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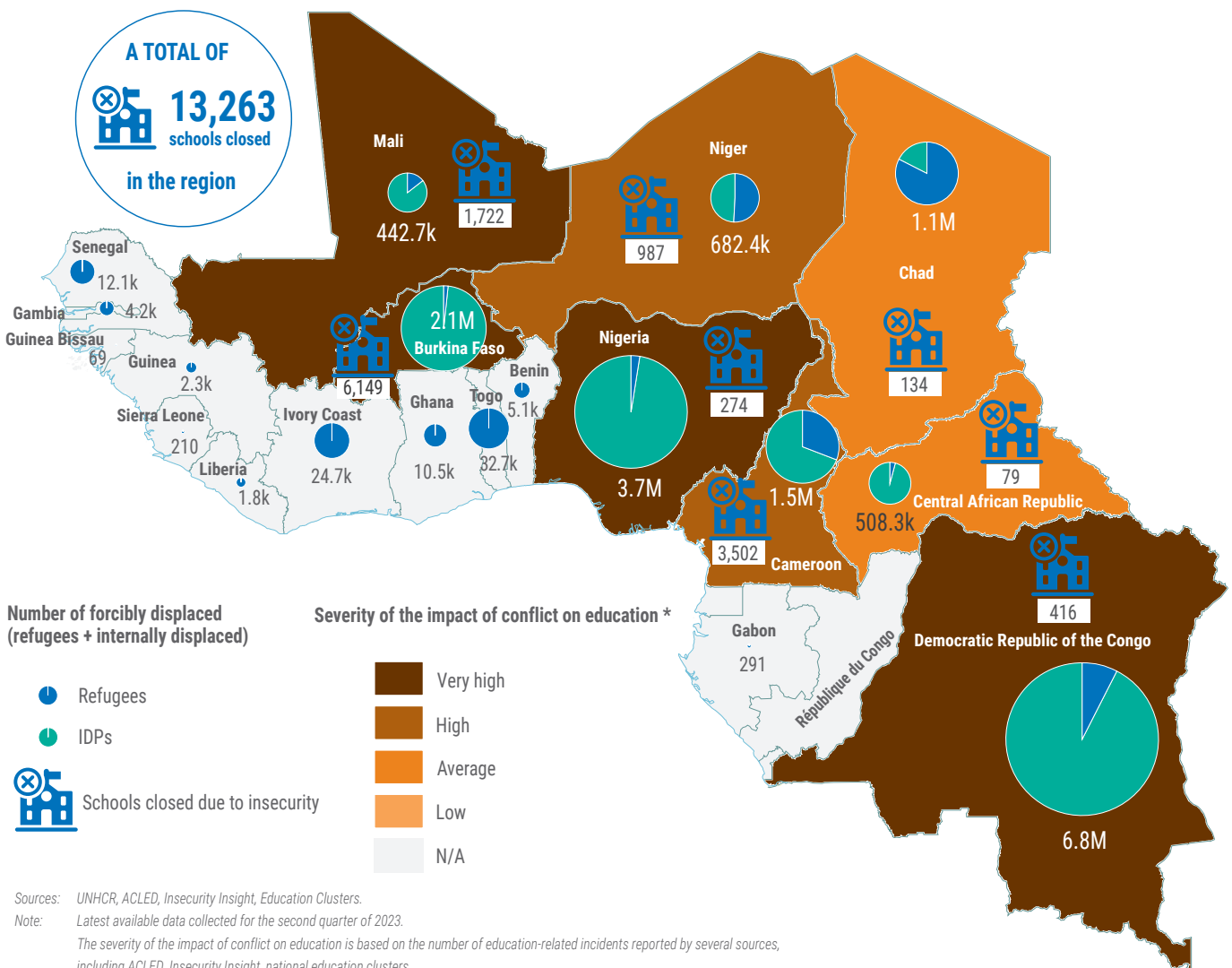
**EDUCATION UNDER ATTACK
IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA
2023 UPDATE**

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, well-being 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 of schools closed due to insecurity 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.

School Closures, Forced Displacement and the Severity of the Impact of Conflict on Education in West & Central Africa, 2023



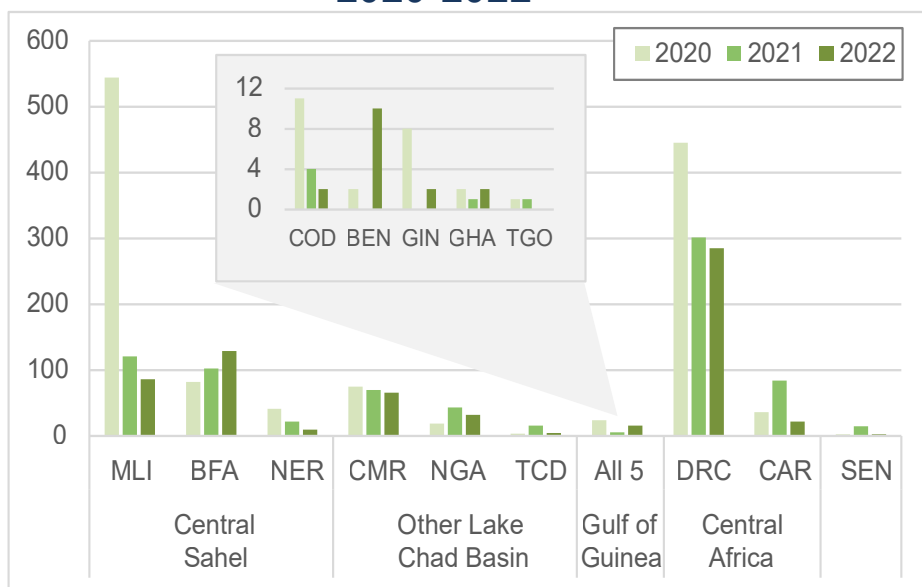


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"In the town of Pama alone, we have over a thousand pupils but there are only six permanent teachers and six volunteers. There is a shortage of materials, reading materials, tables and benches, and many other things. Given the large number of pupils, 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).

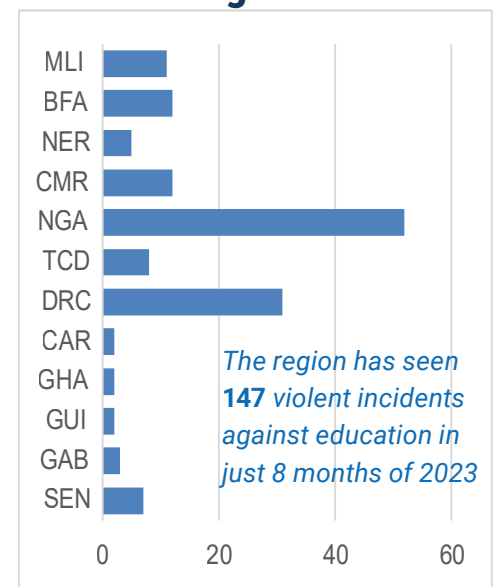
Attacks on Education by Country, 2020-2022



Source: GCPEA, 2020-2022

Note: GCPEA defines attacks on education as any intentional threat or use of force—carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, or religious reasons. Data here include attacks on schools, students, staff and higher education, as well as child recruitment, sexual violence, the military use of schools and targeted attacks on girls and women.

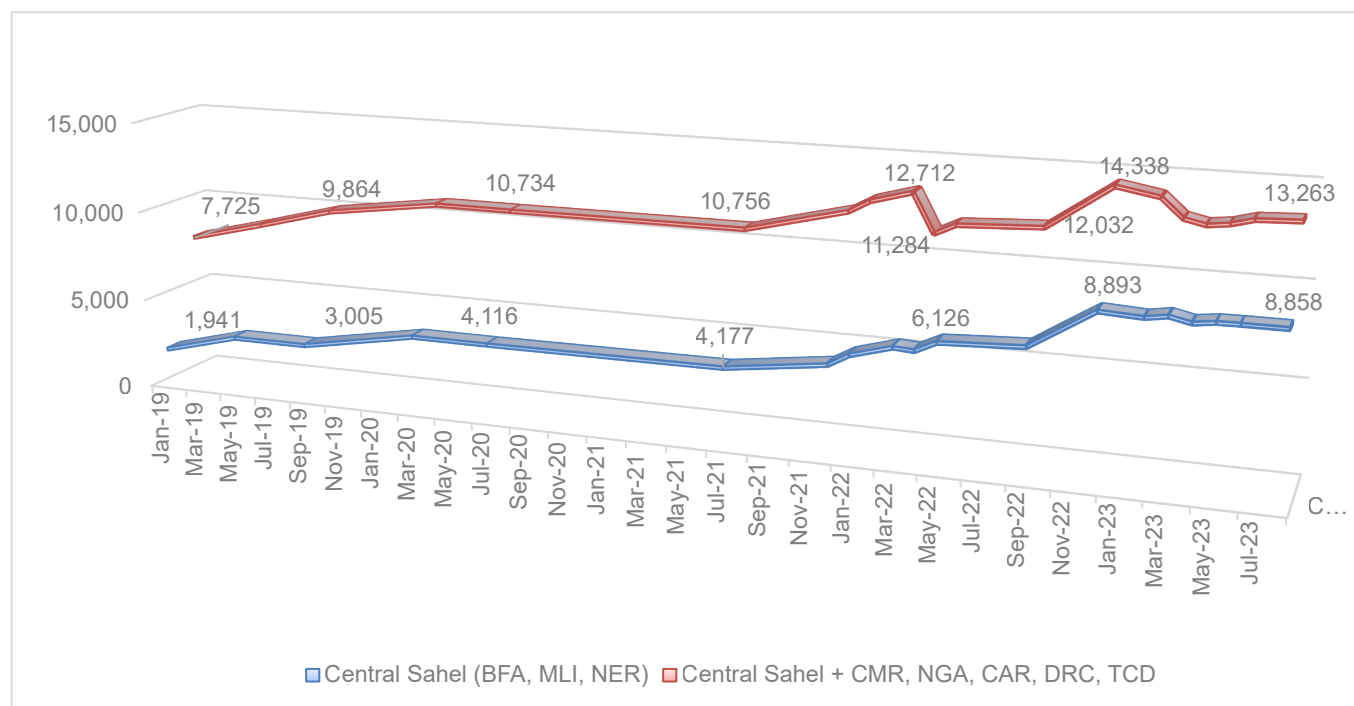
Incidents against Education, Jan-Aug 2023



Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED)

Note: ACLED tracks all types of reported political violence and protest events. The data presented here cover battles, violence against civilians and explosions/remote violence that refer to "school", "teacher", "pupil", "student", etc.

Trend in Number of Schools Closed due to Insecurity, 2019-2023



Source: National Education Clusters

"Some armed men entered the village one evening. At first, people thought it was the army. But a few minutes later, people started to flee. We fled with my mum and my little brothers. We didn't have time to pack our things. In the meantime, dad went to the shop to buy batteries for his radio. He didn't come home. We think he's been kidnapped and killed. His body has not been found. A lot of things have changed in my life. I don't know what state my school is in. It must have been abandoned by now. It was built of cob. I imagine it's destroyed now. I had friends at school with whom we used to play "fire", which was our favourite game. I was a singer in the children's choir at our school. Our teacher was very good, he taught us songs. I miss all that so much. I haven't heard from my friends. I don't know if they're still alive. And if they are, I don't think they can read or write any more. Because the school has not reopened in Otomabere. It's been two years now."

Esther, 13 years old, displaced from Otomabere, Ituri province to Luvangira IDP camp, Oicha, North-Kivu (DRC).

Recommendations

In line with the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 2601 on the protection of schools in armed conflict¹, 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 Standards⁵, as appropriate.
- Governments and partners should multiply actions in

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](#).

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

² GCPEA (2015). [Safe Schools Declaration](#).

favor of the awareness, information, knowledge, learning and understanding of safe school frameworks and their implementation strategies by key education stakeholders at the national, regional and local levels.

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.
- 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.
- This should involve the prior development of related learning opportunities through; i) creating training courses for key stakeholders in the areas of protection and psychosocial support and socioemotional learning (PSS SEL), that could build on the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies' (INEE) toolbox; ii) public and targeted awareness campaigns about the importance of this issue; as well as iii) the allocation or mobilization of funding for this purpose.

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.

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

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](#).

Ensemble pour une sécurité globale de l'éducation, pour l'apprentissage, la protection et le bien-être de nos enfants.
Together for the overall safety of education, for the learning, protection and wellbeing of our children.



Education Under Attack in West and Central Africa - 2023 Update
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