”, 2024.



An awareness caravan in Aderbissanat, the Niger, engages the community to promote safe migration practices and informed decision-making, highlighting the impact of reintegration and protection efforts. © IOM 2023 / Daniel Kouawo



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Globally, IOM is committed to delivering on the promise of safe, orderly and regular migration while supporting the most vulnerable.

To clarify how the Organization will contribute to this at the regional level, three regional strategic priorities for the period 2025–2029 have been defined based on the three objectives of the *IOM Strategic Plan 2024–2028*. They respond to current and emerging challenges across the region and are in line with the commitment of IOM to assist Member States in implementing intergovernmental commitments,

such as the Global Compact, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. While country offices will retain the flexibility to respond to the specific needs of their Member States, these priorities will guide the Organization's work in ensuring a coordinated and cohesive approach across the region.



Nouhou Négué BARRY, an IOM beneficiary under the MPRR programme, has chosen as his reintegration project to complete his nursing studies in Mamou, Guinea. © IOM 2023 / Lucas Chandellier



## Priority 1: Saving lives and protecting people on the move

The outlook for humanitarian crises within West and Central Africa underscores a pressing need for targeted interventions regarding humanitarian and protection assistance. This requirement has arisen in response to ongoing and emerging conflicts and a projected increase in natural disasters, which will drive significant internal and cross-border displacement, necessitating robust and coordinated efforts to meet basic needs and safeguard the rights and well-being of the most vulnerable individuals. With declining funding and increasing numbers of crisis-affected people, coordination with other actors to improve targeting and efficiency of responses will be more vital than ever.

In contexts where States are unable or unwilling to meet the needs of people displaced by crises, IOM and partners provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to meet immediate needs for shelter, food, non-food items, water, sanitation and hygiene support, mental health and psychosocial support, and health care. The Organization's life-saving activities effectively blend the agile and immediate responses of humanitarian and protection assistance with development-oriented, conflict-sensitive programming. This approach places life-saving work squarely at the intersection of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, ensuring a comprehensive response that both addresses immediate needs and contributes to long-term stability and recovery.

IOM will ensure equitable and transparent allocation of resources across affected populations to avoid exacerbating existing tensions or creating new ones. Deeper partnerships with local organizations and community leaders will be used to amplify the reach and credibility of accountability to affected populations initiatives, ensuring they resonate with and genuinely benefit the populations they serve.

The protection of the most vulnerable groups disproportionately affected by conflict and disaster, particularly women, children, the elderly and ethnic minorities, is a priority. Recognizing the unique characteristics of these groups, IOM will seek to intensify efforts to reach them through protection services. This includes implementing child protection measures and programmes aimed at mitigating the risk of, and responding to, gender-based violence. IOM will strengthen community surveillance systems, implement communication campaigns and enhance the capacity of local authorities to monitor and respond swiftly to trafficking activities. Mental health and psychosocial support will be promoted to help individuals and communities to recover from the negative psychosocial consequences of displacement and violence. These initiatives are essential components of a broader strategy to safeguard the rights and well-being of vulnerable individuals, ensuring that humanitarian aid translates into safe, meaningful and sustainable support for those who need it most.

IOM makes use of its humanitarian border management expertise to work with States to manage the safe, regular and orderly cross-border movement of populations escaping conflict or the impact of natural disasters. When necessary, the Organization will facilitate cross-border operations to ensure efficient aid delivery and enhance coordination among affected countries. This represents part of broader efforts to enhance humanitarian access by strengthening and other humanitarian actors, including the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to foster a collaborative approach that overcomes logistical and political barriers. This work is always undertaken in accordance with the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy to ensure that IOM does not provide unmitigated support to security forces at risk of, or actively committing grave human rights violations.

IOM will work with States to strengthen their capacity to perform rights-based search and rescue operations in compliance with relevant international, regional and national standards. It will assist authorities on both policy and operational aspects, and support them with the necessary infrastructure, equipment and training to provide immediate relief and facilitate the safe transit and referral of migrants.

In health emergencies, when disease outbreaks affect multiple countries, IOM plays a crucial role in facilitating on-the-ground cross-border cooperation to manage the crisis effectively. To manage the movement of populations and prevent further spread of disease, the Organization works closely with authorities to implement health screening, surveillance and quarantine measures. When requested, IOM will deploy medical teams and assist in the distribution of medical supplies to areas most in need, ensuring equitable resource allocation. IOM engages in public health risk communication and community engagement across borders to educate migrants and host populations on preventive measures, enhancing overall regional preparedness and response capabilities.

IOM uses its prominent position in humanitarian coordination mechanisms to encourage robust inter-agency coordination and leverage partnerships to drive innovation in programming. Across its humanitarian operations, IOM will increase the use of

digital technologies and promote the interoperability of humanitarian data management systems, including the use of biometric beneficiary data management systems, to help accurately identify individuals, provide targeted assistance, prevent fraud and ensure that aid reaches intended beneficiaries. At all times, the Organization ensures the highest standards of data security and privacy, rigorously applying data protection measures to safeguard the sensitive information of all individuals served.

IOM will promote a more integrated approach to data management and sharing, developing and embracing technological innovations in data and strengthening local capacities to apply data through training and resource-sharing. It will prioritize closing data gaps across the region by improving the availability, quality and use of data on the mobility, capabilities, vulnerabilities and needs of displaced, host and mobile populations. IOM will increasingly disaggregate its data by key variables such as age, gender and ethnicity so that policymakers and practitioners can identify and address disparities and targeted needs within a population.

While responding to immediate humanitarian needs, IOM contributes to long-term environmental sustainability and resilience by introducing systems such as rainwater harvesting and water recycling, and utilizing solar-powered solutions wherever possible.



## Priority 2: Driving solutions to displacement

In response to the persistent and emerging challenges of displacement in West and Central Africa, IOM is dedicated to creating conditions for durable solutions, preventing drivers of displacement from occurring in the first place and ensuring that displaced people receive effective protection and assistance. This strategic approach acknowledges the complex interplay of factors such as conflict, environmental degradation and socioeconomic instability that contribute to forced migration within the region. The Organization's proposed actions are fully aligned with the framework of the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.

IOM is committed to improving access to essential services such as health care; water, sanitation and waste management; legal support; and education for displaced populations and host communities. These efforts include enhancing the capacity of local service providers and authorities, upgrading infrastructure and addressing barriers such as language and cultural differences. IOM supports the resolution of housing, land and property issues by facilitating the clarification and legal recognition of land rights, thereby providing displaced populations with the security needed to rebuild their lives. Wherever possible, the Organization works with and through local systems, local authorities and local civil society actors, supporting locally led responses and avoiding the creation of parallel structures. Special attention will be given at the regional level to increasing technical support to ensure a consistently high quality of service delivery to displaced populations and host communities in all countries.

To assist States in addressing conflict and preventing recidivism and the further spread of violent extremism, IOM will support government-led disengagement,

disassociation, reintegration and reconciliation, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Reintegration efforts will prioritize the protection and safety of communities, ensuring that the return and reintegration of former non-State armed group members do not exacerbate local tensions or jeopardize community security. This will be coupled with broader peace and stabilization efforts to help address other root causes of displacement, such as the provision of sustainable livelihoods, the strengthening of social cohesion and the rehabilitation of essential services. A particular focus will be given to equipping youth at risk of joining violent extremist groups with vocational, emotional and life skills and the capacity to build positive social support networks, as well as strengthening their critical thinking and media literacy.

IOM supports national transitional justice efforts by building government and local capacities to design and implement reparation programmes. This includes aiding key national bodies and civil society in awareness-raising and data management for the verification of prospective beneficiaries of reparations programmes and other transitional justice purposes. Additionally, the Organization facilitates victim consultations and community dialogues on transitional justice needs and communal reconciliation. It also supports capacity-building for survivor networks and civil society to engage in advocacy for transitional justice. These efforts will increasingly be guided by the African Union Transitional Justice Policy.

To build on the success of multi-partner trust funds, IOM works with development partners, such as the Coastal States Stability Mechanism, and the web-based stabilization grants management system, to channel more support to local actors.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION

Migration and climate change are intricately linked, forming a complex interplay that significantly impacts individuals, communities and societies throughout West and Central Africa. The World Bank warns that 32 million people in West Africa could be compelled to move by 2050 because of slow-onset events, such as the disruption of rain patterns, land degradation and sea-level rise. For coastal urbanized countries, this internal climate migration could include large shares of the population. In fragile settings, such as in the Sahel, climate change acts as a threat multiplier, exacerbating security issues and competition for scarce natural resources. In response to these escalating challenges, IOM sets forth a comprehensive approach that aligns with objective 2 of the Global Compact, and the ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy.

IOM commits to facilitating the engagement of Member States in significant international forums, such as the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change. The Organization's work, particularly with civil society partners, will ensure that the voices of communities affected by climate change are heard. The Regional Office will continue working towards promoting continental and regional frameworks, such as the expanded Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change, and fostering dialogue among Member States and regional economic communities on the integration of climate mobility into national, regional and continental policies. This includes supporting the mainstreaming of human mobility into national adaptation plans and enhancing the capacities of policymakers to effectively address human mobility in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters.

In order to support decision makers and practitioners, IOM aims to continue deepening understanding of the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation and disasters on human mobility dynamics in the region, including forced immobility. This will inform evidence-based policies tailored to the unique challenges faced by climate-affected populations. With its academic and civil society partners, the Regional Office will continue to support the production of research and data on climate mobility to inform policy development and implementation. IOM will continue to document community perceptions of climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters to guide people-centred and solution-oriented policies.

Together with its partners, IOM leverages local knowledge to develop programmes that address the root causes of vulnerability, with a particular focus on enhancing early warning systems for disasters and promoting nature-based solutions and green jobs. IOM will also continue to advocate fair and balanced access to climate finance at community level for the scaling up of action. Through community-based programming that is inclusive of migrants, the Organization aims to enhance the resilience of affected communities and social cohesion. This involves implementing solutions and initiatives responding to the multidimensional challenges faced by communities in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters, such as diversifying livelihoods and capacity-building.

IOM prioritizes supporting government and stakeholder operations to directly serve people on the move, together with fostering sustainable livelihoods through the development of skills on nature-based solutions and the rehabilitation of natural resources and biodiversity. The Organization endeavours to contribute to building a region that is better prepared to face the challenges of climate mobility, ensuring safety, security and sustainable livelihoods for all affected populations.

In a region where youth is predominant, IOM recognizes the crucial role that youth play in climate action and in decision-making processes related to human mobility in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters. In line with the Global Youth Statement, launched during the eighteenth United Nations Climate Change Conference of Youth, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in November 2023, IOM is committed to facilitating youth engagement in decision-making related to safeguarding mobile populations, promoting solutions for people to stay and move, and allocating provisions for human mobility within the loss and damage and adaptation funds.



At the intersection of climate change and conflict, IOM supports local communities and government authorities in mapping key transhumance corridors and gathering data on their movement patterns, volume, and socioeconomic characteristics, including real-time data. Stakeholders, including pastoralists, are trained to use the data to better coordinate activities and prevent conflicts over land and water resources and allow for the continuation of this valuable livelihood. This approach of working with partners to develop methodologies that involve joint data collection and analysis, leading to the co-design, co-implementation and eventual handover to government and community stakeholders, will continue to be a feature of IOM's solutions activity in the region.

IOM promotes the establishment of government-led durable solutions platforms that facilitate coordinated efforts among stakeholders to create comprehensive, context-specific solutions that promote stability, security, and social cohesion in affected communities. The Organization will seek to improve capacities to facilitate community-based planning processes that empower local authorities and communities to take

the lead. Participatory mechanisms that involve all stakeholders, including youth, women and minorities, will ensure that planning and development processes are inclusive, reflect the diverse needs of the community and promote sustainability.

IOM will continue to expand its work on gathering displacement data, as well as on the Stability Index and intention surveys, to provide recommendations for programming.

In coordination with Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Organization supports the resettlement of refugees from the region through case management, health assessments at migration health assessment centres, movement management, and pre-departure and post-arrival integration efforts. By coordinating with governments and other partners in receiving countries, IOM will not only seek to facilitate the physical relocation of refugees, but also to ensure access to health care and integration into host societies, emphasizing the importance of a humane and protection-oriented approach.



## Priority 3: Facilitating pathways for regular migration

Recognizing the pivotal role of migration in achieving sustainable development, IOM is committed to supporting governments to identify and facilitate regular pathways across the region and beyond. This commitment is driven by the dual goals of enhancing a diverse range of migrants' access to regular migration options for work, study and humanitarian reasons, and reducing the incidence of irregular migration, which exposes individuals to dangerous and exploitative conditions.

As high- and middle-income countries with ageing populations increasingly look to West and Central Africa to address labour demands, IOM will provide opportunities for governments in the region to learn from successful practices in other countries from the global South. This will allow governments to adapt gender-sensitive strategies that have effectively supported migrants through the migration continuum—encompassing pre-departure, migration and return—and apply the lessons learned to enhance their own migration and development policies. This will include promoting financial literacy among migrants and their families to better manage remittances, lowering remittance transfer costs to ensure more funds reach migrant families, and leveraging remittances for local and national development initiatives.

IOM aims to be a trusted partner of governments that wish to negotiate bilateral labour migration agreements that adequately protect their nationals. This includes protecting migrants entering the informal sectors, which are often highly feminized and unregulated. The Organization will support the certification and training of labour migrants so that they can compete on the international labour market and attract higher salaries. The Organization will also support governments in developing reintegration programmes for returning migrants, which include economic, social and psychological support.

Given the high level of interregional labour migration, IOM will continue to provide technical support to national governments and regional and subregional economic communities to develop policies to improve access to services for migrants and portability of social insurance. This will involve the development

of solutions that are appropriate to contexts where there are high rates of informal employment, often in rural locations. The International Labour Organization will be a key partner in IOM's labour migration work.

In industries that employ significant numbers of migrants, such as agriculture, construction and manufacturing, IOM will establish and maintain partnerships with private sector actors. These sectors are vital for economic development in the region and provide numerous employment opportunities for migrants. Collaboration will focus on promoting ethical recruitment, fair labour practices and integrating migrants into formal employment sectors, reducing the risk of exploitation and abuse and enhancing migrants' contributions to local, national and regional economies.

Together with members of the United Nations Network on Migration, including UNHCR, IOM will promote route-based approaches to prevent the loss of life of migrants in transit. This will be achieved through intercountry and interregional information-sharing and coordinated operations among actors to improve the protection of migrants, coordinate the identification of missing migrants, and assist migrants in situations of vulnerability.

IOM provides protection and assistance to migrants vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse and other rights violations. Institutional capacity-building will be further increased to ensure the sustainability of comprehensive programming to prevent and address smuggling of migrants and human trafficking. IOM will continue advocating the establishment of regional counter-trafficking programming to strengthen cross-border coordination with key stakeholders, which is key to prosecuting offenders and providing adequate, holistic assistance to victims of trafficking in countries of origin, transit and destination.

IOM's assisted voluntary return and reintegration efforts will play a crucial role in promoting inter-State cooperation aimed at assisting migrants who wish to return to their home countries from within the region or further afield. The provision of capacity development and advice on return, readmission and

sustainable reintegration as integral components of migration governance will ensure that States take the leading role and that migrant protection needs are identified and addressed. Assisted voluntary return and reintegration initiatives include pre-departure counselling, travel assistance and targeted reintegration support, such as skills development, job placements and access to education and health services.

IOM takes a holistic approach that considers physical, psychosocial and social aspects of health to address the unique challenges faced by migrants during different phases of their migration process. By collaborating with local, national and regional health authorities and partners, the Organization seeks to strengthen health systems in areas with large migrant populations, promote cross-border health protocols and support the mainstreaming of health care for migrants and refugees as part of efforts to achieve universal health coverage.

The Organization supports Member States and regional economic communities to improve border governance and to implement the African Union Strategy for a Better Integrated Border Governance, and will continue to focus on two fundamental areas: strengthening the presence and capacities of the State at borders, and promoting a rights-based approach to improving border governance through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society strategy. Through the Integrated Border Stability Mechanism, IOM works with key partners in this area, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. The approach comprises the enhancement of border infrastructure and equipment and identity management through the

deployment of a border management information system, which includes mobile means to control borders, capacity development for various law enforcement authorities and strengthening integrated border management to foster better information-sharing and regional cooperation and ensure the sustainability of interventions.

IOM will increase access to legal identity for migrants, including displaced populations, by collaborating with national governments, regional economic communities and international partners to develop and implement comprehensive identity management systems. This will entail the provision of technical assistance to improve civil registration and documentation processes so that they are inclusive of migrants, particularly those in situations of vulnerability. Such efforts will facilitate migrants' access to legal rights and services, reduce the risk of statelessness and support more effective governance and planning.

States will be assisted in undertaking diaspora-mapping exercises to inform the development and implementation of tailored diaspora engagement strategies specific to the capabilities and interests of diaspora groups. In fragile States, IOM will focus diaspora engagement initiatives on the critical role diaspora can play in rebuilding and stabilizing their countries of origin, and as influential advocates on the international stage for their home countries. In more stable contexts, diaspora groups will be supported to foster social and economic development in their countries of origin through investment, skills transfer and the creation of business opportunities that leverage their unique position and insights.



# SYNERGIES WITH REGIONAL PROCESSES

# SYNERGIES WITH REGIONAL PROCESSES

Countries and regional organizations in West and Central Africa are increasingly acknowledging the importance of effective migration governance.

Continental policies, such as Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment, aim to safeguard migrants' rights, facilitate regular migration opportunities, and foster cooperation on border management and migration governance. Intergovernmental organizations and economic communities, including ECOWAS, West African Economic and Monetary Union, ECCAS, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Mano River Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Liptako-Gourma Authority, share overarching objectives that include enhancing regional migration management. The Migration Dialogue for Central African States, established by ECCAS, and the Migration Dialogue for West Africa, established by ECOWAS, are platforms for the majority of countries within these regions to discuss, develop and implement coordinated migration management policies.

These organizations and communities work to facilitate the free movement of persons and goods across their Member States, fostering economic, social and cultural integration and improving intraregional trade and labour mobility. Additionally, they engage in security cooperation to effectively manage borders and combat cross-border crime, such as the smuggling of migrants, human trafficking and terrorism.

Beyond security, they provide forums to address crises and humanitarian responses to displacement caused by conflicts or natural disasters. They are also at the forefront of managing the significant cross-border pastoral and agropastoral activities to ensure the sustainability of these livelihoods in a context in which there is significant pressure on agricultural and water resources. Each community's efforts are tailored to its unique regional context, while being united in their ambition to transform migration into a source of prosperity and mutual development for all Member States.

All countries in West and Central Africa are signatories to the Global Compact, and as such, participate in the International Migration Review Forum, in addition to related regional reviews. Many countries in the region are also members of the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development (Rabat Process), a regional migration dialogue bringing together countries of origin, transit and destination along the migration routes linking West, Central and North Africa with Europe.

# PARTNERSHIPS

# PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout the region, IOM is a long-standing partner of national governments, civil society, private sector actors, academia and the United Nations system. Member States and national governments are the primary partners across all of the Organization's efforts; these partnerships are essential for shaping policies and implementing migration initiatives effectively at both the national and regional levels. In addition, the Organization actively engages with and promotes multi-actor partnerships at the international level that enhance cooperation on migration and mobility, such as the Africa–European Union Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment.

IOM intends to increase its engagement with regional entities, such as ECOWAS and ECCAS, to advance regional integration and encourage the reinvigoration of regional cooperation platforms, such as the Migration Dialogue for West Africa and the Migration Dialogue for Central African States. The Organization will enhance existing partnerships and seek new ones at regional and subregional levels—in the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, Liptako-Gourma region and the Mano River Basin—in line with the African Union continental priorities and Agenda 2063.

The Organization will strengthen collaboration with international and regional financial institutions, such as the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the African Development Bank.

IOM serves as the Coordinator and Secretariat of the United Nations Network on Migration. Together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, IOM co-chairs the regional network to ensure effective and coherent system-wide support to implementation, including the capacity-building mechanism, as well as the follow-up and review of the Global Compact. These efforts will be reinforced by country-level networks, of which there were 15 in 2024.

IOM collaborates closely with UNHCR to address the needs of refugees by facilitating resettlement, providing transportation assistance and ensuring protection for those in situations of vulnerability.

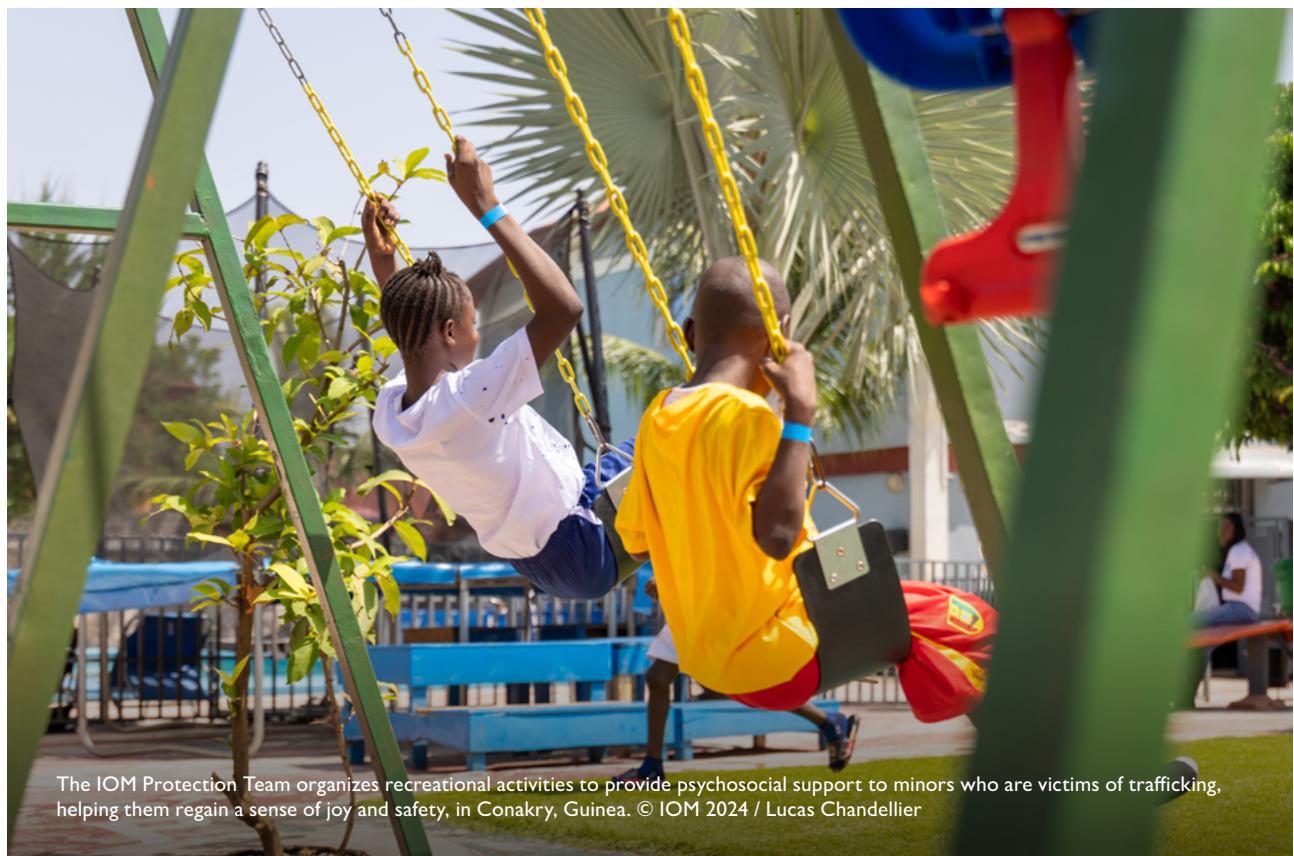
The Organization brings together academics and researchers from across the region to bolster migration research and data collection and enrich the evidence base to inform effective policymaking and programme development. IOM will seek to increase collaboration with universities that are active in migration studies to build networks of migration research professionals. Ultimately, these efforts will ensure that issues affecting West and Central Africa are adequately reflected in global discussions around migration.

IOM will seek to increase collaboration with the private sector across its three strategic objectives, through initiatives such as leveraging private sector logistics, resources and networks to enhance humanitarian assistance; engaging local companies in reconstruction and development projects to support durable solutions; and increasing access to decent work through ethical recruitment practices and support for migrant integration into new work environments.

IOM recognizes the indispensable role that civil society plays in the field of migration and is committed to forging strong partnerships at local, national and international levels. Strong coordination enhances operational effectiveness by extending the reach of initiatives to often hard-to-access areas and populations, ensuring that migration policies and programmes are implemented efficiently across a broad geographic spectrum. Furthermore, advocacy efforts are more effective if they are developed by working closely with partners to prioritize messages and determine the most effective methods for their delivery, ensuring that key issues are communicated effectively to influence policy and public opinion. Youth Ambassadors will support the Organization in taking a more inclusive and sustainable approach to migration, emphasizing the active participation of youth as agents of change within their communities and beyond. IOM engages with organizations for people with disabilities, recognizing the unique challenges that migrants with disabilities face throughout the migration continuum. Their expertise is essential to ensure that programmes are accessible and responsive to the needs of people with disabilities, fostering greater equity and inclusion.

A key aspect of the Organization's partnership approach will be an emphasis on localization, in line with the Grand Bargain. By prioritizing local capacities and knowledge, IOM will foster more sustainable, culturally sensitive and relevant solutions to the complex migration dynamics in the region. This will not only enhance the effectiveness of interventions, but also promote local ownership and accountability

in managing migration, leveraging the strengths of each sector to improve outcomes for migrants and communities across the region. In a context where conflict and violent extremism are on the rise, empowering local communities and civil society will be key to building resilience, promoting social cohesion and fostering peace.



The IOM Protection Team organizes recreational activities to provide psychosocial support to minors who are victims of trafficking, helping them regain a sense of joy and safety, in Conakry, Guinea. © IOM 2024 / Lucas Chandellier

# CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES



# CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES

## CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

IOM will establish and provide oversight of country-level processes aimed at supporting the operationalization of conflict sensitivity into operations and programmes. This will include the inclusion of conflict sensitivity into office-level systems, such as human resource policies, financial processes, procurement analyses, and security assessments. The Organization will invest in specialized training, tools and guidance for its staff and partners on conflict sensitivity, equipping them with the skills to effectively understand and navigate complex conflict dynamics. It will also strengthen partnerships with local organizations that have deep insights into the sociopolitical landscapes of their communities, ensuring more nuanced and culturally appropriate interventions.

## INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The IOM leadership will oversee an organizational culture and internal systems that promote integrity, accountability and transparency. It will measure progress against clearly defined goals and objectives, which will improve the visibility of the Organization's results for Member States and the people it serves. IOM will facilitate transparent discussions about its results and take corrective actions where necessary. It continues to strengthen its response to ethical challenges faced by its workforce, and by the individuals and communities with which it works.

## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

IOM strives to uphold the dignity and human rights of all persons throughout their migration journey. The Organization will address unequal opportunities and outcomes experienced by migrants and its staff based on sex, gender, age, race, ethnicity or disability. It will systematically dismantle the attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers preventing it from achieving its targets. These efforts will be underpinned by meaningful consultations with, active participation of, and representation by all sectors of society, including youth, Indigenous communities and women.

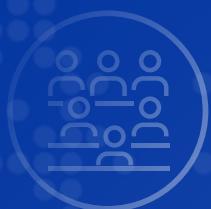
## PROTECTION-CENTRED APPROACHES

IOM is committed to placing the human rights and well-being of all migrants at the centre of its operations and decision-making. It will support the efforts of States to fulfil their responsibilities to reduce protection risks and address the needs of the most vulnerable. It will be guided by rights-based approaches across its migration programming, demonstrate commitment to child safeguarding, involve the individuals and communities it serves in decision-making, and protect them from sexual exploitation and abuse.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

IOM will lead environmental sustainability innovation for impact and scale in the humanitarian and migration management sector. Caring for people and the planet is one of the Organization's core values, and it is committed to mainstreaming environmental sustainability into its projects and programmes, and facilities management and operations. IOM will implement an ambitious environmental governance and environmental management system, drawing upon United Nations system-wide commitments.

# ENABLERS



# ENABLERS



## WORKFORCE

IOM is firmly committed to enhancing the capacity of its workforce and fostering a working environment conducive to delivering on the promise of migration. This commitment will be realized through the implementation of comprehensive professional development initiatives designed to strengthen staff skills throughout the region. IOM places great emphasis on the well-being of staff and the promotion of a work-life balance. Furthermore, it is committed to respecting and promoting diversity within its workforce, as it believes that diverse teams bring a wealth of ideas, experiences and perspectives that are essential for the Organization's growth and success. IOM believes that every member of its team should have the opportunity to grow and develop professionally.



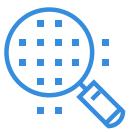
## PARTNERSHIPS

Long-term partnerships built on trust mean that IOM will have the appropriate networks and entry points in place to deliver multidimensional, whole-of-society and whole-of-government solutions. IOM is committed to developing more equitable partnerships with national and local actors and advocating that they play a more central role in developing and delivering migration-related policies and programming. This includes simplifying the implementation of partnership systems and practices. The Organization will leverage its convening role on migration, not least through its capacity as Coordinator and Secretariat of the United Nations Network on Migration and its membership of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.



## FUNDING

IOM will enhance its innovative financing capacity to complement traditional resource mobilization and transition from project-based delivery towards programmes with a mix of short-, medium- and long-term interventions to address diverse needs in the region. The Organization will continue to explore private sector partnerships and other non-traditional funding mechanisms to diversify funding sources. To clarify its value proposition, IOM will develop and implement a resource mobilization strategy that aligns with regional needs and priorities while ensuring efficient resource utilization. Transparent reporting and assessments will be an integral part of this enhanced value proposition approach.



## DATA AND EVIDENCE

IOM and its partners will be the principal source of migration and displacement data for action, which helps save lives and deliver solutions: data for insight, which help facilitate regular migration pathways; and data for foresight, which help drive anticipatory action. The Organization will continue its collaboration with other humanitarian, development and academic actors to share knowledge on migration data and to engage in joint research projects. IOM will increasingly work to develop standardized data collection tools and methodologies within the region, ensuring interoperability and comparability across different organizations. These initiatives will also involve joint capacity-building and technical assistance to enhance global and regional data management and analysis capabilities.



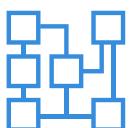
## LEARNING AND INNOVATION

This Strategy embraces the role of innovation in what IOM implements and how it does so. IOM will bring together the expertise of regional and country offices to explore opportunities to harness innovation. Innovation will include the adoption of new technologies to deliver services, collect data and information, including big data, and use of artificial intelligence for analysis. Knowledge management is likewise fundamental, and IOM will leverage the resources available for staff learning to ensure cross-fertilization across the region and the Organization.



## COMMUNICATION

Communication is an important aspect of IOM's work in the West and Central Africa region. The Organization will increase investment in this area in order to better advocate for sound migration governance, migrants' rights and IOM's contributions and its overall mandate. IOM will contribute to a positive narrative of migration to counter xenophobic trends, as part of the United Nations system, recognizing that speaking with one voice will strengthen the collective United Nations position in the region. IOM's communication and advocacy strategy will also ensure that people will make informed migration choices, countering misinformation on migration routes.



## INTERNAL SYSTEMS

IOM commits to strengthening its corporate governance through the integration of new enterprise resource planning solutions, which is expected to revolutionize internal processes, ensuring increased transparency and operational efficiency. Aligned with the Organization's dedication to improving processes, IOM will improve its ability to identify and manage financial and operational risks. Moreover, it will empower stakeholders for efficient reporting of fraud and other violations on defined organizational policies and procedures, through initiatives such as awareness-raising campaigns. In this way, IOM will lead on a comprehensive approach to corporate governance, compliance, internal process review and risk management within the broader restructuring efforts, reinforcing its unwavering commitment to ensuring resources are efficiently and effectively utilized.



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