

DATA SNAPSHOT OF MIGRANT AND DISPLACED CHILDREN IN AFRICA

2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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About IDAC

The International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC) is a cross-sectoral global coalition that aims to improve data and statistics and support evidence-based policymaking for migrant and displaced children. With the European Union as its main donor and jointly led by Eurostat, IOM, OECD, UNHCR and UNICEF (Secretariat Chair), IDAC brings together governments (including experts from national statistical offices and migration- and displacement-related ministries), international and regional organizations, NGOs, think tanks, academics, civil society and youth. At the end of 2025, IDAC's membership had surpassed 50, including 25 Member States.

DATA SNAPSHOT OF MIGRANT AND DISPLACED AFRICAN CHILDREN: 2025


1 in 2

African refugees is a child



16.3 million


African children are internally displaced by conflict and violence



The number of African children living in internal displacement due to disasters in 2024 was

2x

the 2023 figure



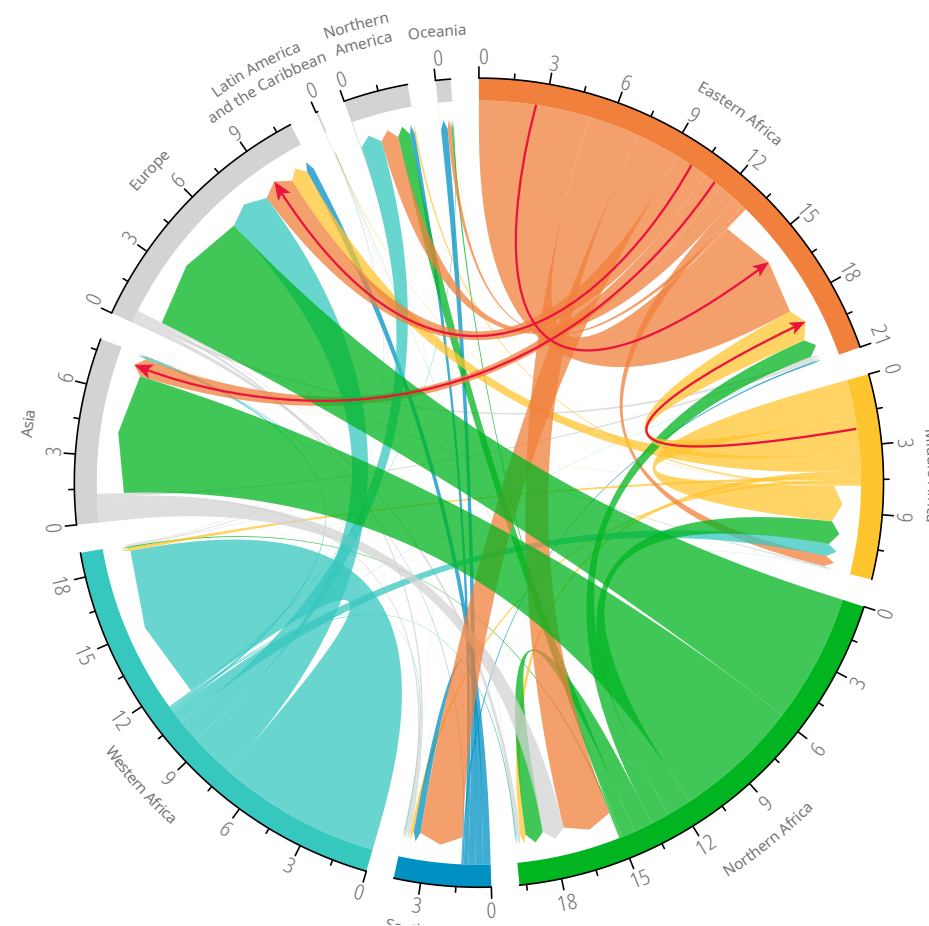
Fact 1: More international migrants move within Africa than beyond the continent. In Eastern Africa and Western Africa, migration largely occurs within the region.

As of 2024, over 25.1 million Africans were living outside their country of birth but still within the continent. Migration primarily occurs within regions: a third (33 per cent) of all migrants from Africa stayed within the same region. Intracontinental emigration is concentrated between countries within Eastern Africa and Western Africa, which together represent 72 per cent of all migration within Africa.

An additional 20.7 million Africans had migrated beyond the continent since birth. The majority of these emigrants went to Europe (51 per cent) and to Asia (32 per cent), mostly the Gulf States. Most emigrants that have left the African continent were from countries in Northern Africa (59 per cent).

How to read this chart: The coloured arrows show the direction of migration from the place of origin (emigration) to the place of destination (immigration). Looking at trends for Eastern Africa, for example (see thin red arrows), in 2024 more than 13 million people born in Eastern Africa were living outside their country of birth. Of these, around 5 million lived in another country within the same region, approximately 2.3 million lived in Europe or Asia, and the remaining 6 million lived in another African region or elsewhere in the world.

FIGURE 1: International migrants by place of origin and destination in Africa, 2024 (migrant stock in millions)



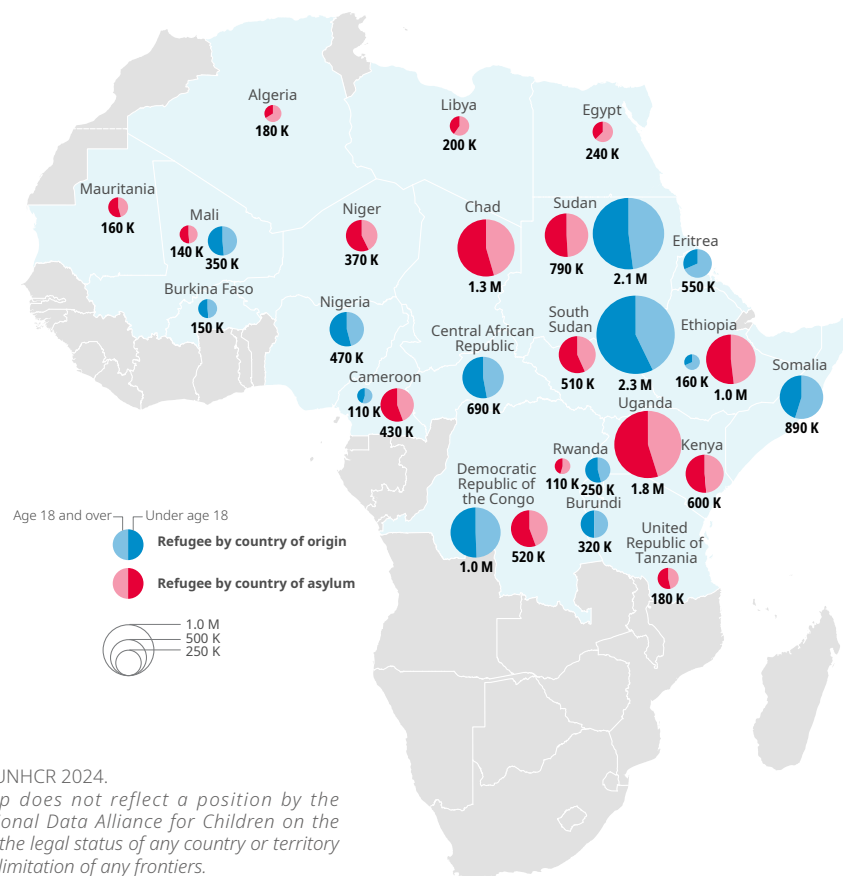
Source: UNDESA 2024.
Note: Geographic regions are based on SDG regions.

Fact 2: Children account for more than half of all refugees in Africa, representing an estimated 4.9 million in total. Most child refugees in Africa come from Eastern Africa and the Horn of Africa.

At the end of 2024, 9.8 million refugees originated in African countries – 2.3 million more than in 2020 – and children are disproportionately represented among them. Half of all African refugees are children, totalling more than 4.9 million (as of end of 2024). The largest numbers of African refugee children come from South Sudan, followed by Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia.

African countries bear much of the responsibility for hosting the continent's refugees, with an estimated 91 per cent of them finding asylum in other African countries. Uganda currently hosts the largest number of refugees in Africa and has been recognized for its progressive refugee policy, which – among other aspects – includes the provision of access to education and protection mechanisms for children.^{1,2}

FIGURE 2: Largest refugee populations (over 100,000) in Africa by country of origin and asylum, 2024

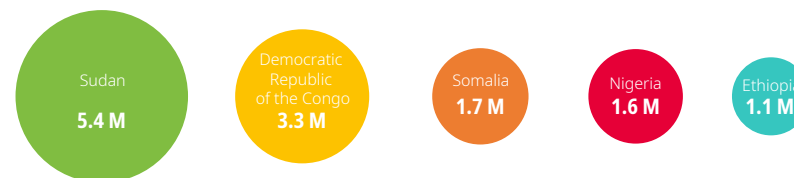


Source: UNHCR 2024.
 This map does not reflect a position by the International Data Alliance for Children on the Move on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers.

Fact 3: An estimated 16.3 million children in Africa are internally displaced by conflict and violence. One in four of them lives in Sudan or the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Conflict and violence have internally displaced more than 33.1 million people in Africa – an estimated half of them are children. At the end of 2024, there were 5.4 million internally displaced children in Sudan alone.

FIGURE 3: African countries with largest number of conflict-related internally displaced children, 2024 (in millions)



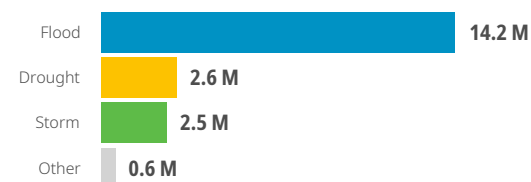
Fact 4: Disasters triggered 19.8 million new internal displacements of African children over the past decade – 7 in 10 due to floods.

Disasters caused a third of new child displacements between 2015 and 2024. In certain regions – such as Western Africa – the share is even higher, with the number of new displacements tied to disasters surpassing those triggered by conflict and violence over the last 10 years. Continent-wide, floods were the primary cause of displacement, leading to 14.2 million new child displacements, or 71 per cent of all disaster-related displacements since 2015. Droughts and storms followed, causing 2.6 million and 2.5 million new displacements over this 10-year period, respectively.

By the end of 2024, an estimated 2.9 million African children were living in displacement due to disasters – more than double than at the end of 2023. The majority, around 1.4 million, were in Eastern Africa.

Explore [IDAC's report](#) on children and climate mobility.

FIGURE 4: New child displacements by disaster-related hazard type in Africa, 2015 to 2024 (in millions)

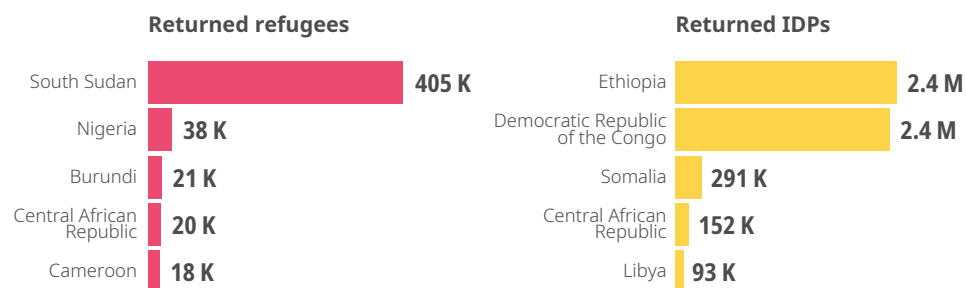


Fact 5: An estimated 6 million former refugees and internally displaced people returned to their homes in Africa in 2024.

In 2024, UNHCR recorded 527,000 former refugees and 5.4 million internally displaced people returning to their homes in Africa – an increase of over one million returnees compared with 2023. South Sudan alone accounted for 405,000 returnees.

Significant numbers of returning children have also been recorded by other sources – for instance, IOM found that at least 140,000 Chadian children who were living in Sudan had been displaced back to their home country by mid-2025, often without the resources to rebuild their lives.³ The actual number of returning displaced children across Africa may be much higher, as most countries do not collect quality data on them.

FIGURE 5: African countries with largest number of returned refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), 2024



Source: UNHCR 2025.



Fact 6: Many African children travel unaccompanied or become separated during their journeys – but they remain largely invisible in the data.

Data from key mixed migration flows in Africa reveal that alarming numbers of children are traveling without parents or caregivers, often representing a significant share of migrant and displaced children. Many of them are adolescent males.⁴

While data on unaccompanied and separated children across Africa remain scarce, existing evidence points to grave protection risks, including detention,⁵ sexual violence⁶ and labour exploitation.⁷

Closing the data gaps on the numbers and situation of unaccompanied and separated children in Africa is vital to both protecting and empowering these children.

Read [IDAC's report](#) on unaccompanied and separated children.

FIGURE 6: Contextual insights on the presence of unaccompanied and separated children in Africa from mixed-movement flows and regional displacement data

- 1 Asylum-seeking and refugee children, Tunisia (2025)
Of 1,890 displaced children registered with UNHCR, **37% were travelling without a parent or caregiver**
- 2 Migration route crossing Djibouti, Somalia and Yemen to the Gulf States (2020)
IOM tracked migration flows and found that **71% of children on this route were unaccompanied**
- 3 People receiving IOM food assistance along the Western African Atlantic Route (2024)
Of more than 10,000 recipients, **7% were unaccompanied and separated children**
- 4 UNHCR registration data from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Somalia (2010–2018)
Proportion of **unaccompanied children** among refugee populations ranged widely from **0.3% to 5%**



Source: Lay and Papadopolos 2009; Engebretsen et al. 2020; Hovil et al. 2021; Dako-Gyeke et al. 2023; Mixed Migration Centre 2025. For full references, see citations 31, 33, 34 and 35 in [Alone, On the Move and Unseen](#).

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7 Dako-Gyeke, Mavis, Richard Baffo Kodom and Alhassan Sulemana, 'Experiences of Unaccompanied Child Migrant Workers from West African Countries Living in Ghana', *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, vol. 24, no. 2, June 2023, pp. 527–546.

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