VULNERABILITY AMONG IOM ASSISTED

MIGRANTS IN NORTH AFRICA

IOM
UN MIGRATION

COVER
IOM organizes migrants transfer to the Tripoli airport for AVR. © IOM Tripoli 2020

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KEY HIGHLIGHTS

North Africa remains a significant destination, transit, and origin for international migration, with migrants often facing vulnerabilities and requiring support and protection.

During the period of 2021-2022, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) played a crucial role in identifying and registering migrants in North Africa through two key programmatic interventions, particularly those seeking Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration (AVRR) and Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants (AVM) support.

During this period, IOM identified and registered within its internal case management platform, Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA), over 68,000 migrants in North Africa. Libya's mission accounted for almost half of the registered migrants.

Most individuals were young males with basic education, originating mainly from nearby countries. Sudan emerged as the most common country of origin for identified and registered migrants, followed by several West African countries including Guinea, Nigeria, Mali, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, and Senegal.

During the two-year period, IOM identified approximately 9,800 migrants vulnerable to violence, exploitation, neglect, deprivation and abuse, including victims of trafficking, individuals with health needs, and unaccompanied or separated children. They constituted a subset that represented 14 percent of all assisted migrants present in IOM's records.

Within the subset of migrants in vulnerable situations, Sudan had the highest number of cases in North Africa overall, driven by health needs. Nigeria ranked first for victims of trafficking, and Guinea topped the list for assisted unaccompanied or separated children within the region.

The primary nationalities among the identified, registered and vulnerable migrants comprise Sudan, Guinea, Nigeria, Mali, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Bangladesh, and Egypt.

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INTRODUCTION

North Africa holds a pivotal position in the realm of human migration, carrying significant global implications. Within this subregion, there has been a persistent rise in the number of migrants originating from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. According to estimates from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Egypt (13.6%) and Morocco (12.3%) stood as the second and third largest countries of origin respectively in 2020.[1] Moreover, recent reports revealed that Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt continue to play substantial roles as source countries for European immigration[2]. North African countries, serving as transit and destination regions, attract individuals from other parts of the African continent. Countries such as Nigeria, Mali, Guinea, Niger, and Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa regularly utilize migration routes in their pursuit of reaching the northern countries[3] of Africa. The region's significance in understanding global migration patterns persists whether individuals aim to settle permanently[4] or venture towards Europe via the Mediterranean Sea.

According to the Handbook on Protection and Assistance to Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2019, migrants in vulnerable situations are "persons who are unable effectively to enjoy their human rights, are at increased risk of violations and abuse and who, accordingly, are entitled to call on a duty bearer's heightened duty of care".[5] Within this vulnerability framework, there are specific groups vulnerable to violence, exploitation, neglect, deprivation and abuse require specialized care and analysis. For the purposes of this report, such groups include victims of trafficking, unaccompanied or separated migrant children, and individuals with health needs.

As migration restrictions ease post-COVID-19, there is a pressing need to examine the protection schemes provided in the region, particularly in relation to the increasing arrivals to Europe from the Western Mediterranean (WMR) and Western African Atlantic routes (WAAR)[6] and the rising number of missing migrants[7] in the Mediterranean.

IOM's Approach to Protection reflects shared thinking and common understanding of the Organization's approach to protection across operational contexts. IOM's overarching goal on protection is to place the rights and well-being of migrants, regardless of their status, at the center of its operations. This means ensuring the protection of migrants across the full spectrum of migration management and governance, i.e. migration and development, facilitating migration, regulating migration and addressing forced migration (which includes internal displacement), working on solutions that prevent and promote ways to sustainably resolve displacement that protect and uphold rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The Organization promotes migration as a choice through interventions aimed at reducing the risks of violence, abuse and exploitation, and other rights violations along their journey, and fostering protective factors that lead to resilience at an individual, household, community, and structural level.

IOM plays a crucial role in supporting and protecting migrants facing vulnerabilities[8] in North Africa. IOM's protection interventions include multi-level schemes, programs, and initiatives.[9] Specifically, the North African region benefits from initiatives as the Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa (RDPP), COVID-19 Disease Response, Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) and Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants (AVM)[10]. Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programs aim to ensure a dignified and secure return to the migrant's

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1. IOM (2021). Region on the Move. Regional Mobility Report for the Middle East and North Africa. IOM: Geneve

2. IOM (2022). DTM Europe Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) October – December 2021. IOM: Geneve.

3. IOM (2016). MALI - Irregular Migration. Available: https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1461/files/reports/Irregular_Migrantion_GAO_Sitrep3_EN.pdf

4. IOM (2020). DTM Côte d'Ivoire — Migration de retour: Lien entre irrégularité et renforcement de la vulnérabilité des migrants ivoiriens en Tunisie, au Maroc et en Algérie (Juin 2020). IOM: Yamoussoukro.

5. IOM (2019). IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance to Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse. Geneve: IOM. https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-handbook-migrants-vulnerable-violence-exploitation-and-abuse

6. IOM (2022). DTM Europe Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) October – December 2021. IOM: Geneve

7. Missing Migrants Project has recorded over 27,800 migrant deaths and disappearances in the Mediterranean since 2014. https://missingmigrants.iom.int/

8. The Inter-agency standing committee defines protection as: "all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law."

9. IOM (2019). IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance to Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse. IOM: Geneve.

10. IOM (2020). RETURN AND REINTEGRATION KEY HIGHLIGHTS. IOM: Geneve.

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country of origin. These programs may include travel arrangements, medical assistance, pre/post departure information, transportation, and immediate as well as long-term support.[11] Meanwhile, Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants (AVM) provides comprehensive protection to migrants, covering legal, physical, human rights, social, and humanitarian aspects[12]. This report delves into an analysis of people identified and registered in North Africa, reaching over 68,000 migrants during 2021-2022. This report focuses on the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) and Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants (AVM) extracted from Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA), the organization's internal case management system.

Firstly, the report provides demographic information about identified and registered migrants during the 2021-2022 period, which contributes to a comprehensive understanding of migration and protection dynamics in North Africa. The second half of the report aims to shed light on specific groups vulnerable to violence, exploitation, neglect, deprivation and abuse in the region, including those with health needs, victims of trafficking, and unaccompanied migrants. Throughout the reporting period, approximately 9,800 individuals were registered facing these situations, representing 14 percent of all IOM protection interventions conducted.

This report serves as a contribution to our understanding of migration and protection dynamics in North Africa. It sets the stage for further exploration of the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by migrants in the region, highlighting the importance of targeted interventions and support for these populations. In the subsequent sections of the report, specific aspects of the findings are presented in a more detailed analysis, along with recommendations for future actions.

METHODOLODY

While IOM's protection interventions encompass various modalities,[13] this report specifically focuses on the data from migrants registered in the Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA) and seeking Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) and Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants (AVM) support.

With a relatively large sample size of over 68,500 individuals, it is essential to note that this report solely addresses migrants identified and registered by the International Organization for Migration seeking Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) and Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants (AVM). The findings presented in this report are primarily based on data collected by IOM through its internal case management platform, the MiMOSA. The MiMOSA tool is used by IOM Missions to record biographic and demographic information necessary for managing the process of services related to movement, medical care, migrant training activities, assisted voluntary return, and counter-trafficking.

Vulnerable migrants registered in North Africa country offices (which includes Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia) utilize various channels to access IOM's protection interventions, including hotlines, reception centers, consulates/embassies, and self-walk-ins at NGOs. Throughout the 2021-2022 period, the predominant method of accessing IOM's support was through self-walk-ins, representing 26 percent of cases, closely followed by referrals from consulates/embassies, which constituted 24 percent. Consular missions play a significant role in referring individuals to assisted voluntary return services, serving as the primary source of support. Regarding migrants facing vulnerabilities, it is noteworthy that the hotline emerged as the second most utilised channel for registering such migrants, accounting for 24 percent of cases, closely trailing self-walk-ins which constituted 41 percent.

11. IOM (2008). ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN (AVR). https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/countries/docs/afghanistan/avr_factsheet_sept08.pdf

12. IOM (2019). IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance to Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse. IOM: Geneve. https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-handbook-migrants-vulnerable-violence-exploitation-and-abuse

13. IOM's protection interventions include, amongst others, child protection, risk mitigation, response to and prevention of gender-based violence, counter-trafficking, alternatives to detention, mental health and psychosocial support, land property and reparations and inclusion of persons with disabilities. IOM also focuses on mainstreaming protection across all its sectors of intervention, ensuring the principle of do no harm, prioritizing safety and dignity, enabling meaningful access, promoting accountability and fostering participation and empowerment. See IOM (2019). IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance to Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse. IOM: Geneve.

The report spans from January 1st 2021 to December 31st 2022, covering a consecutive period of two complete calendar years. The two-year duration is divided into four time periods, each lasting for six months, as follows: January 1st to June 30th 2021; July 1st to December 31st 2021; January 1st to June 30th 2022; and July 1st to December 31st 2022.
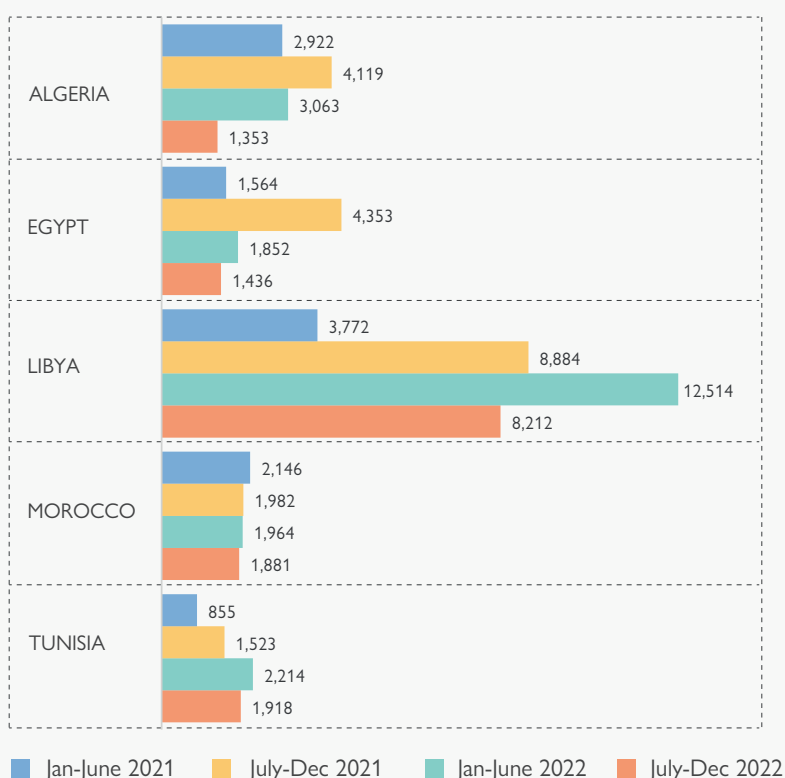
LIMITATIONS

The analysis in this report covers certain nationalities of migrants assisted by the organization depending on registration of migrants between 2021 and 2022. This distribution of nationalities may differ from the general trends recorded in the MENA region by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) or IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). As a result, it is crucial to understand that the findings of this report should not be considered as a statistically representative sample of the overall situation in the region, and it is not appropriate to draw generalizations from the analysis presented.

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS OF ASSISTED MIGRANTS

Between 2021 and 2022, a total of 68,536 vulnerable migrants were identified and registered by IOM across the five North African countries, namely Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. The number of people seeking assistance (AVRR/AVM) did not exhibit a clear pattern during this period. Notably, there was a significant increase in the number of these migrants in 2021, which maybe attributed to the relaxation of COVID-19 mobility restrictions.

FIGURE 1: IDENTIFIED AND REGISTERED MIGRANTS BY IOM'S NORTH AFRICA OFFICES. 2021-2022

ALGERIA
- Jan-June 2021: 2,922
- July-Dec 2021: 4,119
- Jan-June 2022: 3,063
- July-Dec 2022: 1,353

EGYPT
- Jan-June 2021: 1,564
- July-Dec 2021: 4,353
- Jan-June 2022: 1,852
- July-Dec 2022: 1,436

LIBYA
- Jan-June 2021: 3,772
- July-Dec 2021: 8,884
- Jan-June 2022: 12,514
- July-Dec 2022: 8,212

MOROCCO
- Jan-June 2021: 2,146
- July-Dec 2021: 1,982
- Jan-June 2022: 1,964
- July-Dec 2022: 1,881

TUNISIA
- Jan-June 2021: 855
- July-Dec 2021: 1,523
- Jan-June 2022: 2,214
- July-Dec 2022: 1,918

Legend: ■ Jan-June 2021 ■ July-Dec 2021 ■ Jan-June 2022 ■ July-Dec 2022

Source: Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA)

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TABLE 1: NUMBER OF IDENTIFIED AND REGISTERED MIGRANTS IN 2021-2022 BY NATIONALITY AND TIME PERIOD.					
Nationality	Jan – June 2021	Jul – Dec 2021	Jan – Jun 2022	Jul – Dec 2022	Total
Sudan	1,334	3,455	2,828	2,532	10,149
Guinea	1,616	2,634	2,409	1,205	7,864
Nigeria	1,143	2,043	2,460	2,130	7,776
Mali	1,610	1,811	1,976	862	6,259
Niger	506	1,151	2,347	1,577	5,581
Côte d'Ivoire	1,062	1,176	1,328	1,306	4,872
Bangladesh	599	970	2,273	644	4,486
Chad	56	663	954	828	2,501
Egypt	26	840	529	559	1,954
Senegal	498	516	487	407	1,908

Source: Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA)

However, from the beginning of 2022, there was a decline in the number of identified and registered individuals across all country offices.

Nearly half of the vulnerable migrants registered by IOM were recorded in Libya, accounting for 33,382 cases. The second-ranked mission, Algeria, reported only a third of the figures (16.7%) registered by Libya, with 11,457 cases. Coincidentally, individuals from these two countries typically seek voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR), suggesting a significant number of stranded migrants in these locations. Other missions accounted for lower numbers of vulnerable migrants, namely Egypt (9,205), Morocco (7,973), and Tunisia (6,519). Despite its relatively modest magnitude, IOM's country office in Egypt ranks as the number one provider of Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants (AVM).[14]

27% Female

73% Male

Average age 26.5 years

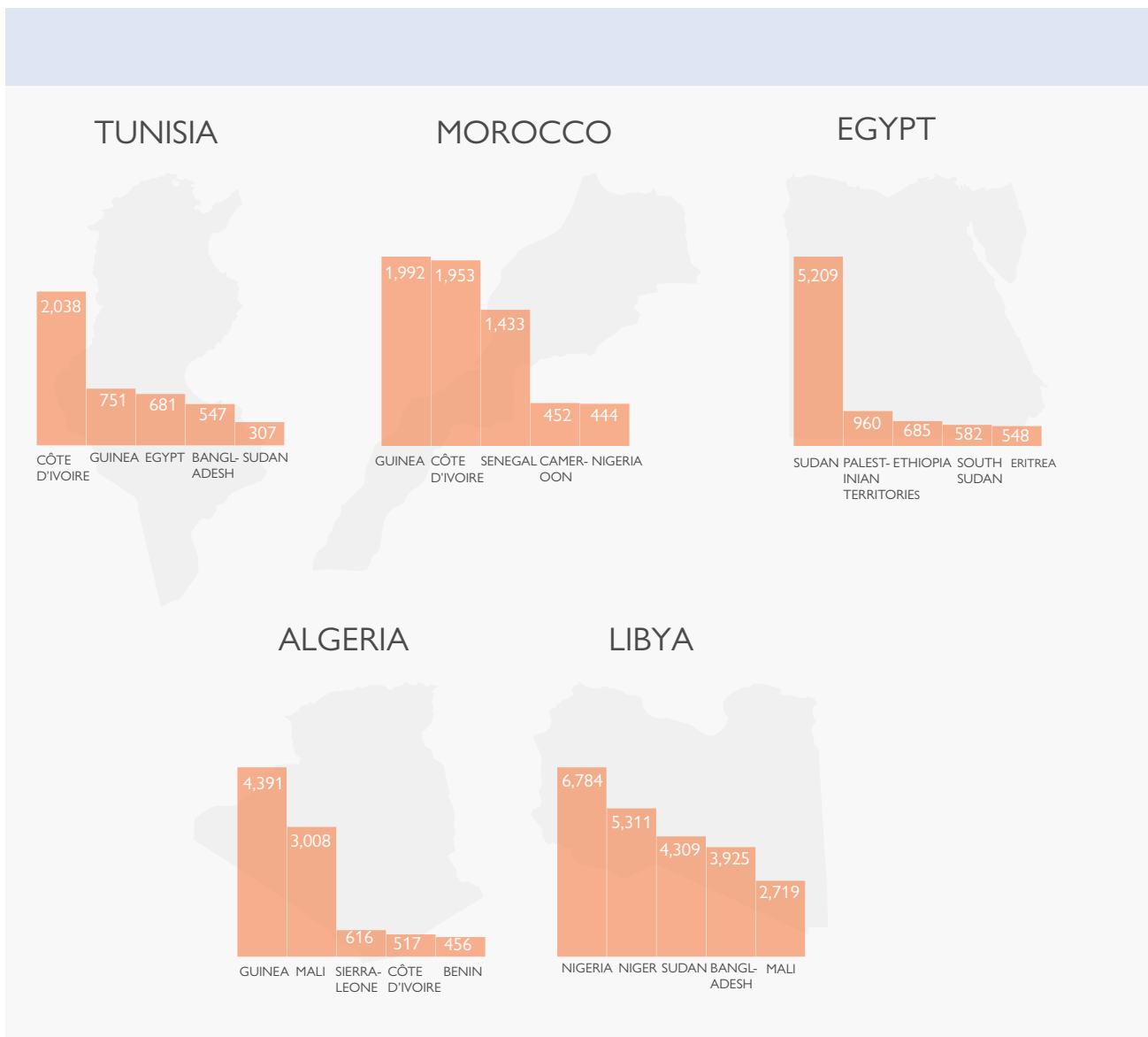34% Secondary Education

9% Higher Education
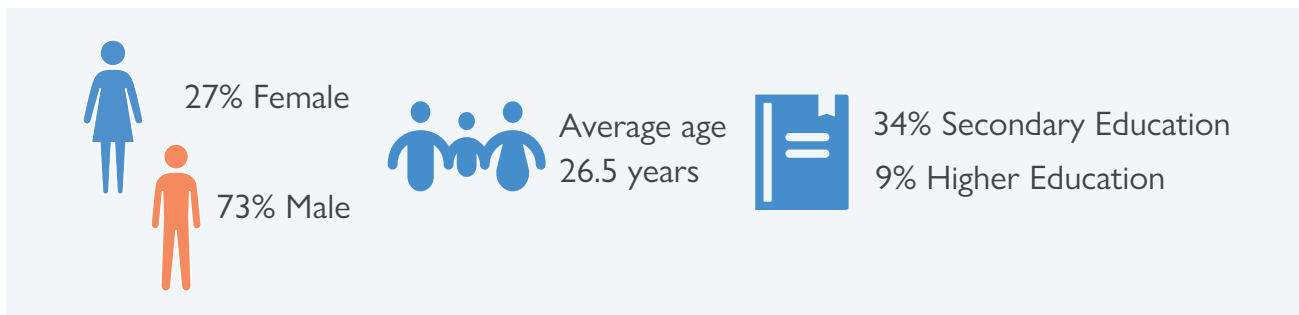
This group of vulnerable migrants in North Africa can be described as relatively young individuals with up to secondary education, often employed in the commerce sector. The mean age of all beneficiaries was 26.5 years, with a slightly younger female population (25 years) compared to males (27 years). Over a third (34%) have completed high school/secondary studies, and nearly ten percent have completed higher education (9%). Likewise, almost a quarter of beneficiaries previously worked in commerce sector (22%), while six per cent were employed in agricultural sectors.[15]

The distribution of migrants varied by sex. The overall trend indicates that nearly three quarters of all cases were males (73%), while the remaining quarter supported females (27%). Additionally, both sex show similar distribution

14. IOM country office in Egypt is MiMOSA compliant and this could be one of the reasons for high representativeness of assistance provided through AVM program.
15. Education and employment information are not mandatory when registering with IOM. Therefore, the organization captures this demographic information on a willing basis. Employment and education demographics should thus be interpreted with caution.

TUNISIA

2,038	751	681	547	307
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	GUINEA	EGYPT	BANGL-ADESH	SUDAN

MOROCCO

1,992	1,953	1,433	452	444
GUINEA	CÔTE D'IVOIRE	SENEGAL	CAMER-OON	NIGERIA

EGYPT

5,209	960	685	582	548
SUDAN	PALEST-INIAN TERRITORIES	ETHIOPIA	SOUTH SUDAN	ERITREA

ALGERIA

4,391	3,008	616	517	456
GUINEA	MALI	SIERRA-LEONE	CÔTE D'IVOIRE	BENIN

LIBYA

6,784	5,311	4,309	3,925	2,719
NIGERIA	NIGER	SUDAN	BANGL-ADESH	MALI

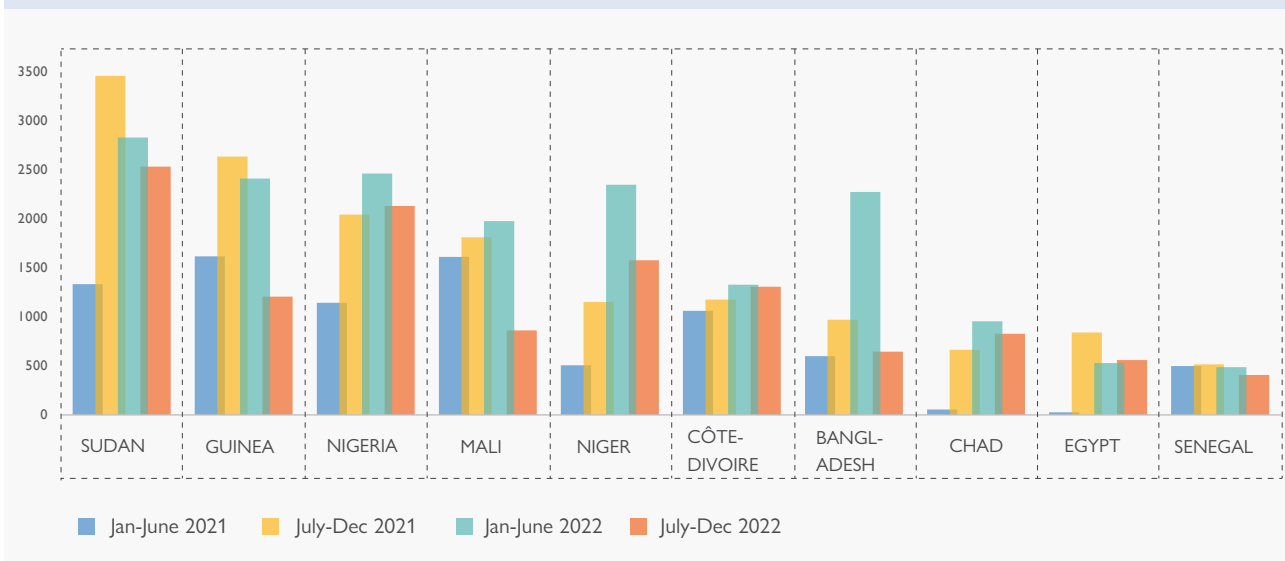Source: Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA)

patterns for AVM seekers. However, men rely more on AVRR programs, with approximately 82 per cent of males in need of return support programming.

Migrants in the North African region often originate from neighboring countries, particularly those in the western part of Africa (refer to Table 1). The highest number of registrants are Sudanese nationals, followed by Guineans and Nigerians. It is worth noting that Niger, ranked fifth, has been recognized in previous IOM reports as the top recipient of assisted voluntary return and reintegration programs, globally.[16] Apart from Bangladesh, all other top ten countries of origin are from within the African continent.

The identification and registration process are carried out through IOM's country offices, and the countries of origin vary across these offices in North Africa. Such differences in origin countries as reflected in the total number of migrants supported by IOM may be partially explained by the geographical proximity of specific missions across West and North Africa, as well as migration agreements.

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16. IOM (2020). RETURN AND REINTEGRATION KEY HIGHLIGHTS. IOM: Geneve.

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FIGURE 3: ASSISTED MIGRANTS BY TOP TEN NATIONALITIES AND TIME PERIODS (JAN 2021 - DEC 2022)

Source: Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA)

Nearly half of the migrants (49%) identified were registered in Libya. The country's central geographic location and proximity to Europe may play a role in facilitating movements towards Libya. Conflicts and instability have posed challenges to effective border control, subsequently creating an environment conducive for the proliferation of smuggling networks within the country.[17] These circumstances partially explain the diverse origin countries of vulnerable migrants in Libya. Nigerian (6,784) and Nigerien (5,311) migrants, originating from West African countries, rank first and second in terms of assistance needs (refer to Figure 2). Migration from these two countries follow an established route from northern Nigeria, across Niger, and into Libya.[18] According to a UNHCR report, economic motivations primarily drive migration for nationals of Nigeria and Niger.[19] Other vulnerable migrants in Libya come from West African countries such as Mali and Chad[20]. Sudanese migrants (4,309) and individuals from Bangladesh (3,925), outside the region, are also notable vulnerable populations in Libya.

Migrants registered in Algeria mainly came from Guinea (4,391) and Mali (3,008). Previous IOM publications have highlighted similar migration patterns from these nationalities to Algeria.[21] In the case of IOM's mission to Egypt, a substantial number originated from Sudan (5,209), as these two countries share a large border and have strong ties. The resurgence of the conflict in Sudan in 2023 introduces uncertainties regarding the enduring assistance requirements for countries such as Egypt.

In Tunisia, over two fifth of the migrants (2,038) originated from Côte d'Ivoire. Although not geographically close, Ivorian nationals may be drawn to Tunisia due to the visa entry exemption, perceived well-paid job opportunities, and the security provided by airline routes[22]. Morocco's country office also registered numerous Guineans nationals (1,992), along with Ivorian (1,953) and Senegalese (1,433) migrants. Besides being a transit country, Morocco serves as a destination for Ivorian and Senegalese nationals, driven by the exception in visa entry to this Maghreb country.[23] Additionally, Senegalese nationals have the right to live and work in Morocco based on a bilateral agreement.[24]

17. Darme, M. & Benattia, T. (2017). Mixed migration trends in Libya: Changing dynamics and protection challenges. Altai Consulting, IMPACT and United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR): Geneve.

18. IBID

19. IBID

20. Similarly, evidence indicates economic drivers as main reasons for emigrating from Mali and Sudan. See Afrobarometer 2017. https://www.afrobarometer.org/survey-resource/merged-round-7-data-34-countries-2019/

21. See International Organization for Migration (2016). MALI - Irregular Migration. Available: https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1461/files/reports/Irregular_Migrantion_GAO_Sitrep3_EN.pdf

22. International Organization for Migration (2020). DTM Côte d'Ivoire — Migration de retour: Lien entre irrégularité et renforcement de la vulnérabilité des migrants ivoiriens en Tunisie, au Maroc et en Algérie (Juin 2020). IOM, Côte d'Ivoire

23. IBID.

24. Abourabi, Y. (2022). Governing African Migration in Morocco: The Challenge of Positive Desecuritisation. In Governing Migration for Development from the Global Souths (pp. 29-59). Brill Nijhoff.

Figure 2 summarizes the absolute number of migrants in North Africa, categorized by nationality. Among the countries of origin, six West African nations stand out: Guinea (7,864), Nigeria (7,776), Mali (6,259), Niger (5,581), Côte d'Ivoire (4,872), and Senegal (1,908)[25]. These nationals often seek support from Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programs while in North African countries, suggesting a potentially stranded population. Historically, migration to North African countries has been primarily driven by economic factors,[26] as well as cultural connections.[27] While countries from West Africa make up large proportion of migrants in North Africa, Sudanese nationals ranked as the top recipient nationality with a total of 10,149 cases. Similar to other West African countries, Sudanese nationals predominantly pursue AVRR when located in most North African countries. However, in Egypt, the majority of supported Sudanese nationals sought Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants (AVM), making up 85 per cent of the cases. If hostilities in Sudan persist, an increase in the number of people fleeing the country and seeking assistance abroad can be anticipated. As of mid-June, IOM had already registered 255,565 individuals crossing the Sudanese-Egyptian border, with a total of 1,965,946 displaced individuals registered overall.[28]

This nationality overview helps identify the countries of origin of migrants registered by IOM. It highlights the connection between West and North Africa, as a significant portion of vulnerable migrants originate from the western region of the continent. However, based on the available data, it remains unclear whether the country where they were identified and registered represents their intended final destination. Nonetheless, previous reports suggest that a portion of vulnerable migrants may engage in further migration.[29]

MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATION

During the reporting period, approximately 9,800 individuals, which accounted for 14 per cent of all registered migrants, were migrants in vulnerable situations.. Table 2 provides a breakdown of migrants in vulnerable situations during the reporting period with a notable surge in 2021 and a subsequent deceleration in 2022. There was a significant shift in the sex distribution among this subset, as vulnerable females accounted for 43 percent of the total.

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS IN 2021-2022

Reported time	Victims of Trafficking	Unaccompanied or Separated Children	Health Needs	Partial total by time period
Jan – Jun 2021	308	315	1,082	1,705
Jul – Dec 2021	433	648	2,337	3,418
Jan – Jun 2022	765	362	1,883	3,010
Jul – Dec 2022	644	319	1,224	2,187

Source: Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA)
Note: Migrants may encounter multiple vulnerabilities, and therefore the cumulative number of individual vulnerabilities may not be equivalent to the overall total.

25. Previous IOM publications also identified Guinea, Mali and Nigeria as top three recipients of assistance to voluntary and humanitarian returns in 2017-2022, whether departing from North Africa or elsewhere. This would indicate these nationalities normally rely on such protection schemes. For more, see IOM (2012). ASSISTANCE TO VOLUNTARY AND HUMANITARIAN RETURN 2017- JUNE 2022 Profiles of migrants assisted to return to their country of origin - West and Central Africa. IOM: Dakar.

26. IOM (2019). Nigeria - CMFS: Migration Drivers and Reasons for Migration to Europe (2017). IOM: Abuja.

27. Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire remain the two main countries of residence of Guinean nationals abroad. Mali has historically remained an important supplier of workforce for coastal West African countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Senegal. Similarly Malian migration towards France has peaked since the 1960s. For more, see International Centre for Migration Policy Development and IOM (2015). A survey on Migration Policies in West Africa. ICMPD and IOM: Vienna and Senegal.

28. IOM (2023). Displacement Tracking Matrix | DTM Sudan. Sudan Situation Report 9. https://dtm.iom.int/reports/dtm-sudan-situation-report-9

29. International Organization for Migration (2020). DTM Côte d'Ivoire — Migration de retour: Lien entre irrégularité et renforcement de la vulnérabilité des migrants ivoiriens en Tunisie, au Maroc et en Algérie (Juin 2020). IOM, Côte d'Ivoire and IOM (2015).

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Country	Victims of Trafficking	Unaccompanied or Separated Children	Health Needs	Total
Sudan	291	139	2,109	2,498
Nigeria	1,011	63	1,107	1,866
Côte d'Ivoire	232	131	436	767
Guinea	32	320	235	575
Egypt	17	284	46	344
Somalia	108	181	61	329
Bangladesh	0	0	290	326
Palestinian Territories	1	0	306	307
Niger	56	55	200	307
Mali	19	53	215	285
TOTAL	**1,767**	**1,226**	**5,005**	**7,604**

Source: Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA)
Note: Migrants may encounter multiple vulnerabilities, and therefore the cumulative number of individual vulnerabilities may not be equivalent to the overall total.

Among migrants in vulnerable situations, 57 per cent were males, and over 4 out of 5 unaccompanied or separated migrant children were also males (83%). However, in the case of victims of trafficking and individuals with health needs, the distribution between sex was almost equal.

Migrants in vulnerable situations predominantly originate from neighboring countries, as depicted in Table 3. Sudan stands out as the nationality with the highest proportion of individuals in vulnerable situations, comprising a quarter (25%) of the total vulnerable migrants examined. Health needs emerge as the primary vulnerability among Sudanese nationals. Nigeria follows closely in second place, encompassing 19 percent of these cases. Notably, Nigeria exhibits the highest number of trafficking victims (47%), surpassing second-ranked Sudan (13.5%) by more than threefold. In addition to IOM,[30] various stakeholders including the United States Department of State, have extensively documented instances of migrant smuggling and human trafficking originating from Nigeria. The smuggling of Nigerian nationals to Europe through African migration routes, including Morocco, Algeria, and Libya, has been previously identified as a significant concern.[31] Additionally, the issue of forced sexual labor involving Nigerian nationals in Libya persists as a pressing challenge.[32]

The information pertaining to unaccompanied or separated migrant children presents a distinct pattern compared to other vulnerable conditions. Guinea emerged as the top-ranking country in terms of unaccompanied or separated children, despite being fourth in the overall ranking of migrants facing vulnerable conditions. Previous publications have identified Guinean minors fleeing persecution and seeking better economic opportunities in Europe, often using North African routes through Mali, Niger, and Algeria.[33]

Egypt also reported a considerable number of unaccompanied migrant children in 2021-2022. Previous studies by IOM noted that Egyptian unaccompanied migrant children are exposed to verbal/physical abuse, robbery, and even death[34]. The evidence indicates that these minors are motivated to migrate from Egypt in pursuit of improved educational prospects and to provide financial support to their families.[35] Additionally, nationals from other West African countries, namely Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, and Mali, also received assistance during the 2021-2022 period.

30. IOM (2015). MRS No. 23 - Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe. IOM: Geneve. https://publications.iom.int/books/mrs-no-23-migration-human-smuggling-and-trafficking-nigeria-europe

M. & Benattia, T. (2017). Mixed migration trends in Libya: Changing dynamics and protection challenges. Altai Consulting, IMPACT and United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR): Geneve.

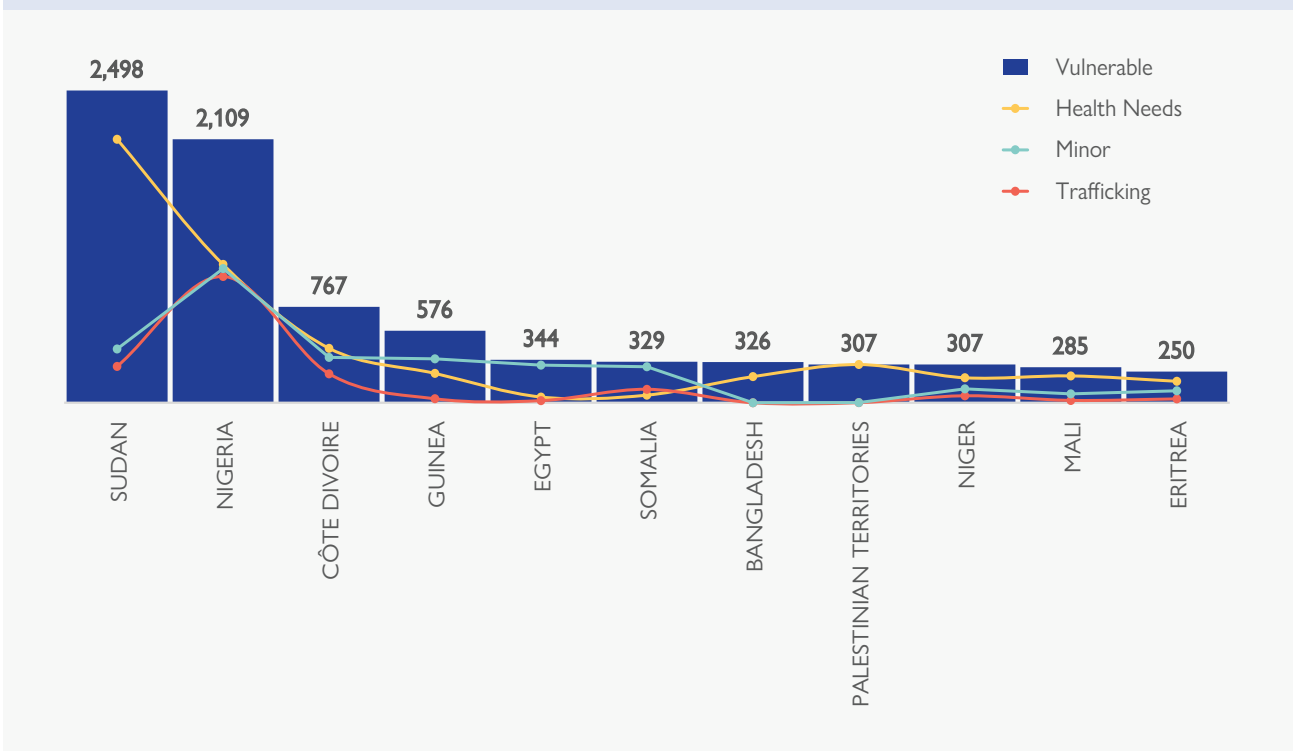31. IBID. This include routes from Agadez to Tripoli (Libya) and Tunis (Tunisia).

32. United States Department of State (2022). 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria. https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/nigeria/

33. United Nations Children's Fund (2017). Unaccompanied and Separated Children from Guinea Conakry in Italy. https://data.unhcr.org/es/documents/details/57947

34. IOM (2016). Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children. A case study on irregular migration. IOM: Cairo.

35. IBID.

FIGURE 4: MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS BY NATIONALITY (2021-2022)

Legend:
- Vulnerable
- Health Needs
- Minor
- Trafficking

Bar values: SUDAN 2,498; NIGERIA 2,109; CÔTE DIVOIRE 767; GUINEA 576; EGYPT 344; SOMALIA 329; BANGLADESH 326; PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES 307; NIGER 307; MALI 285; ERITREA 250

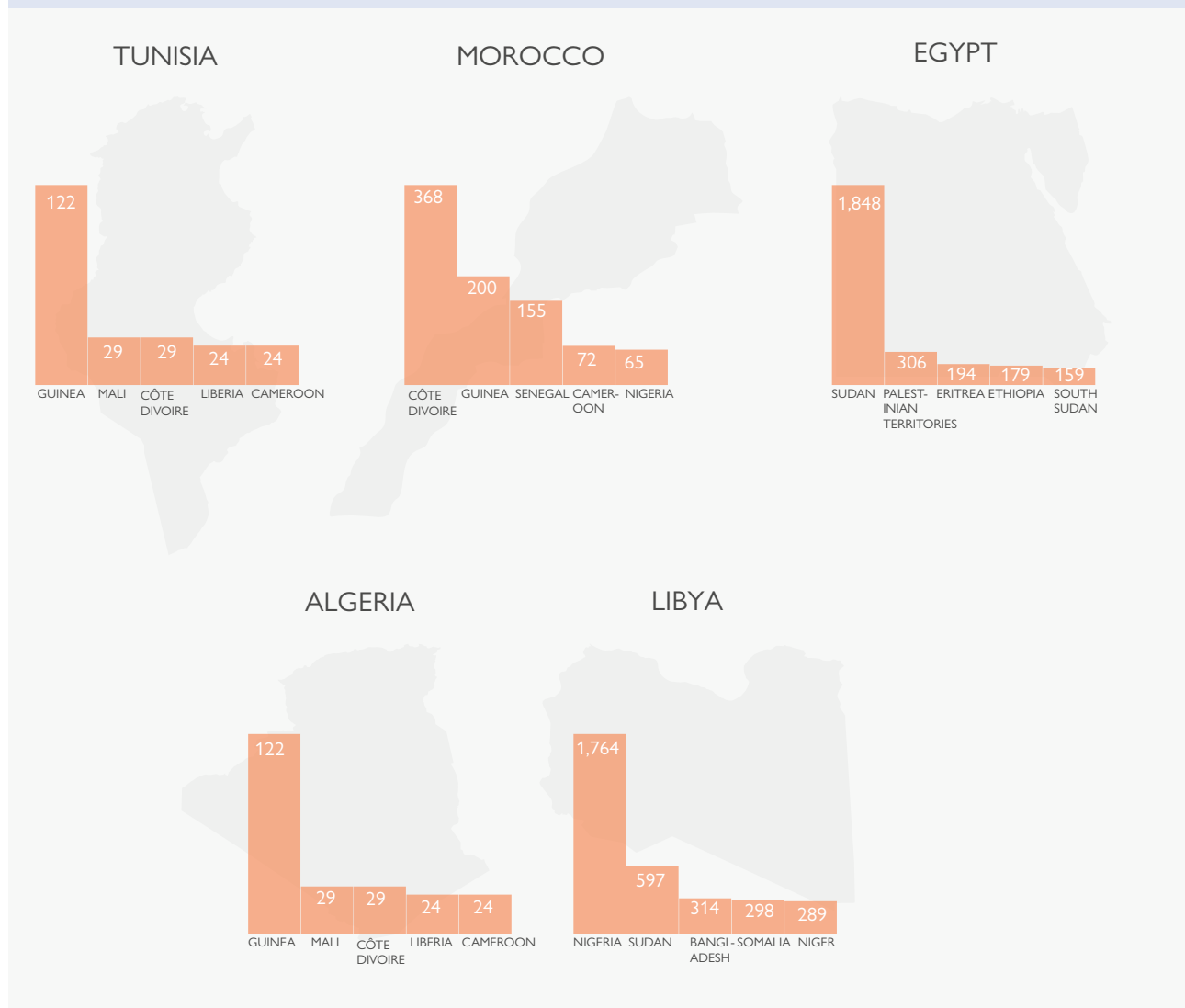Source: Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA)

The geographical proximity to North African countries, linguistic similarities, and the potential for employment opportunities may be significant factors influencing migration between West and North Africa.[36]

Environments which may exacerbate situations of vulnerability often intertwine, exposing migrants to heightened risks throughout their migration journeys. For instance, among the 9,819 recorded cases, IOM identified 383 individuals (4%) who were both victims of trafficking and had health needs during the 2021-2022 period. Furthermore, 58 victims of trafficking were unaccompanied or separated migrant children, and 63 unaccompanied children faced health needs. These specific circumstances highlight the need for tailored case management and assistance programs to address their unique vulnerabilities.

It is crucial to examine the assistance rendered to these beneficiaries, as existing programs might have already targeted these vulnerabilities with personalized case management and support, in order to prevent redundant efforts and assess the necessity for additional specific aid. It should be noted that for certain cases, such as unaccompanied or separated migrant children, IOM conducts family tracing and best interest determination processes prior to their return, which may not be fully captured in the recording system (MiMOSA). Similarly, in cases involving health needs, IOM assesses whether the required healthcare can be provided in the country of origin. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that most of the support through the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) program would occur after the return, specifically through reintegration assistance in the country of origin.

36. International Organization for Migration (2020). DTM Côte d'Ivoire — Migration de retour: Lien entre irrégularité et renforcement de la vulnérabilité des migrants ivoiriens en Tunisie, au Maroc et en Algérie (Juin 2020). IOM, Côte d'Ivoire.

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TUNISIA

122	29	29	24	24
GUINEA	MALI	CÔTE DIVOIRE	LIBERIA	CAMEROON

MOROCCO

368	200	155	72	65
CÔTE DIVOIRE	GUINEA	SENEGAL	CAMER-OON	NIGERIA

EGYPT

1,848	306	194	179	159
SUDAN	PALEST-INIAN TERRITORIES	ERITREA	ETHIOPIA	SOUTH SUDAN

ALGERIA

122	29	29	24	24
GUINEA	MALI	CÔTE DIVOIRE	LIBERIA	CAMEROON

LIBYA

1,764	597	314	298	289
NIGERIA	SUDAN	BANGL-ADESH	SOMALIA	NIGER

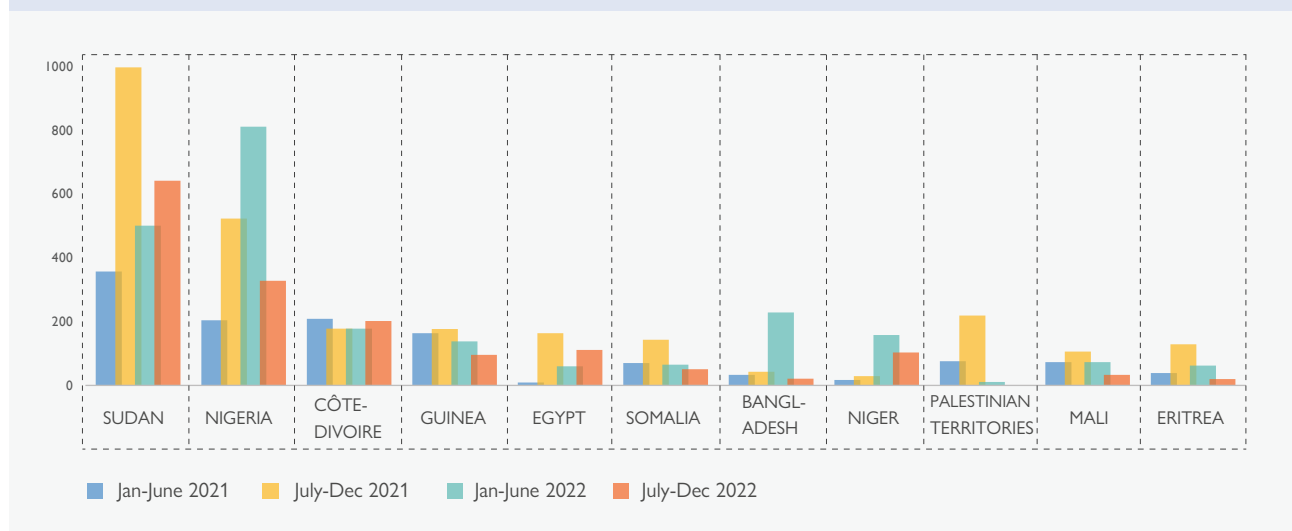Source: Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA)

Within the cohort of 9,819 migrants facing vulnerabilities, the highest concentration, comprising 38.7 percent, was observed in Libya, followed by Egypt with 2,213 individuals (22.5%). Figure 5 illustrates that migrants facing vulnerable situations in Libya were primarily of Nigerian (1,764) and Sudanese origin (597). Sudan, which has experienced decades of conflict, and Nigeria, with established migration routes and smuggling networks in North African corridors,[37] were notable contributors. Additionally, Bangladesh (314), Somalia (298) and Niger (289) nationals also faced vulnerable situations while in Libya. Niger, with its extensive border with Libya and significant African migration routes, has previously been involved in similar IOM assistance programs.[38] Egypt also hosted several migrants with heightened vulnerability, with Sudanese nationals constituting the majority, accounting for 18% of the total migrants facing vulnerable situations during the 2021-2022 period. Sudan has been grappling with conflict for years, and since April 2023, hostilities have resurged. The extent to which assistance will be provided to Sudanese nationals amid this renewed conflict is yet to be determined.

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37. IOM (2015). MRS No. 23 - Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe. IOM: Geneve.
38. IOM (2020). RETURN AND REINTEGRATION KEY HIGHLIGHTS. IOM: Geneve.

Migrants facing vulnerable situations from different countries exhibit an uneven distribution across various 6-month periods. The two primary contributors, Sudan and Nigeria, exhibited fluctuating patterns throughout the two-year period, experiencing peaks and valleys (refer to Figure 6). In contrast, other significant West African countries like Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea demonstrated a more consistent trend, with approximately two hundred cases per half year. The movement of Egyptian and Bangladeshi nationals, however, displayed greater irregularity. It is noteworthy that many of these nationalities were also major beneficiaries of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) as well as Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants (AVM) programs, as highlighted in Table 1.

FIGURE 6: MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS BY NATIONALITY IN 2021-2022

Source: Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA)

CONCLUSION

The distribution of migrants seeking protection in North African countries highlighted Libya as the primary host, accounting for nearly half of all migrants, followed by Algeria. The migration patterns observed among migrants during 2021-2022 seemed to be driven by strong cultural ties, migration connections, and geographical proximity between West and North Africa. The complexities of migration dynamics in the region require ongoing attention and targeted interventions to ensure the well-being and protection of vulnerable migrants.

While the number of protection interventions varied across various 6-month periods during the 2021-2022 period, there was a consistent trend observed among the most assisted nationalities. Countries such as Sudan, Guinea, Nigeria, Mali, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Bangladesh, and Egypt consistently emerged among the top ten identified nationalities, both in terms of program (AVRR/AVM) and the number of individuals facing particularly vulnerable situations.

The complexities and variations observed among migrants in vulnerable situations emphasize the need for greater tailored protection schemes – whilst building on existing programmatic interventions. While this report primarily focuses on the Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants (AVM) and Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programs, it is important to consider other relevant protection interventions. Considering the potential easing of migration restrictions in the post-COVID-19 era, the increasing migration flows from North African countries, and the rising number of missing migrants[39] in the Mediterranean, it is crucial for protection initiatives and public policies in the region to consider the insights presented in this report, including vulnerabilities, regional migration flows, and enabling conditions that contribute to vulnerability.

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39. IOM Missing Migrants Project https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean

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