



March 2023

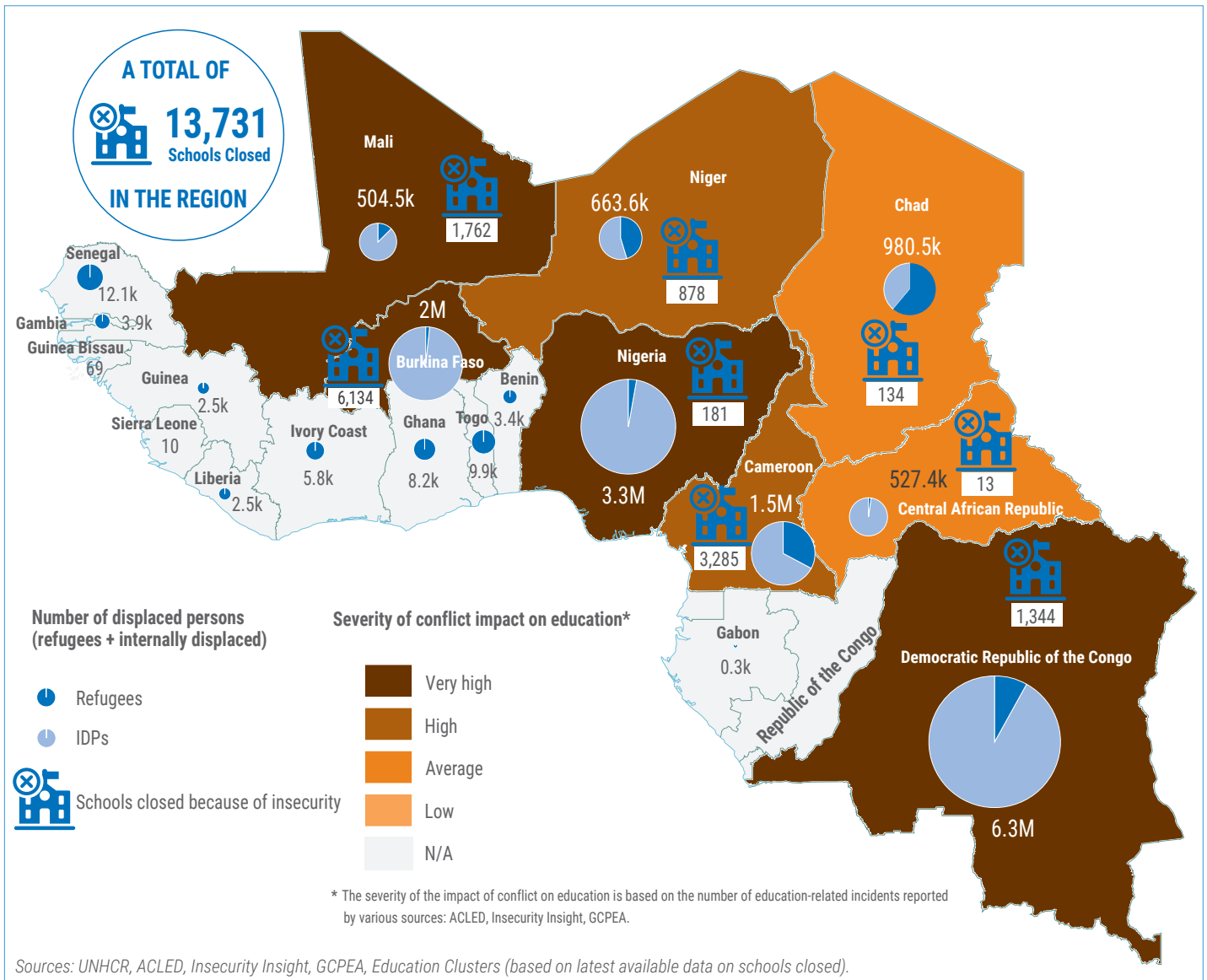


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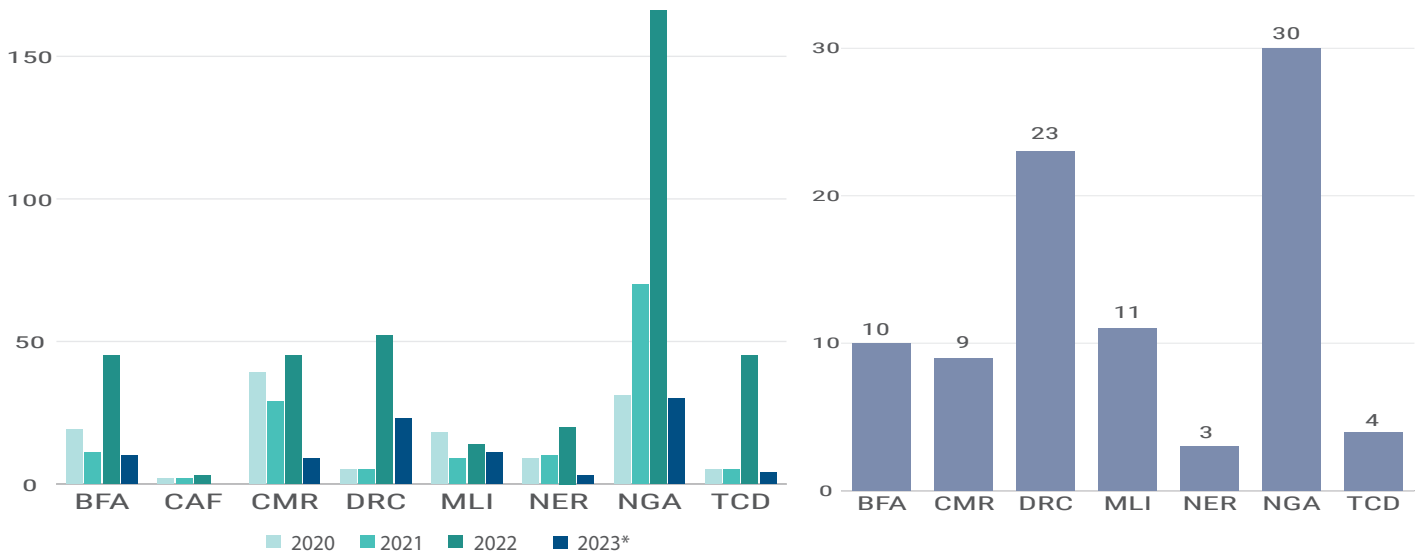
# UNPRECEDENTED SCHOOL CLOSURES JEOPARDISE THE FUTURE OF MILLIONS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

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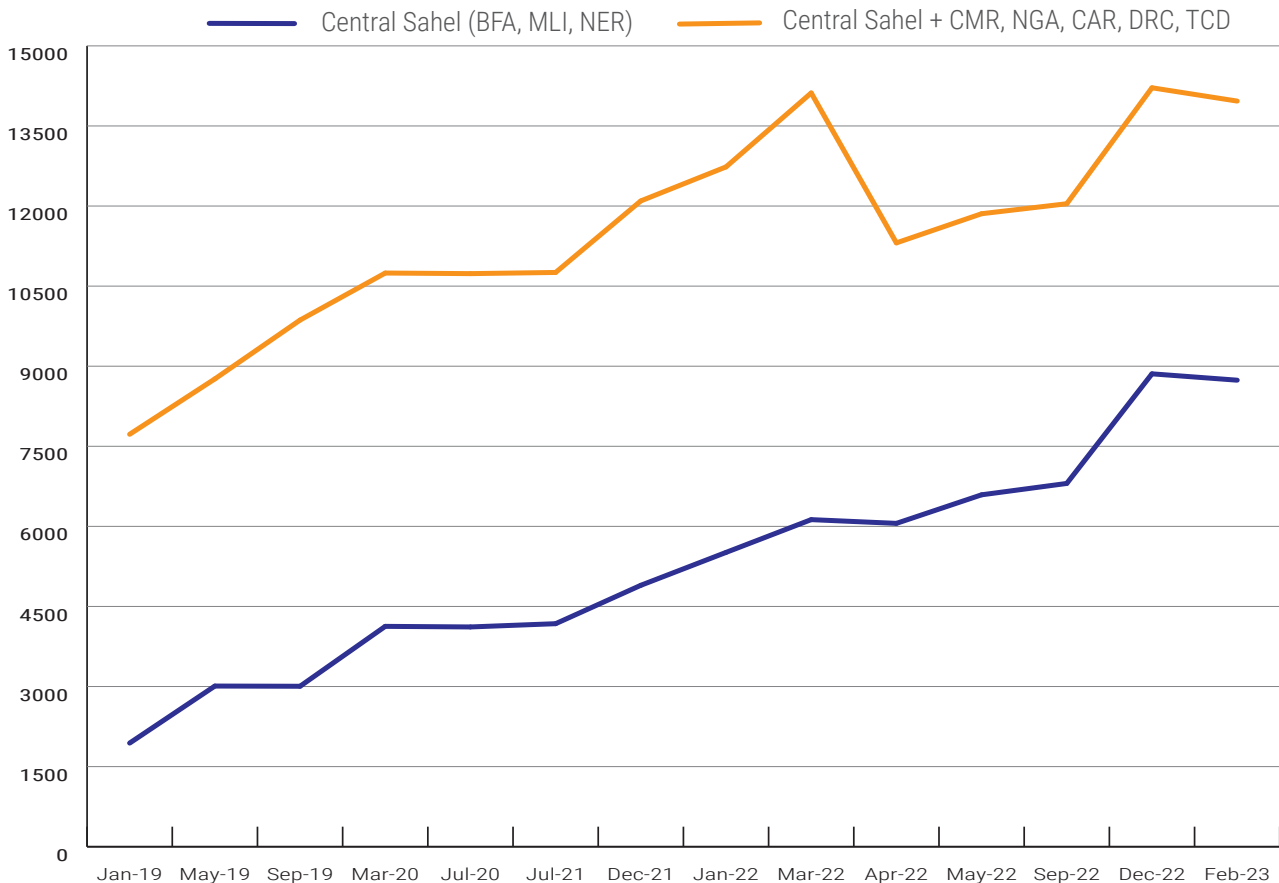
## Education Attacks and Displacement Trends in West & Central Africa



\* A total of 90 incidents against education between January and March 2023



## Schools closed from 2019 to 2023



## Recommendations

In line with the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 2601 on the protection of schools in armed conflict<sup>1</sup>, 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)<sup>2</sup>.
- 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)<sup>3</sup>, the *Safe to Learn initiative*<sup>4</sup>, and the *Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies* (INEE) Minimum Standards<sup>5</sup>, 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*<sup>6</sup>.
- The international community should ensure that civil military coordination mechanisms document the military use of schools and rapidly identify concrete measures to end it.

<sup>3</sup> GADRRRES (2022). [Comprehensive School Safety Framework 2022-2030](#).

<sup>4</sup> Global Partnership and Fund to End Violence Against Children (2016). [Safe to Learn initiative](#).

<sup>5</sup> INEE (2010). [Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery](#).

<sup>6</sup> GCPEA (2014). [Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict](#).

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council (2021). [Resolution 2601 on the protection of schools in armed conflict](#).

<sup>2</sup> 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*<sup>7</sup>. 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*<sup>8</sup> 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*<sup>9</sup>.
- 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.

<sup>7</sup> Geneva Call (2013). [Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict](#).

<sup>8</sup> GCPEA (2021). [Toolkit for Collecting and Analyzing Data on Attacks on Education](#).

<sup>9</sup> Transforming Education Summit (2022). [Safe Schools Common Approach](#).

### 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.