West and Central Africa
Education in Emergencies
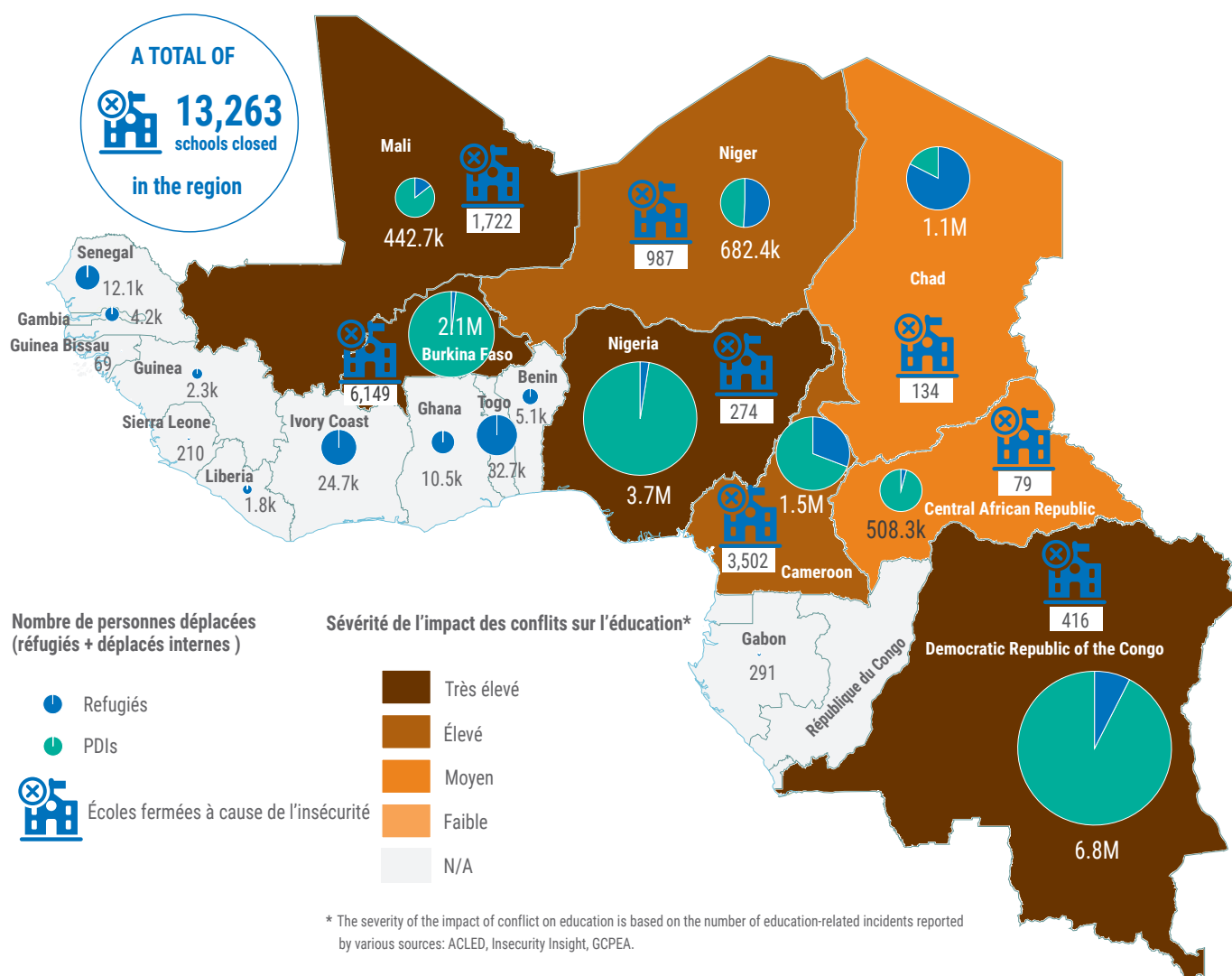**Working Group**

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EDUCATION UNDER ATTACK
IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA
2023 UPDATE

Summary Analysis

The number of schools closed in West and Central Africa due to attacks by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG), occupation by armed forces, a general climate of insecurity, direct threats to the lives of pupils and school staff, and the outright fear faced by children, families, teachers and communities has increased over the past year to reach over 13,250, impacting an estimated 2.5 million children's learning, wellbeing and protection. While this represents a modest 7 per cent annual rise, this average conceals some highly contrasted evolutions.

Burkina Faso is most notable. The number has increased by close to 33 per cent, to reach 6,150; today 1 in every 4 schools is closed in the country. DRC has also seen a stark increase, by the same proportion yet on a smaller scale, to reach 410, following the deterioration of the conflict in the Eastern regions of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri. In Chad the number of schools closed has increased over tenfold, to reach 134. Fortunately, these trends are contrasted by those of Nigeria and the Central African Republic, where over 70 per cent and 90 per cent of those schools closed in September 2022 have since re-opened to pupils.

Education Attacks and Displacement Trends in West & Central Africa

A TOTAL OF
13,263 schools closed
in the region

Mali — 442.7k — 1,722
Senegal — 12.1k
Gambia — 4.2k
Guinea Bissau — 69
Guinea — 2.3k
Sierra Leone — 210
Liberia — 1.8k
Ivory Coast — 24.7k
Burkina Faso — 2.1M — 6,149
Ghana — 10.5k
Togo — 32.7k
Benin — 5.1k
Niger — 682.4k — 987
Chad — 1.1M — 134
Nigeria — 3.7M — 274
Central African Republic — 508.3k — 79
Cameroon — 1.5M — 3,502
Gabon — 291
République du Congo
Democratic Republic of the Congo — 6.8M — 416

Nombre de personnes déplacées (réfugiés + déplacés internes)

- Refugiés
- PDIs
- Écoles fermées à cause de l'insécurité

Sévérité de l'impact des conflits sur l'éducation*

- Très élevé
- Élevé
- Moyen
- Faible
- N/A

* The severity of the impact of conflict on education is based on the number of education-related incidents reported by various sources: ACLED, Insecurity Insight, GCPEA.

Sources: UNHCR, ACLED, Insecurity Insight, GCPEA, Education Clusters (based on latest available data on schools closed).
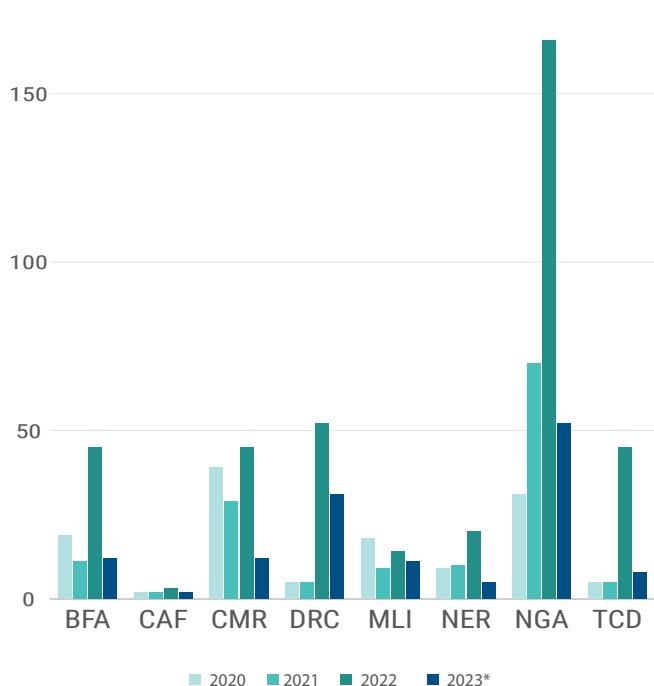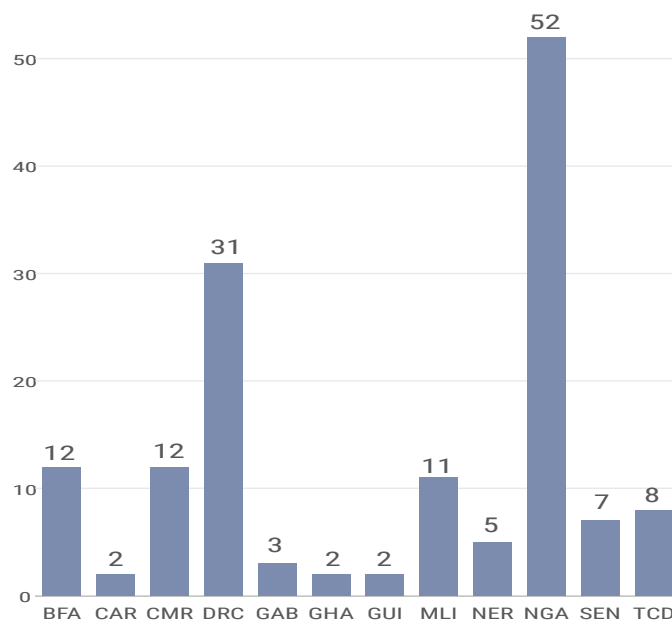
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"In the town of Pama alone, we have over a thousand pupils but there are only six permanent teachers and six volunteers. There is a shortage of materials, reading materials, tables and benches, and many other things. Given the large number of pupils, our latrines are in poor condition. There are no more doors - it embarrasses young girls when they have their periods. For the moment, the most pressing need is the school canteen. We have over a thousand pupils. So, we're not sure that the children can have one meal a day. Often, we must stop lessons because there have been shootings here and there. When we hear gunfire, we ask the children to get down on the ground so as not to be hit by bullets or other objects. We also ask the children to stay put, not to start running at random. This is very confusing, because if you tell the children to take cover first, for at least perhaps an hour or two while we were carrying out an activity, it means that the activity is blocked, paralysed, and may even take all day. You can't pull yourself together easily."

Kampaari, primary school teacher in Pama, an area under blockade, where only two of the town's eight primary schools have remained open (Burkina Faso).
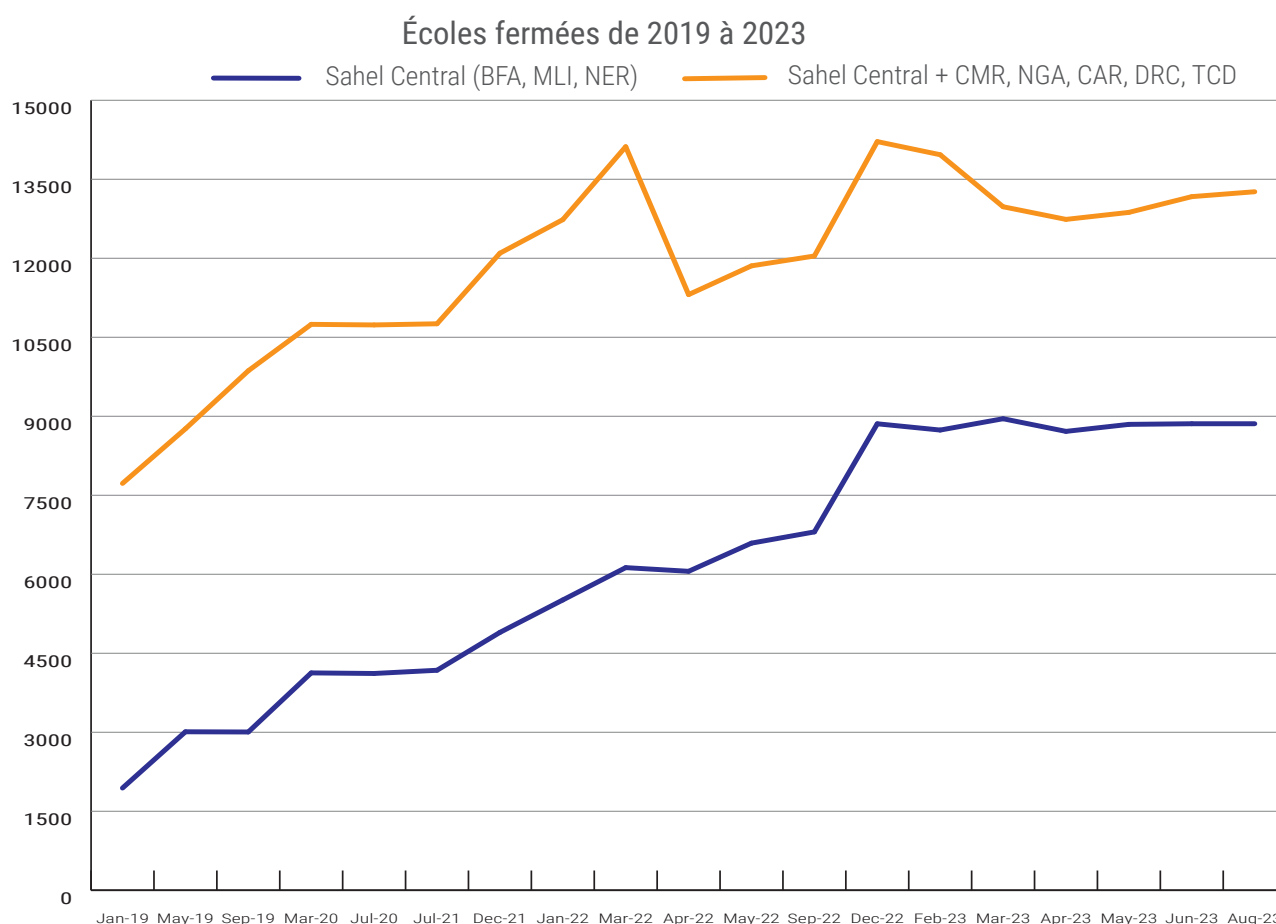
There have been a total of 147 incidents against education between January and August 2023

Sources: ACLED, Insecurity Insight, GCPEA.

Source: ACLED, Period January 1st - August 25th, 2023 .

Écoles fermées de 2019 à 2023

Sahel Central (BFA, MLI, NER) — Sahel Central + CMR, NGA, CAR, DRC, TCD

Recommendations

In line with the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 2601 on the protection of schools in armed conflict[1], we call on governments, all parties to conflict and the international community to:

1- Adopt holistic, integrated and multisectoral approaches to the implementation of the Safe Schools protocols and frameworks

• Governments should ensure that decision making bodies, and inclusive and transparent coordination mechanisms are put in place and functioning to operationalize and implement the *Safe School Declaration* (SSD)[2].

• Governments and the international community should ensure stronger cooperation and coordination between protection and education stakeholders for the development of operational strategies for the prevention and mitigation of the impact of attacks on education.

• Governments should take a holistic view to build school resilience in the face of conflict, disasters, and climate change, by seeking to optimize the institutional, technical and

implementation convergence and synergies of the SSD with other relevant frameworks, such as the *Comprehensive School Safety Framework* (CSSF)[3], *the Safe to Learn initiative [4]*, and the *Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies* (INEE) Minimum Standards[5], as appropriate.

2- Immediately negotiate the non-occupation of schools by parties to conflict and re-opening of closed schools

• Governments should take concrete measures - for example, through legislation, standing orders, and training - to end the military use of schools, and at a minimum, implement the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict [6]*.

• The international community should ensure that civil military coordination mechanisms document the military use of schools and rapidly identify concrete measures to end it.

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3 GADRRRES (2022). Comprehensive School Safety Framework 2022-2030.

4 Global Partnership and Fund to End Violence Against Children (2016). Safe to Learn initiative.

5 INEE (2010). Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery.

6 GCPEA (2014). Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

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1 United Nations Security Council (2021). Resolution 2601 on the protection of schools in armed conflict.

2 GCPEA (2015). Safe Schools Declaration.

• Governments and the international community should use the SSD to push Non-State Armed Group leaders to respect International Humanitarian Law by issuing command orders, adopting internal policies, creating a code of conduct, or signing and implement Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict*[7]. These initiatives should include, at a minimum, commitments to stop recruitment and use of children under 18 years of age, and to prevent sexual and gender-based violence by combatants (including by halting all forced and child marriages).

• Governments and partners should immediately negotiate the reopening of closed schools through community-based mediation and negotiation approaches.

3- Develop and implement response plans based on quantitative & qualitative data, prioritizing the most at risk

• Governments, international humanitarian and development organizations, and civil society should implement the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack's *Toolkit for Collecting and Analyzing Data on Attacks on Education*[8] to identify monitoring and reporting gaps.

• Based on the gaps identified, governments should establish mechanisms to reinforce monitoring and reporting of attacks on education (including incidents of sexual violence and specific threats to female students and teachers) with:

- Disaggregated data by type of attack on education, sex, age, location, person or group responsible; number of days the school was closed (as a result of a direct attack or of threats made against teachers and students);

- Type of school to improve efforts to prevent and respond to attacks on education.

• Governments and the international community should establish early warning systems and emergency response plans (in consultation with school communities), build the capacity of education personnel and train children and teachers in self-protection, including through the *Safe Schools Common Approach*[9].

• Governments and the international community should increasingly prioritize children living in hard-to-reach areas, as well as other marginalized children, including internally displaced children and refugees.

• Coastal countries (Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Togo) should urgently strengthen all prevention and response plans to protect schools and educational continuity in the event of a rapid deterioration of the security situation.

4- Reinforce alternative, innovative, accelerated, and flexible learning solutions for educational continuity

• Governments and partners should introduce or expand initiatives that promote continued learning for children who have had to drop out of school or those that have had long interruptions in their learning on the other. This requires ministries to be flexible in their approaches and requires partners to be innovative and experiment with various alternative education options including distance learning.

• Education stakeholders need to work with Koranic education structures, understanding that they are often the only ones that remain open in the current context where education is under attack, promote the inclusion of foundational literacy and numeracy therein, and support pathways to continued education for their learners.

5- Expand and improve psychosocial support to children, their teachers, and caregivers

• Governments and partners should provide increased group and individual psychosocial and socioemotional learning support to stressed and traumatized children and their teachers, recognizing that the former cannot learn, and the latter cannot teach.

6- Increase predictable flexible and long-term financing for education in emergencies

• Ministries of education should advocate to ministries of finance and budget for increased budget allocations that allow for flexible disbursements.

• Donors should promote synergies and complementarities of funding to ensure the best usage thereof, and fund specific measures to prevent, mitigate, and respond to attacks on education across the development-humanitarian nexus.

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7 Geneva Call (2013). Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict.

8 GCPEA (2021). Toolkit for Collecting and Analyzing Data on Attacks on Education.

9 Transforming Education Summit (2022). Safe Schools Common Approach.