



West and Central Africa Region

COVID-19 Situation Report No. 9

United Nations Population Fund



Reporting Period: 1 - 31 October 2020

Regional Highlights

- The West and Central Africa region is not experiencing a second wave of COVID-19 as seen on other continents. The WCA region has recorded a steady decrease of cases over the last two weeks.
- The total number of COVID-19 cases has reached over 247,429 in the 23 countries in West and Central Africa. By the end of October 2020, there were 3,770 deaths, with a mortality rate of about 1.5%. Nearly 15,000 (9.6%) patients were still under treatment, while 92.5% had recovered.
- The pandemic continues to spread at a much slower rate. The five countries with the highest confirmed caseloads are: Nigeria (63,036), Ghana (48,124), Cameroon (22,103), Côte d'Ivoire (20,753) and Senegal (15,630).
- Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea record the highest percentage of recovery: 98.3% 98% and 97.6% respectively, while Chad and Liberia have the highest case fatality rates, 6.5% and 5.8%.
- Health worker infections continue to increase gradually with 8,437 infections reported in 22 WCA countries since the beginning of the outbreak. Nigeria remains the most affected, with 2,175 health workers infected, followed by Ghana (2,065), Cameroon (808), Guinea (513), Equatorial Guinea (363), Senegal (349) and Guinea-Bissau (282).
- In collaboration with Care International and Plan International, UNFPA and the GBV AoR, organized a high-level side event “**Gender-Based Violence, Girls’ and Women’s Rights in the Central Sahel**”, on 16 October 2020 in advance of the High-level Ministerial Roundtable. The highly-attended side event drew attention to protection crisis, and the need to prevent and respond to GBV in Central Sahel.

Situation in Numbers

 **247,429** Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

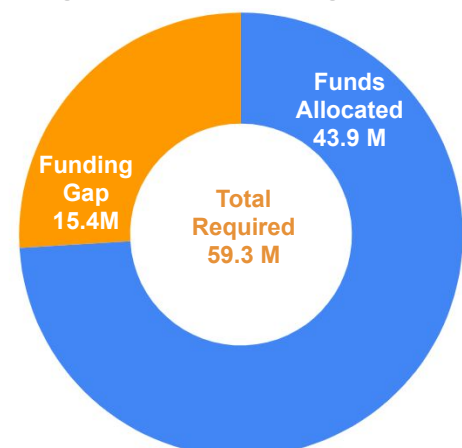
 **3,770** COVID-19 Deaths

Source: WHO, 4 November 2020

Key Population Groups

-  **13 M** Pregnant Women
-  **108 M** Women of Reproductive Age
-  **148 M** Young People (age 10-24)
-  **13 M** Older Persons (age 65+)

Funding Status for Region (US\$)



Regional Response Summary

Regional coordination and partnerships

UNFPA's response in the region aligns with the [2030 Agenda](#), [WHO global strategic preparedness and response plan](#), [UN-coordinated global humanitarian response plan](#), the [UN framework for socio-economic response to COVID-19](#), and the [UNFPA COVID-19 global response plan](#).

UNFPA participates in weekly meetings of the Regional UN Sustainable Development Group for West and Central Africa, attended by Regional Directors, to coordinate the UN response to the pandemic. The health, humanitarian and socio-economic challenges brought about by the pandemic require solidarity for a global response.

Three critical and complementary components of UN efforts are to save lives, protect people and build back better.

- The humanitarian response, as detailed in the OCHA-led COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, focuses on responding to immediate health and multi-sectoral humanitarian needs in particularly vulnerable countries.
- The health response, led by WHO and detailed in the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP), focuses on supporting public health measures to stop the transmission of the virus and to care for those affected. The adapted SPRP in the region has six pillars of the public health response: 1) country-level coordination, planning and monitoring; 2) risk communication and community engagement; 3) surveillance, laboratories and points of entry; 4) rapid response teams; 5) infection prevention and control and case management; and 6) operational support and logistics.
- The UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19, to mitigate the social and economic impacts of COVID-19, focuses on supporting governments and communities through five work streams: 1) protecting health services and systems; 2) ensuring social protection and basic services; 3) protecting jobs and small- and medium-sized enterprises; 4) supporting macroeconomic choices and international cooperation and multilateralism; and 5) enhancing social cohesion and community resilience.

UNFPA leadership on GBV in COVID-19 context

- Plan International, Care International, UNFPA and the Gender-Based Violence AoR organized a virtual event on 16 October 2020 at 3:30 PM CEST prior to the Ministerial Roundtable on Central Sahel. The event aimed to (i) amplify the voices and priorities of girls from Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger offering an unique opportunity to learn from first-hand-experience and receive recommendations from the affected girls; (ii) draw attention to the critical challenges to preventing and responding to GBV from local women's groups, and advocate for global solidarity around GBV; (iii) motivate governmental actors and donors to commit to strengthen the prevention, risk mitigation and response to GBV, raising the profile of the Call to Action on the protection of GBV in emergencies (CtA GBV) and ensuring the rights of women and girls are central to humanitarian action and across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding triple nexus.



1. Continuity of SRH services and interventions, including protection of health workforce

- In 17 countries in the region, UNFPA is leading life-saving SRH services through the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for reproductive health in emergencies.
- 111,964 women and youth accessed integrated SRH services in UNFPA-supported facilities in Liberia (62,800), Senegal (42,832), Sierra Leone (3,189), Guinea-Bissau (2,002), and Benin (1,141).
- In 12 countries, emergency obstetric and newborn care, per international recommended minimum standards, is guaranteed thanks to UNFPA support. (These countries are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal and Togo).
- In 7 countries, UNFPA is leading the national COVID-19 contact-tracing and case monitoring mechanisms (these countries are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Niger and Senegal).
- At least 16,458 safe deliveries were facilitated in UNFPA-supported facilities in Benin (3,647), Guinea-Bissau (114), Senegal (7,779), Sierra Leone (2,330) and Togo (2,588).
- Some 2,960 contact-tracers were trained and deployed with UNFPA support in Burkina Faso (700), Cabo Verde (60), Liberia (447), Niger (92) and Senegal (1,661).
- 2,712 contacts were traced with UNFPA support in Chad (50), Gambia (789) and Liberia (1873).

Country examples:

- **Burkina Faso:** To address the sexual and reproductive health concerns of young people and adolescents, Marie Stopes International in collaboration with UNFPA, set up a hotline. The toll-free number "3005" was launched as a continuation of the activities of the Youth HQ platform, launched in March 2018, and the operationalization ceremony took place on Thursday, 22 October in Ouagadougou. The hotline aims to meet the health needs and rights of young people in this context of COVID-19 and give the right information to young people about the virus.
- **Central African Republic:** 60 RH providers were trained in COVID-19 infection prevention and control for the continuity of RH services. Awareness campaigns were organized at the locations of 1,314 cabs of 100 male and female professionals. The Central African Network of People Living with HIV (RECAPEV) received 100 hand-washing kits, 100 boxes of soap of 80 pieces (80g). A total of 40 Community Relays (RECO) were trained on the fight against COVID-19. An awareness campaign took place in the 8 districts of Bangui by the trained RECOs: 1314 motorcycle cab drivers were reached, 100 sex workers and 30 deaf RECO youth were trained.
- **Ghana:** UNFPA-Ghana supported two Isolation centers with 26,150 hygiene items and COVID-19 personal protective equipment for both frontline health workers and those in quarantine. UNFPA-Ghana supported over 100 girls in the Tano North Municipality of the Ahafo Region Municipality with hygiene items such as sanitary pads, and COVID-19 preventive items (hand sanitizers and face masks), through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. UNFPA-Ghana in partnership with the Rebecca Foundation (First Lady's Foundation) and the Canadian Government, through the Girls Mentoring Program- Because I want to be, supported young girls with SRH information and interventions (including provision of hygiene items such as sanitary towels), and mentorship. On 25th October, it premiered the weekly 'Because I Want to Be' Series on national television to inspire young girls to take steps to reach their potential.
- **Guinea-Bissau:** Distributed 4 tents each for the UN Clinic, HNSM Maternity, the military hospital and Bafata regional hospital. From March to October 2020, 143 youth benefited from family planning consultations and early detection of COVID-19 in three health centers (Bamdin, Quelele, and Plaçk-II); 3536 people participated in STI/HIV prevention and referral sessions for full FP/HIV consultation; 1100 people participated in the community information sessions on COVID-19 prevention; and 524 posters distributed in the OIO region.
- **Liberia:** 27,317 childbirth deliveries took place with UNFPA support. Out of this number, 2049 were by C-section and 254 were via forceps or episiotomy. In addition, 114 women and girls were assisted by skilled providers during delivery at health facilities.

1. Continuity of SRH services and interventions (continued).

- **Mauritania:** Given the prison density in the context of COVID-19, UNFPA Mauritania donated several handwashing devices, hygiene products, and dignity kits to limit the spread of the virus in the prisons of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. UNFPA also distributed to the 45 women inmates in the prisons of Nouakchott (30) and Nouadhibou (15), a set of sewing machines and fabrics to make masks in order to initiate an income-generating activity to strengthen the livelihoods of this population.
- **Sao Tome and Principe:** The Santomean Health System was reinforced with three mobile clinics and equipment for Health Centers and Posts to insure the continuity of provision of the RH & family planning services in the remote communities, particularly in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was supported by a partnership between the Government, UNFPA and the UN- India Partnership Fund for Development.
- **Sierra Leone:** With support from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO, former DFID)-funded Saving Lives Programme through implementing partner Doctors with Africa (CUAMM), UNFPA Sierra Leone supported maternal health services in three of the five main referral hospitals. The safe deliveries supported were as follows: 509 at Princess Christian Maternal Hospital; 346 at Bo Hospital; and 185 at Makeni Hospital. A total of 990 mama and baby packs were distributed in September and October to encourage pregnant women to deliver in facilities with skilled support. These packs were distributed to seven hospital maternity wards within Sierra Leone.



A young girl using a sanitary pad for the first time under the Because I want to Be Initiative. Credit – UNFPA-GHANA



Life continues even after having a baby as an adolescent- The International Day of the Girl Child commemoration. Credit- UNFPA-GHANA



The trainer presenting the game themes to the participants. Credit- UNFPA-Guinea-Bissau



Official Donation Ceremony in the presence of the Gender Program Officer of UNFPA Mauritania. Credit- Mauritania

2. Addressing Gender-Based Violence

- In 16 countries, UNFPA is leading GBV prevention and response coordination mechanisms.
- In 14 countries, there is an alert mechanism in place to identify and report cases of GBV.
- 2,254 women and girls subjected to violence, including those with disabilities, have accessed essential services (health, social, police and justice) in Burkina Faso (117), Cabo Verde (58), Cameroon (217), Chad (1326), Congo (103) and Togo (433).

Country examples:

- **Burkina Faso:** Actions continued in four regions, namely the East, the Sahel, the North Center and the Boucle du Mouhoun, particularly in the fight against child marriages and FGM, through the animation of safe spaces for adolescent girls to strengthen their life skills and knowledge on SRH and GBV. A total of 338 safe spaces, (194 in the East, 34 in the Sahel, 100 in the Boucle du Mouhoun, and 10 in the Center North), were opened to benefit 8,725 adolescents (6,797 girls and 1,928 boys). A total of 22 actors (social workers, frontline health workers, security agents and justice agents) in the Center-North region were trained on gender-based violence, the referral mechanism, management services, guiding principles, frontline psychological support and coordination between the different actors involved in the management of GBV cases and the WSPs in the context of COVID19. 32 spaces were established within the framework of the CERF/COVID project for women and girls that continued to function to ensure the sustainability of the project's achievements.
- **Cabo Verde:** With support of UNFPA, a study on the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic in Gender Equality was carried out with the ICIEG (Cabo Verde Institute for Gender Equality), the implementing partner for the gender programme. The study was presented in October via Zoom with the presence of 70 partners, including the First Lady and other partners.
- **Central African Republic:** The prefectural GBV control committees of the Lobaye and Ombella M'poko were set up in October, followed by capacity building for the members of these committees on their roles, the basic concepts of GBV, and the referral pathway. Training of national stakeholders on the holistic management of GBV cases was conducted, along with the evaluation of 35 health facilities on their capacities to conduct clinical GBV case management.
- **Gambia:** To support the national GBV response under the line Ministry, in partnership with the PSSR Subcommittee Partners and UNFPA, the National GBV helpline aims to protect women and girls, providing increased access to information and services, including psychological first aid services. During the month of October, 1723 calls were received through the GBV helpline. Out of these, 126 received support and services and 524 received online remote psychological first aid services.
- **Ghana:** Seventy queen mothers are leading a nationwide campaign against early and forced marriages, in collaboration with UNFPA-Ghana and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. UNFPA-Ghana, in partnership with the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of the Ghana Police, supported the training of 50 investigators in Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) case management in Accra.
- **Guinea-Bissau:** 841 people participated in GBV STI/HIV prevention sessions.
- **Sierra Leone:** In October, UNFPA Sierra Leone renewed a messaging campaign targeting more than 31,200 mobile phone users across the country with text messages on ending gender-based violence. With the generous support of Irish Aid and the Government of China, together with UN Women, UNFPA Sierra Leone is supporting seven government one-stop centers providing services to GBV survivors nationwide. In Q3, the centers provided assistance to survivors in 111 cases of sexual penetration (minors), four cases of rape, and four instances of domestic violence.

2. Addressing Gender-Based Violence (continued)

- **Liberia:** Prevention intervention has been limited due to the competing priorities associated with limited funds. The inability of state actors and duty bearers to prioritize interventions that will help curb the incidence of GBV has negatively affected the prevalence of GBV in the country, especially the abuse of adolescents and teenage girls. In Liberia, the one-stop centers for handling cases of GBV are located at referral facilities, only. For example, both those who could afford out-of-pocket expenditures to access care at OSC (referral hospital), and those survivors who access care at primary care facilities, are very small compared to the daily reportage of GBV in the country (i.e the GBV survivors that access care at health facilities were recorded at 429 from January to September 2020- small compared to daily news). This means that the majority of those who need care are either lost to follow-up or that parents, guardians, or the community decided to compromise due to economic constraints. The lockdown and closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic influenced a new dynamic of vulnerabilities for survivors (they were stuck in homes with perpetrators and had nowhere to run). This exacerbated the GBV situation, which was already on the rise due to the socio-cultural norms that have embraced the perpetration of GBV, especially amongst women and girls. With the pending Senatorial election scheduled for December 2020, it is anticipated that there is going to be an increase in GBV despite the already high prevalence in the country.

Animation of a club for future spouses in Kantchari with respect to the wearing of masks and social distancing. Credit- Burkina Faso



Animation of a safe space in Namouno while respecting the wearing of masks and social distancing. Credit- Burkina Faso

3. Ensuring the supply of modern contraceptives and other reproductive health commodities

- There is a significant risk of contraceptive stockouts in four countries (Cameroon, Gabon, Gambia, Mauritania).
- A total of 645,930 couple-years of protection for contraceptives were procured by UNFPA, including condoms in Benin (41,152), Chad (203,583), Senegal (281,195) and Sierra Leone (120,000).

Country examples:

- **Burkina Faso:** From October 19 to 25, 2020, the national planning week was organised to help strengthen the mobilization of domestic resources for FP and other RH services. This national FP week is expected to reach 48770 new users.
- **Cabo Verde:** During the quarter, 17.217 male condoms were distributed at national level through a defined distribution circuit with Health National system, local associations and NGOs;
- **Central African Republic:** The organization of the International Contraception Day in October made it possible to sensitize 150 young people and 150 leaders in 10 districts of Bangui and the surrounding area; awareness campaigns by the mass media and town criers in the neighborhoods of these districts were organized; a caravan criss-crossed the main streets to deliver on messages and distribute pamphlets on the advantages of FP. The distribution and free installation of contraceptives in 10 fixed and mobile centers.
- **Gambia:** The Community based distribution approach was enhanced through the training of 50 new Community Based Distributors and the provision of sanitary materials. This has helped in improving access to Family Planning services in fifty additional communities.
- **Ghana:** UNFPA-Ghana in collaboration with the Ghana Health Service and Willows International, embarked on a door-to-door outreach to provide Family Planning information to residents of Mankyi in the Greater Accra region, as part of activities to mark this year's Family Planning week, reaching 550 people during this intervention.
- **Guinea-Bissau:** 29896 Condoms delivered at HIV prevention sessions in the cities of Bissau, Mansoa, Gabu and Buba; Distribution of medical products with response to COVID-19 to the COES of the 11 sanitary regions of the Country and Clinic of the UN, the following: i, Latex non sterile examination gloves (100 units package)-150; ii. Sterile surgical gloves n° 7 and 8: 60400 units; iii. Gynecological Gloves: 10083; iv. Cotton Roll 150 units;
- **Liberia:** UNFPA Liberia continues to ensure a sustained supply of SRHR commodities and services to women and young people during the Pandemic. Apart from the regular RH commodities, UNFPA Liberia supports the mental rehabilitation and social-reintegration of disadvantaged youth (classified as Zogos- males & Zogees -females). Using a model called "reaching them within their communities" the CO has contributed to a reduction in out-of-pocket expenditures associated with accessing health care services at the three Drop-in-Centers under the "Socio-Economic Empowerment of Disadvantaged Youth- SEED for short". The Community Outreach services have reached more than 3.500 Disadvantaged youth within a month as compared to the same number reached since the beginning of the project (March 2019 - September 2020). The lesson is that dealing with young people holistically goes beyond SRHR to include their mental and social wellbeing. Studies/research have shown that drug use can have an adverse effect on the sexual and reproductive health wellbeing of those who are using drugs. For example HIV prevalence among MSM, who largely used drugs increased from 19.8% in 2013 to 37% in 2018 (a 17.3 % increase).
- **Mauritania:** UNFPA Mauritania continued to ensure the distribution of contraceptive methods, including during the COVID-19 pandemic period. The UNFPA representation took the opportunity of the launch of the national family planning campaign (from 26 September to 26 November 2020) to increase the distribution of FP means in addition to essential drugs, particularly through the involvement of professional associations and civil society working in the field of disability and the fight against slavery. The goal is to provide 15,500 women of childbearing age with modern methods of contraception and to recruit 7,200 new women users.

3. Ensuring the supply of modern contraceptives and other reproductive health commodities

Country examples:

- **Sao Tome and Principe:** UNFPA Sao Tome and Principe continues to ensure a sustained supply of SRHR commodities and services to women and young people during the pandemic. It facilitated mobile teams access to rural and inaccessible communities using mobile clinics that offer FP consultations and distribution of contraceptive methods
- **Sierra Leone:** UNFPA Sierra Leone delivered injectable contraceptives to the central medical stores. These supplies are estimated to protect more than 140,000 couples for a period of one year. In addition, two key life-saving maternal health medicines (Oxytocin and Magnesium Sulphate), were delivered to the central medical stores. These medicines help prevent maternal deaths due to the two major causes (postpartum hemorrhage and severe hypertension).

Socio Economic Empowerment of Disadvantaged (SEED) Youth Project in Liberia



Disadvantaged youths awaiting service delivery during outreach activity in Gobe Chop Community, Red-Light



Young people engaging with the community during the door to door outreach on family planning. Photo credit- UNFPA-Ghana



Service providers and Clients granted cover heads and masks to insure the continuity of provision of the RH, Family planning and Obstetric Care services. Photo credit- UNFPA-Sao Tome and Principe

UNFPA raises awareness, shares guidance and showcases achievements through media outreach.

In collaboration with Care International, Plan International, UNFPA and GBV AoR, a high-level side event was organised on the theme: “**Gender-Based Violence, Girls’ and Women’s Rights in the Central Sahel**”, on 16 October 2020. The highly-attended side event drew attention to the gaps and needs to prevent GBV in Central Sahel.

The Regional Office continues to participate in the regional working group on Risk Communications and Community Engagement (RCCE), with UNICEF as lead and WHO as co-lead. The RCCE group runs a media campaign to raise awareness on COVID-19 response through a multilingual website. The website includes some local languages most spoken by people across the region.

Country examples:

- **Cabo Verde:**

- <https://caboverde.un.org/pt/97129-COVID-19-e-desigualdade-de-genero-planeamento-com-perspetiva-de-genero-e-essencial-para>
- <https://expressodasilhas.cv/pais/2020/10/24/elas-eles-e-o-trabalho-em-tempos-de-pandemia/71840>
- <https://noticiasdonorte.publ.cv/108638/icieg-apresenta-estudo-impacto-da-COVID-19-na-desigualdade-de-genero-no-pais/>

- **Gambia:**

- <https://gambia.unfpa.org/en/news/leveraging-power-youth-strengthen-community-contact-tracing-and-surveillance>
- <https://gambia.unfpa.org/en/video/supporting-physical-health-and-wellness-quarantine-centres-gambia>
- <https://gambia.unfpa.org/en/news/nurses-and-doctors-trained-clinical-management-rape>

- **Ghana:**

- <https://mobile.classfmonline.com/news/general/2021-Population-and-Housing-Census-to-be-conducted-in-April-May-19643>
- <https://newsghana.com.gh/gender-ministry-implores-parents-to-strengthen-relationship-with-girls/>
- <https://newsghana.com.gh/gender-ministry-holds-annual-summit-with-stakeholders/>
- <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/UNFPA-Gender-Department-present-sanitary-products-to-school-girls-in-Tano-North-1084144>

- **Sierra Leone:**

- [Sharing life skills in the face of a pandemic: Sierra Leone’s teens in action](#)
- [Improving quality obstetric care services to reduce maternal and newborn mortality in Sierra Leone](#)
- [Saving lives has never been more harrowing](#)
- [Youth leading the way in COVID-19 solutions](#)
- [International youth day — inspiration in action, Isatta’s story](#)

- **Sao Tome and Principe**

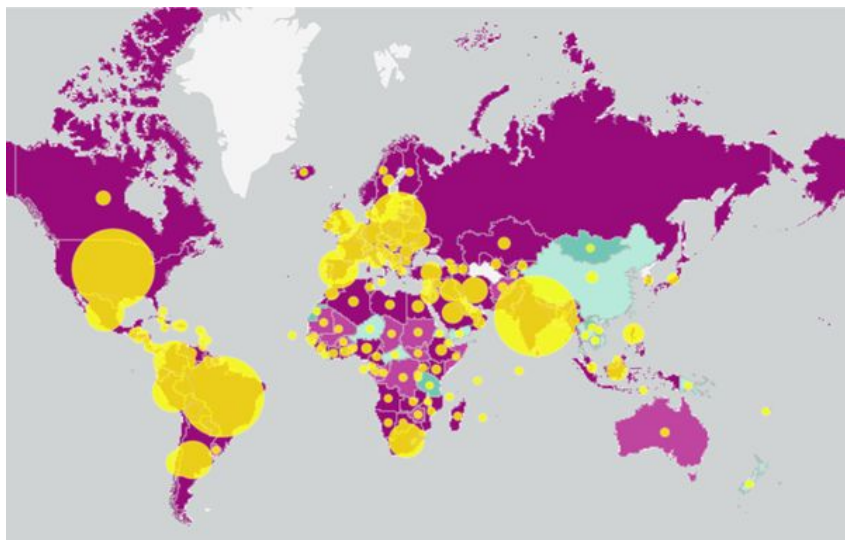
- <https://twitter.com/UNFPASaoTome/status/1291864367441620994>
- <https://saotomeandprincipe.unfpa.org/pt/news/t%C3%A9cnicos-de-sa%C3%BAdede-reprodutiva-familiarizam-se-com-os-equipamentos-das-cl%C3%ADnicas-m%C3%B3veis>
- <https://saotomeandprincipe.unfpa.org/pt/news>
- <https://twitter.com/UNFPASaoTome/status/1291864367441620994>
- <https://www.telanon.info/sociedade/2020/08/07/32314/3-clinicas-moveis-reforcam-os-cuidados-basicos-de-saude-em-sao-tome/>

- **Senegal:**

- [Fight against COVID-19: girls’ clubs make soaps](#)
- [Launch of a distribution campaign of 25,000 masks](#)

Confirmed Cases and Deaths (UNFPA programme countries) WHO, 4 November 2020

Country	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Benin	2,683	41
Burkina Faso	2,517	67
Cabo Verde	8,882	95
Cameroon	22,103	429
Central African Republic	4,866	62
Chad	1,499	98
Congo Republic	5,348	92
Côte d'Ivoire	20,753	126
Equatorial Guinea	5,089	83
Gabon	8,984	55
Gambia	3,672	119
Ghana	48,124	320
Guinea	12,213	73
Guinea-Bissau	2,413	41
Liberia	1,426	82
Mali	3,573	136
Mauritania	7,725	163
Niger	1,221	69
Nigeria	63,036	1,147
Sao Tome and Principe	949	16
Senegal	15,630	325
Sierra Leone	2,366	74
Togo	2,357	57
Total number of cases	247,429	3,770



See UNFPA's [COVID-19 Population Vulnerability Dashboard](#) for real-time updates