

# Emerging trends in human trafficking in West and Central Africa

The Freedom From Slavery Africa Regional Forum  
Actionable Justice: Implementing Effective Strategies and Raising Awareness in  
Combating Human Trafficking

*Protection Division*

*IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa, Dakar*

*23 July 2024*



# OVERVIEW

1. Migratory trends in West and Central Africa (WCA)

2. TIP trends and patterns in WCA



# 1. MIGRATORY TRENDS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

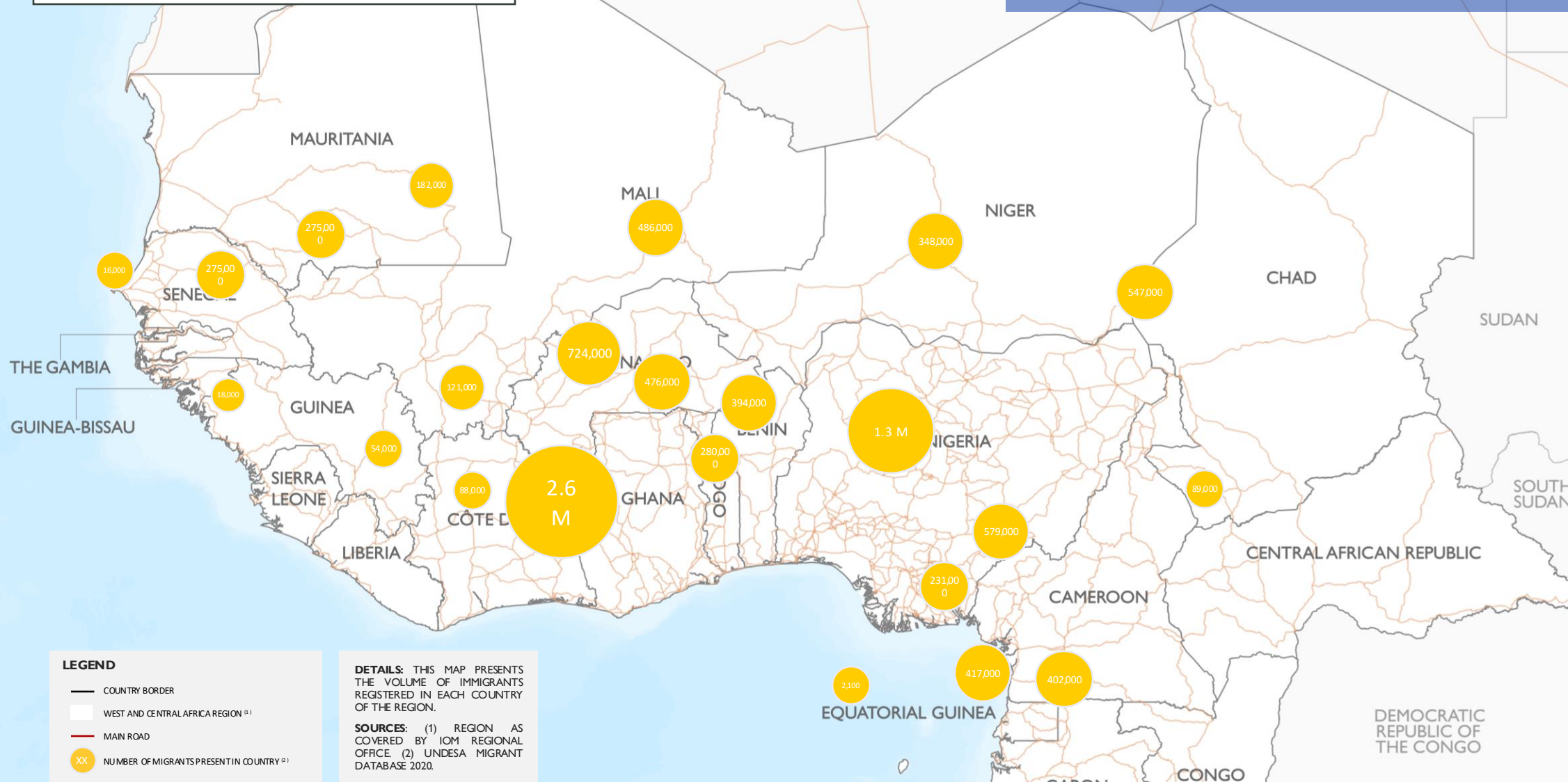


# INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS



83 per cent of immigrants living in West and Central Africa are from another country in the region.<sup>(2)</sup>

An estimated 9.8 million migrants live in the WCA region. The largest registered migrant communities in the region are currently living in Côte d'Ivoire (2.6 million) and Nigeria (1.3 million) (UNDESA).



**LEGEND**

- COUNTRY BORDER
- WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGION <sup>(1)</sup>
- MAIN ROAD
- XX NUMBER OF MIGRANTS PRESENT IN COUNTRY <sup>(2)</sup>

**DETAILS:** THIS MAP PRESENTS THE VOLUME OF IMMIGRANTS REGISTERED IN EACH COUNTRY OF THE REGION.

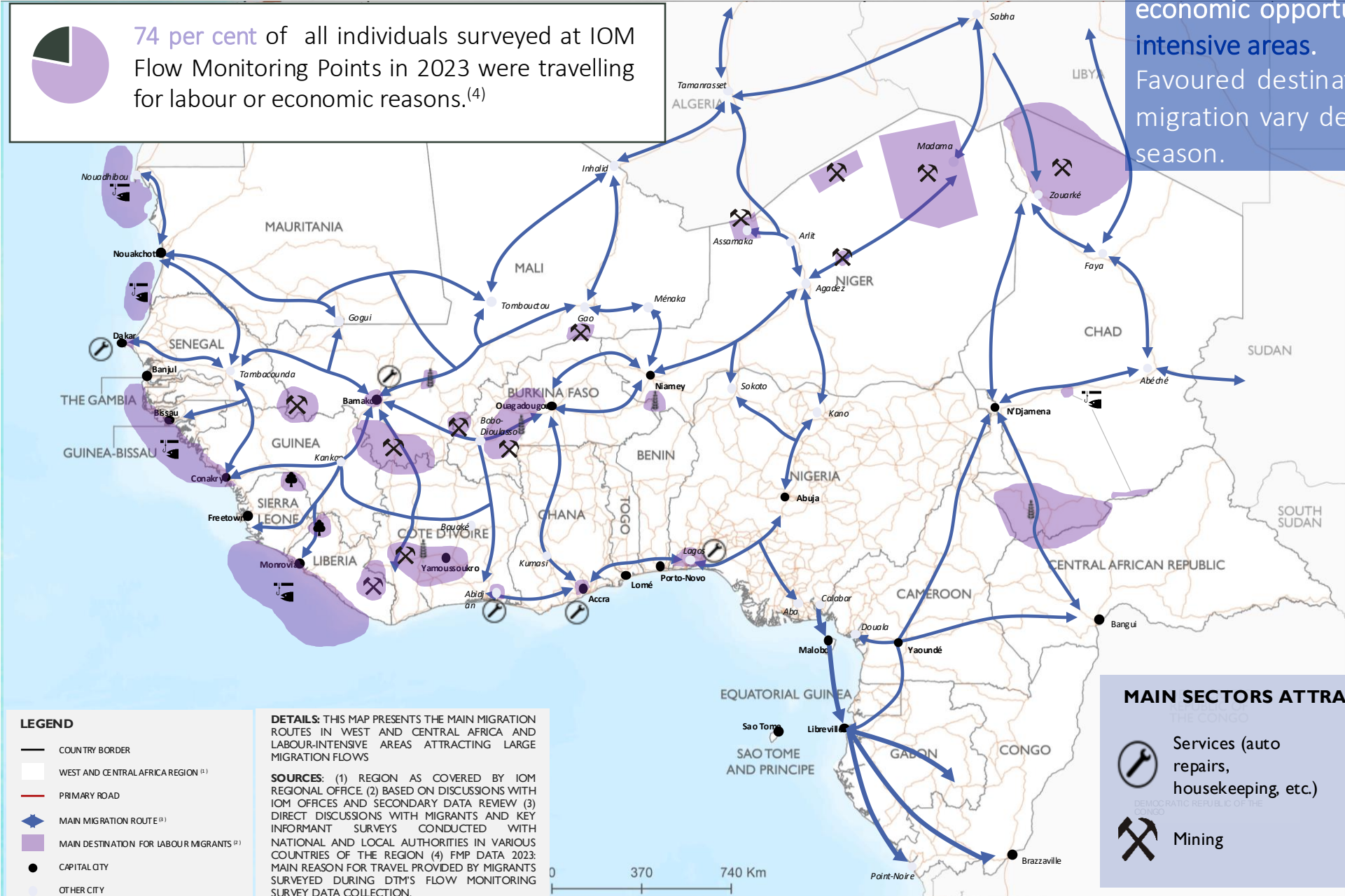
**SOURCES:** (1) REGION AS COVERED BY IOM REGIONAL OFFICE (2) UNDESA MIGRANT DATABASE 2020.

# LABOUR MIGRATION



74 per cent of all individuals surveyed at IOM Flow Monitoring Points in 2023 were travelling for labour or economic reasons.<sup>(4)</sup>

Mobility patterns are largely driven by employment and economic opportunities in labour intensive areas. Favoured destinations for labour migration vary depending on the season.



## LEGEND

- COUNTRY BORDER
- WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGION <sup>(1)</sup>
- PRIMARY ROAD
- MAIN MIGRATION ROUTE <sup>(2)</sup>
- MAIN DESTINATION FOR LABOUR MIGRANTS <sup>(2)</sup>
- CAPITAL CITY
- OTHER CITY

**DETAILS:** THIS MAP PRESENTS THE MAIN MIGRATION ROUTES IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA AND LABOUR-INTENSIVE AREAS ATTRACTING LARGE MIGRATION FLOWS

**SOURCES:** (1) REGION AS COVERED BY IOM REGIONAL OFFICE (2) BASED ON DISCUSSIONS WITH IOM OFFICES AND SECONDARY DATA REVIEW (3) DIRECT DISCUSSIONS WITH MIGRANTS AND KEY INFORMANT SURVEYS CONDUCTED WITH NATIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES OF THE REGION (4) FMP DATA 2023: MAIN REASON FOR TRAVEL PROVIDED BY MIGRANTS SURVEYED DURING DTM'S FLOW MONITORING SURVEY DATA COLLECTION.

## MAIN SECTORS ATTRACTING MIGRATION

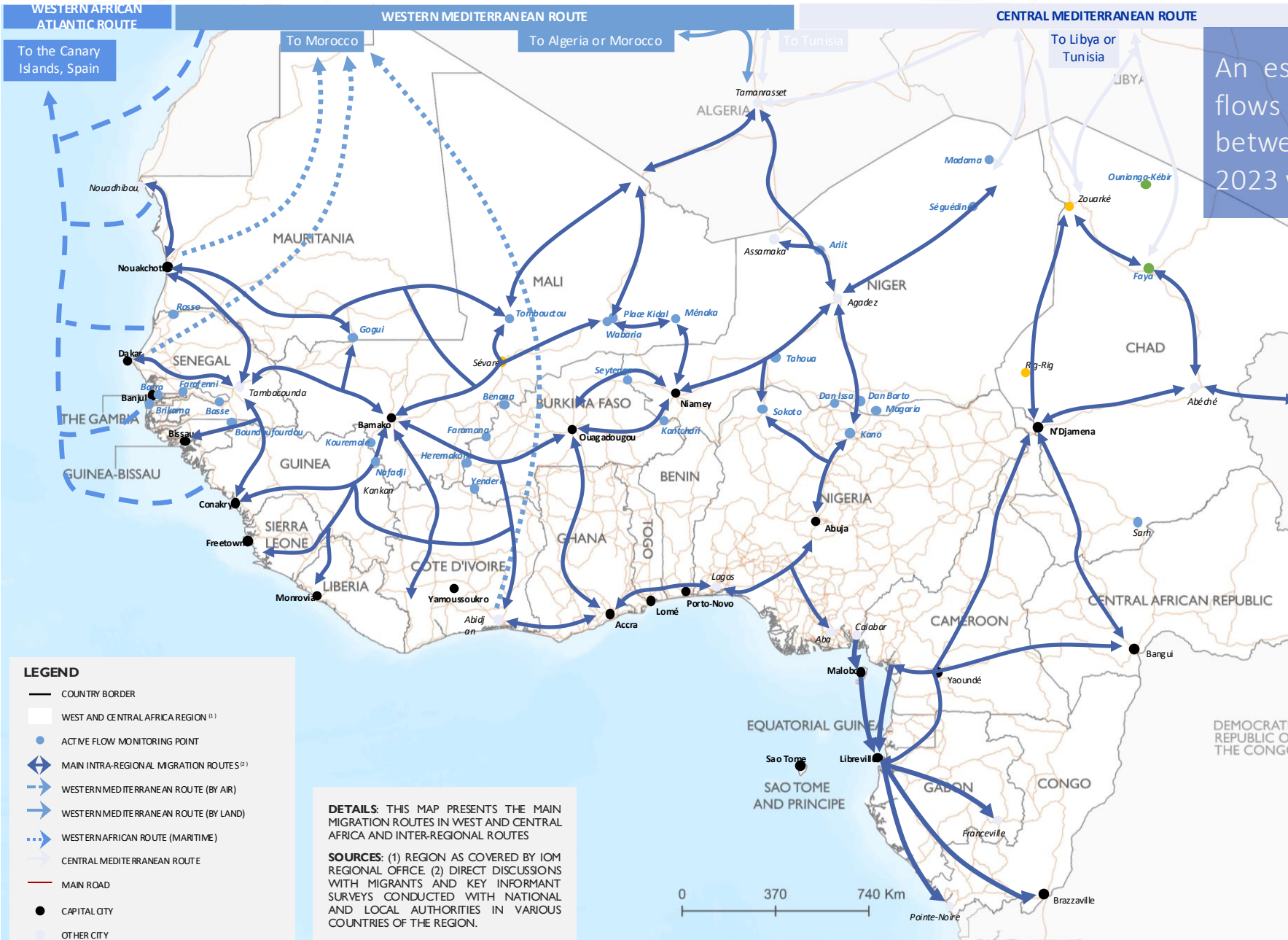
- Services (auto repairs, housekeeping, etc.)
- Mining
- Farming
- Fishing
- Forestry

0 370 740 Km

This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM



# INTER-REGIONAL ROUTES



An estimated **93%** of migration flows in West and Central Africa between January and December 2023 were **internal** to the region.

Inter-regional migration routes taken by migrants regularly shift according to changes in migration legislation, policies and controls. However, the routes themselves do not evolve much.

Migrants heading to North Africa or Europe travel along three main migration routes:

1. Western African Atlantic
2. Western Mediterranean
3. Central Mediterranean

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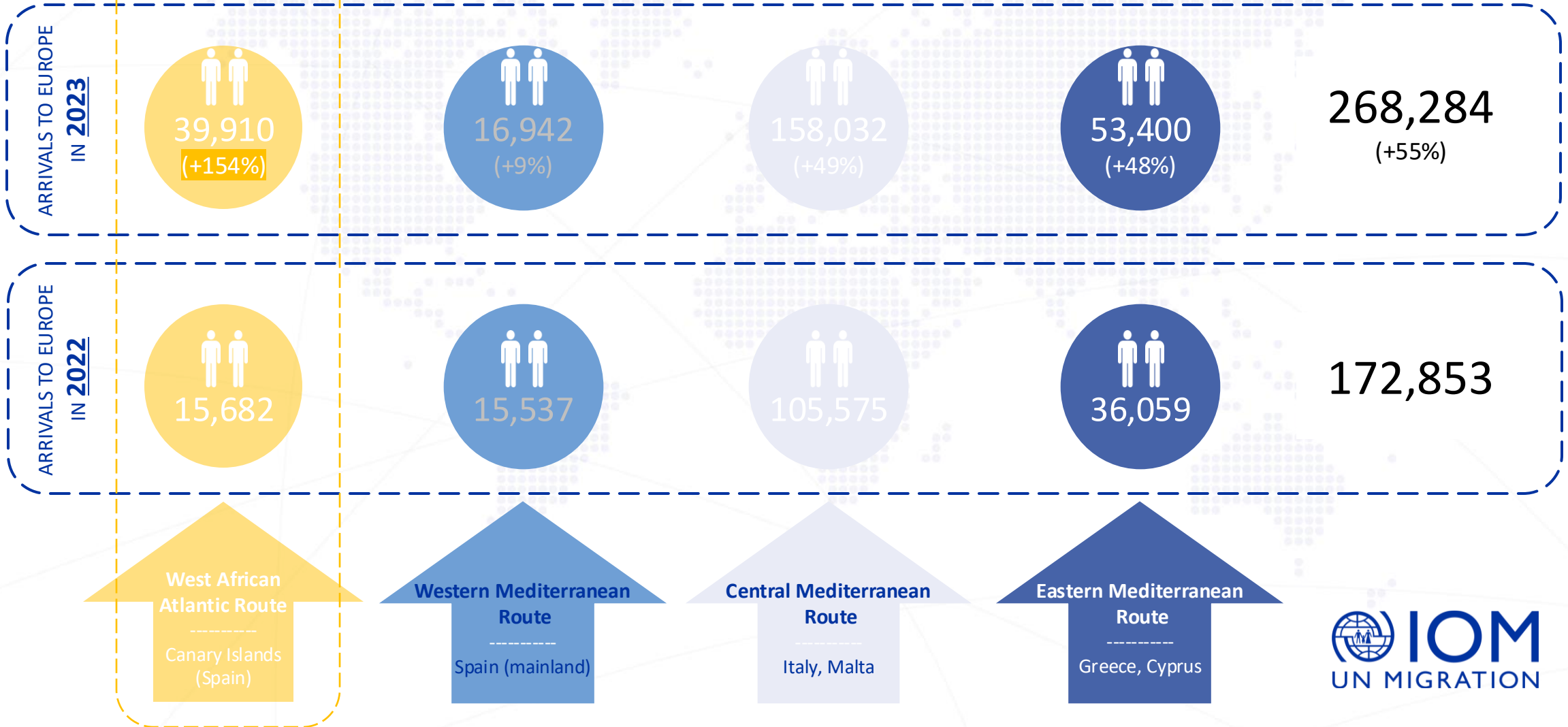
# RESURGENCE OF THE WEST AFRICAN ATLANTIC ROUTE - Boat departures from Senegal, Mauritania, The Gambia and Guinea to the Canary Islands



+71% of missing migrants between 2022 (559) and 2023 (956) on this route



The **West African Atlantic Route** is the route that saw the **biggest growth in 2023** in terms of Arrivals to Europe ; from **15,682** in 2022 to **39,910** in 2023 (154% growth). During the **first 3 weeks of January 2024**, **4,012** migrants arrived in the Canary Islands, representing a more than 10-fold increase compared to the same period in 2023 (396 arrivals).



# NEW ROUTE FROM WCA TO LATIN AMERICA AND USA

2023 trend of Senegalese, Mauritians and Guineans arriving to Latin America and the USA

## ARRIVALS TO DARIEN GAP, PANAMA

2022

**7,903 arrivals**  
of migrants  
25% of Senegalese  
(1,944 migrants)



2023 (Jan-Dec)



**5,825 arrivals**  
of migrants

The new route through Nicaragua is preferred by migrants to having to cross the Darien by foot

## ARRIVALS TO HONDURAS

2022

**4,147 arrivals**  
of migrants  
from WCA



2023 (Jan-Dec)



**34,000 arrivals**  
of migrants  
from WCA

12,417 Guineans  
8,730 Senegalese  
5,815 Mauritians

The sharp increase in 2023 highlights the **change of route**: migrants now preferring to travel by plane until Nicaragua and only then continue the route further north (Honduras, USA) by foot

## ARRIVALS TO MEXICO

2022

**3,695 arrivals**  
of migrants  
from WCA



2023 (Jan-Nov)

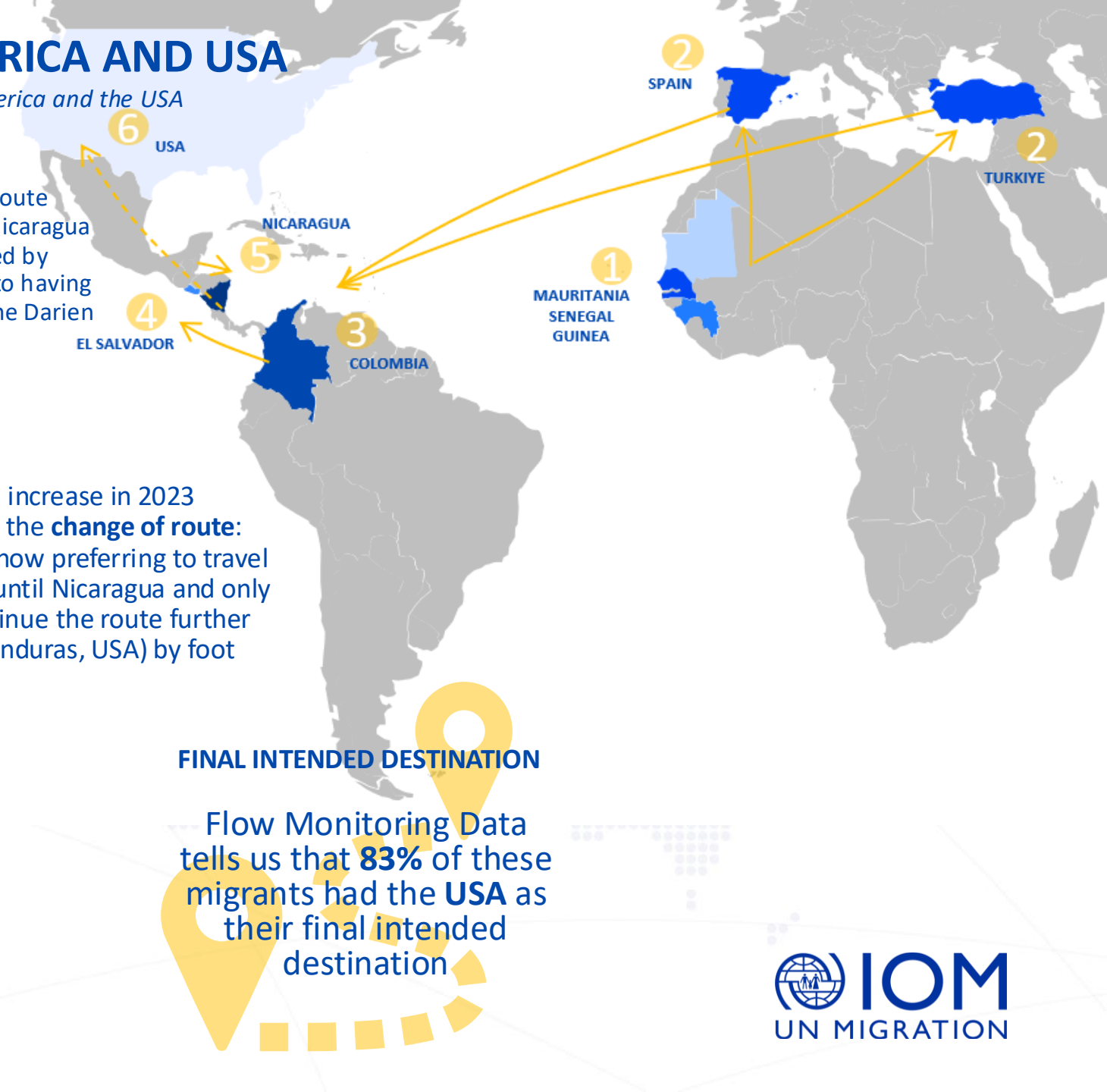


**41,100 arrivals**  
of migrants  
from WCA

17,404 Senegalese  
8,584 Guineans  
8,042 Mauritians  
1,901 Ghaneans

## FINAL INTENDED DESTINATION

Flow Monitoring Data tells us that **83%** of these migrants had the **USA** as their final intended destination





## 2. TRAFFICKING TRENDS IN THE REGION

# TIP regional main trends and characteristics

*Trafficking flows out have a global dimension, with victims detected in Western and Southern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Most of the victims detected in WCA are either citizens of the country of detection or citizens of other WCA countries. (UNODC, 2020)*

- **Sexual exploitation** of women and girls (mainly from **Nigeria**, exploited in Niger, Libya, Mali, Senegal...)
- **Labor exploitation** of women, boys and girls for domestic work (within the region, in the Middle East...)
- Multiple forms of **exploitation in traditional mining sites**:
  - New “gold rushes”
  - Gold-belt throughout Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger
  - Reliable indicators and testimonies of:
    - sexual exploitation of children and adults
    - child labor (not necessarily as miners)
    - labor exploitation of miners

# Child trafficking regional specificities

- **Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC)** in the region are often identified as **victims of trafficking**.
- **Sexual exploitation** of girls (namely from Nigeria)
- **Child forced begging** (Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Mauritania, The Gambia...):
  - Main countries of origin: Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea Bissau
  - Main countries of destination: Guinea Bissau and Senegal (most prevalent form of TIP)
  - Children, usually boys, entrusted by their parents to adult religious leaders supposed to provide religious education
  - **No official figures**, but tens of thousands could be involved





LawInSport™  
**UNDERSTAND THE RULES OF THE GAME™**  
 6<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE (DIGITAL EDITION)  
 10 • 20 NOVEMBER 2020

**WOMEN'S SPORT**  
**PROTECTING AGAINST EXPLOITATION**

Khalida Popal  
 Founder & Director,  
 Girl Power Organisation

Kat Craig  
 CEO,  
 Athlead CIC

Khayran Noor  
 Advocate, Founder & CEO  
 Sports Legal

Madalina Diaconu  
 Associate Professor  
 University of Neuchate

**Exploitation of children in sport : a widespread and unchecked problem**



VENTE ET  
 EXPLOITATION  
 SEXUELLE D'ENFANTS :  
 LE SPORT ET  
 LES ÉVÈNEMENTS  
 SPORTIFS



**Traffickers on the prowl pretending to be sports scouts, NAPTIP warns**

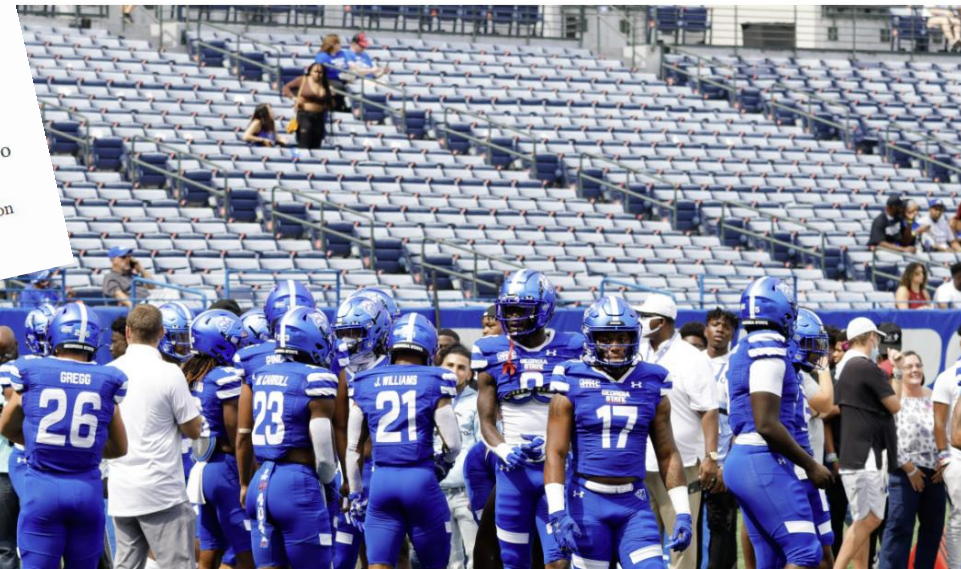
"Let youths be aware; let parents be aware that there are preys out there waiting to extort their ambitions."

By Agency Report — July 29, 2023 Reading Time: 1 min read

The **National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP)** warned in Abuja on Saturday to beware of traffickers using sporting platforms to traffic young people.

**Sports as a means of exploitation**

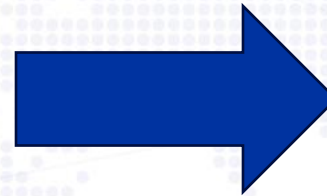
By Terrance Davis



# Exploitation and abuse in sport: an emerging trend?

- The opportunities to migrate and join football clubs are extremely limited. Migrant smugglers and traffickers can take advantage of the situation
- Many youth migrate for sporting reasons, without these movements being quantified or recorded
- Multiple data collection initiatives on trafficking in general vs. lack of specific data on trafficking in sport
- Anecdotal evidence, despite research highlighting its prevalence:
  - 2023: 4 cases detected in Cabo Verde (1 Guinean, 1 Sierra-Leonean and 2 Nigerian migrants); 1 case in Côte d'Ivoire (Sierra Leonean)
  - 2018-2023: 23 cases of Côte d'Ivoire nationals detected in Tunisia and 2 in Kazakhstan

Need for an **evidence-based approach** and more **data collection efforts**





Thank you for your attention !

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