



Understanding Relations between Local Communities and Transit Migrants in Gao and Agadez

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Part of the **SSS II** programme





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What is IMREF?

This report was written by IMREF. IMREF is the Independent Monitoring, Rapid Research and Evidence Facility of the SSS Phase II programme commissioned by the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO). It is delivered by a consortium led by Integrity Global, which includes Seefar, IMPACT Initiatives, and the Danube University Krems.

IMREF aims to provide programme stakeholders with a better understanding of results, to improve accountability through monitoring and verification activities, and to identify gaps and areas where partners could strengthen delivery. IMREF will also facilitate adaptation and learning in SSS II by delivering and using evidence from research to inform programmatic and potentially policy decisions that support vulnerable people in mixed-migration flows.

Safety, Support and Solutions Phase 2 (SSS II)

The FCDO's Safety, Support and Solutions Phase II (SSS II) programme is a migration programme that aims to make migration safer and provide critical humanitarian support, resulting in fewer deaths and less suffering along the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR). SSS II is implemented by IOM, UNICEF, British Red Cross, and a consortium led by the Danish Refugee Council. SSS II takes a route-based approach to when responding to the complex needs of mixed-migrant populations including refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and victims of trafficking, in a wide range of countries along the Central Mediterranean Route.



INTEGRITY

IMPACT

Shaping practices
Influencing policies
Impacting lives

SEEFAR



Acronyms

4Mi	Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
BRC	British Red Cross
CAR	Central African Republic
CMR	Central Mediterranean Route
COSINN	Community Stabilization Initiatives in Northern Niger
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DTM	(IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
EUTF	European Union Trust Fund for Africa
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
FMP	Flow Monitoring Points
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HACP	Haute Autorité à la Consolidation de la Paix
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IMREF	Independent Monitoring Research and Evidence Facility
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KII	Key Informant Interview
MDM	Médecins du Monde
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MMC	Mixed Migration Centre
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PAIERA	Action Plan for Rapid Economic Impact in Agadez
RQ	Research Question
SSS II	Safety, Support and Solutions Programme for Refugees and Migrants, Phase Two
SNV	Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers
TDH	Terre des Hommes
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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Executive Summary

This study examines the relations between local communities and transit migrants in Agadez, Niger and Gao, Mali. Agadez and Gao are two important migration transit hubs in the Sahel where the scale of development and humanitarian programming has increased significantly in the past five years. Existing research demonstrates that the changing political-economic context, including increased insecurity and strengthened efforts to limit migration flows, have had an impact on relations between transit migrations and local communities. Existing research also demonstrates that communities' attitudes towards migrants or other displaced populations can play a significant role in shaping the latter's vulnerability, with implications for effective assistance strategies. To date, however, there has been limited evidence from the Sahel looking at how local communities perceive and interact with transit migrants, and how migration programming influences these perceptions and interactions.

This study seeks to improve the evidence base on local community perceptions and attitudes towards migrants and the factors that shape them. Findings draw on a desk review of 58 sources, semi-structured interviews with 30 humanitarian and development workers and 30 community stakeholders, 480 remote quantitative surveys with migrants and community members, and 60 remote in-depth interviews with migrants and community members in both locations. The study's findings provide insight into the experiences of study participants but are not statistically representative.

Community perceptions of migrants varied greatly among respondents and suggested relations between local communities and migrants in Agadez are under greater strain compared to Gao. In Gao, most community respondents (82%) perceived migrants either positively or neutrally. In Agadez, however, close to half of community respondents (44%) said perceptions of migrants were negative or very negative, compared to 16% in Gao. Similar trends across the study's quantitative indicators and qualitative interviews suggest that negative attitudes towards migrants are more prevalent in Agadez. Migrant and community quantitative respondents consistently reported more negative interactions and fewer instances of mutual support in Agadez. In Gao, only 3% of community members described their interactions with migrants as 'bad' or 'very bad', compared to 22% of those interviewed in Agadez.

In both locations, community members often expressed negative attitudes towards specific segments within the migrant population, including women and migrants of certain nationalities. Female migrants were commonly perceived to engage in sex work and seen as a threat to traditional gender roles. Similarly, community members often stereotyped migrants of certain nationalities with less cultural, religious and linguistic overlap, describing their behaviour as incompatible with the cultural and religious norms and values of the community.

The nature of past interactions and strength of socio-economic ties between migrants and community members played a significant role in shaping attitudes. Although most migrants and local community members interact frequently, these interactions generally take place in the neighbourhood, the street, or the market. As a result, data suggests the two groups generally have weak social and economic ties in both study locations. Interactions that suggested stronger social or economic ties, and reinforced positive attitudes, between migrants and local communities, included those in mosques and churches, grins and fadas,¹ and football games. Migrants with weaker social or economic ties to community members – including women excluded from male-dominated places of positive interactions, migrants living in ghettos, and migrants living in centres run by humanitarian actors – generally felt local communities viewed them negatively.

Community members often attributed their attitudes to the perceived impact of migrants on the local economy, values and security. Most community members who said they perceived migrants positively believe that the latter play an important role in the local economy due to their spending power and did not think migrants competed with the community for jobs. On the other hand, negative attitudes were linked with concerns over how migrants with perceived cultural and religious differences affect local values or their perceived role in increasing local crime. Few local community members thought that the presence of migrants created competition over access to services, suggesting it does not play a significant role in shaping attitudes in these contexts.

Several contextual factors in the two study locations appeared to influence how local communities perceived migrants' impact on their community. These factors also help to explain diverging perspectives in Agadez and Gao. Factors that emerged clearly from the data include:

¹ Public meeting places where groups of men drink tea and talk, usually in the evenings.

- **Higher volume of flows and number of stranded migrants.** Key informants suggested that a greater volume of flows and a higher number of stranded migrants were associated with more negative attitudes in Agadez. The visibility of flows, coupled with the political-economic implications of migration policy in Niger, was a major factor fuelling perceptions among community members that migrants are an economic, social and security burden.
- **Political-economic implications of migration policy in Niger.** There are notable differences in the politics of migration and corresponding economic implications in the two study locations. In 2015, Niger passed a law on “illegal trafficking of migrants” (Law 2015-36) that criminalised the activities of people involved in the transportation of migrants. This had significant negative economic consequences and contributed to a loss of livelihoods in migration hubs. Several community respondents attributed negative attitudes towards migrants to the economic losses that resulted from the criminalisation of migration.
- **Discontent with migrant-targeted programming in Agadez.** Community members in Agadez often had the perception that migrant-targeted programming excludes local communities and assistance is not fairly distributed. This discontent is likely to partially explain the higher prevalence of negative attitudes towards migrants in the sample in Agadez than in Gao. Discontent with migrant-targeted programming also made some local community members more reticent to support migrants. Key informants suggested that this discontent may pose risks to migrants over time, including community retaliation against humanitarian organisations, or increased levels of violence against migrants. Despite these frustrations, community respondents acknowledged migrants’ needs and most did not want humanitarian support taken away from migrants, but instead called for more equitable support.
- **Visibility of migrant-targeted programming in Agadez.** Data also suggests migrant-targeted programming is more visible in Agadez than in Gao, where community members are more aware of humanitarian and development programmes working to support the local population. However, in both locations, many local community members remained ill-informed about the activities of programmes, which contributed to misconceptions, and ultimately negative attitudes towards migrants.

Data does not suggest that the COVID-19 outbreak, and its socio-economic consequences, has significantly amplified tensions between migrants and local communities. Findings suggest this is because community members are often ambivalent to COVID-19 and do not believe migrants increase the risk of transmission. The only discernible impact that COVID-19 has had on relations between migrants and local communities is that measures to contain the virus appear to have reduced the quality and frequency of interactions between them. This may potentially limit contact and ties, leading to more negative attitudes over time and a more difficult operating environment.

Migrants confirmed that the local community is often an important source of support and assistance, supporting their ability to avoid and recover from harm. In the quantitative sample, almost half of migrant respondents said that the community had provided them with assistance. Local communities also played a key role in referring migrants to humanitarian organisations, indicating that community members can play an important role in facilitating access to migrants. Migrants more frequently reported receiving support from the local community in Gao than Agadez, suggesting perceptions have an impact on communities’ willingness to support and assist migrants.

Reported incidents of harm and abuse towards migrants from local community members were relatively infrequent, though not absent. The most prevalent incidents were verbal insults, followed by robbery. A small share of migrants reported negative effects that resulted from relations with the local community. These negative effects included decreased financial resources and access to employment due to local employers’ mistrust, higher prices for goods and shelter and stress due to verbal insults and fears of bad treatment. For women, those who reported local community attitudes negatively affected them said they found it harder to access work, other than sex work, and faced more verbal abuse than men, which was a significant source of psychosocial distress.

Recommendations to donors

1. Consider adopting an area-based development programme in key migration hubs that contributes to humanitarian, stabilisation and development outcomes in the Sahel. Steps for adopting an area-based development programme that supports migrants and local communities include:
 - a. Undertake a needs and capacity-based assessment that draws on community consultation to understand priority areas for a mix of shorter-term humanitarian and longer-term development programming. This could explore options to improve the availability and quality of local government services to both migrants and local communities.

- b. Conduct an updated mapping exercise of development, humanitarian, and stabilisation programming in key areas. Consider existing vulnerabilities, gaps in programming, and the political economy setting when deciding to what degree programmes will target both migrants and the local community.
2. Advocate for the inclusion of migrants as beneficiaries of existing development programmes. Explore opportunities with other donors to integrate migration objectives into existing development programmes.
3. Commission periodic surveys in key migration hubs with other key donors to monitor the relationships between migrants and local communities.
4. Commission a review of existing social cohesion initiatives and practices relevant to migration programming to better understand what works and could be scaled up. This could build on and analyse individual reviews by implementing partners but should likely be done as independent research.
5. Organise an event for donors and implementers to share lessons learned of what works on social cohesion in migration hubs ahead of future migration programmes. The event could also be used to shape the commissioning of recommendations 2 and 3 above.

Recommendations to implementers

1. Consolidate lessons learned on social cohesion from migration programming and develop a broader strategy. Although research suggests social cohesion should be an integral part of migration programming, the literature review for this study finds there is limited evidence on what works in these contexts.
2. Prioritise social cohesion activities that could counter negative attitudes expressed towards women and migrants of specific nationalities, who are perceived as not sharing common values and traditions.
3. Enhance communication strategies to ensure the objectives and results of programmes are shared with local communities. This can help to mitigate perceptions of unfair resource distribution by creating more awareness about the activities and objectives of programming. Strategies could include regular town halls or consultations with local community members in locations close to project activities or factsheets in local newspapers or social media commonly used by local communities.
4. Consult local community leaders and members in the design of programme activities and social cohesion approaches. Ensure that actions taken in response to consultations are communicated back to community members to support trust.
5. Identify key indicators of migrant–community tensions and monitor them. Based on the findings of this study, implementers should consider monitoring perceptions around the equity of assistance and fluctuations in the number of stranded migrants in key hubs.
6. Fund community-based services to promote positive interactions and more sustained social ties between migrants and local communities. Organisations could explore community-based housing options for less vulnerable migrants instead of housing them in reception centres.
7. Identify opportunities to include community members in assistance and/ or in recreational events organised for migrant beneficiaries.
8. Explore joint livelihoods programming for female migrants and community members. Findings show that negative perceptions make it harder for women to partake in income-generating activities outside of sex work, raising protection concerns. Programming could include joint trainings for local and migrant women, and engaging community women who would be willing to act as mentors in relevant sectors of the economy (i.e. hairdressing, sewing).
9. Mainstream risk mitigation by ensuring that risk registers include risks in specific higher-risk locations related to relationships with local communities, access and managing tensions between migrants and local communities. Ensure mitigation strategies are meaningful activities regularly undertaken by teams and included in narrative reporting.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and objectives

In response to the increase in migrant arrivals from West Africa in Europe, humanitarian and development actors have significantly increased the scope and scale of migration programming in the Sahel since 2016.² Historically significant transit hubs that connect West and North Africa, such as Agadez in Niger or Gao in Mali, have become key implementation sites for programmes seeking to make migration safer and influence migrant journeys towards North Africa and Europe.

Increased migration programming has highlighted the need to better understand relations between transit migrants and local communities in transit hubs on the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR). Existing research confirms that members of local communities both perpetuate abuse against migrants and provide critical assistance to migrants in their times of need.³ The influence of local communities on the vulnerabilities of migrants is directly relevant to migrant-targeted programme objectives of protecting migrants and making migration safer. Insights from project evaluations also suggest that the increase in migration programming may be causing increased tension between local communities and migrants.⁴ As such, understanding these relations is a crucial component of effective assistance strategies.

While relations between migrants and local communities have been researched in North African migration hubs, such as Libya,⁵ there is limited evidence from the Sahel looking at how local communities perceive and interact with transit migrants, and how migrant-targeted programming influences these perceptions and interactions. Previous IMREF research also suggests that the COVID-19 outbreak may have created new strains on the relations between transit migrants and local communities, but data has been insufficient to determine how or to what extent these may be affecting relations.⁶

In response to these knowledge gaps, this study seeks to improve the evidence base on the perceptions of, attitudes towards, and interactions between transit migrants and local communities in two significant Sahelian migration transit hubs: Agadez and Gao. To do so, the study explores the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ1. What are the different attitudes towards, and perceptions of, transit migrants within the local community?
- RQ2. What are the types of interactions between transit migrants and the local community?
- RQ3. What are the main factors that appear to drive negative and positive attitudes and interactions?
- RQ4. How are local communities' attitudes towards and interactions with transit migrants affecting migrants' vulnerabilities?
- RQ5. How does migrant-targeted programming appear to influence attitudes and interactions?
- RQ6. How has the COVID-19 outbreak impacted the local communities' attitudes towards, and interactions with, transit migrants?

1.2 Methodology

The study uses a mixed-methods approach engaging both the perspectives of local communities and migrants in Agadez and Gao. This has allowed the study to triangulate different data sources and ensure that a range of perspectives were captured and analysed. Data used for findings were gathered through:

- **A desk review of 58 available sources.** Overall, the available evidence base was used to triangulate findings, provide context to the report, shape the analytical framework, identify the main factors that

² Those programmes include, among others, the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) and the FCDO-funded Safety, Support and Solutions Phase II (SSS II) programme.

³ IMREF. 2019. Interim Evidence Review.

⁴ Europe Conflict and Security Consulting (2019). The British Red Cross Mid-Term Review: Action for Migrants: Route-Based Assistance (AMiRA) Programme Final Report, December 2019; Europe Conflict and Security Consulting (2019). Review of Protection Programming in the Mixed Migration Context | 3M Response Programme, May 2020.

⁵ See for instance: Seefar. 2017. [Zuara: A Formula for Change in Libya? Libyan Perspectives on the Migration Crisis](#); British Red Cross. 2018. [Humanity at a crossroads: Migrants' journeys on the Central Mediterranean Route](#). London: British Red Cross; IMREF. 2020. Accessing the Most Vulnerable in Ouagadougou and Agadez. Unpublished.

⁶ IMREF (2020a). [Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on the vulnerabilities of migrants in Agadez, Gao and Ouagadougou](#).

influence relations between displaced people and local communities, and rapidly review good practices in social cohesion programming. The full list of sources can be found in [Annex 2](#).

- **Semi-structured interviews with 30 key informants**, including researchers and humanitarian and development field-based assistance providers in Agadez and Gao. IMREF also conducted interviews with senior staff members, donors and researchers who were familiar with the situation in Agadez and Gao. [Annex 3](#) provides a list of key informant profiles.
- **Semi-structured interviews with 30 community stakeholders in Agadez and Gao**, including community leaders, leaders of community-based organisations, migrant community leaders, and members of local smuggling networks.
- **Remote quantitative survey with 240 community members and 240 migrants** in Agadez and Gao. [Annex 5](#) provides a breakdown of quantitative survey respondents.
- **Semi-structured interviews with 60 community members and transit migrants in Agadez and Gao**. [Annex 6](#) provides a breakdown of qualitative interview respondents.

Figure 1: Overview of the quantitative and qualitative samples



Box 1: Quantitative and qualitative sampling

IMREF used a hybrid snowball and convenience sampling strategy for both qualitative and quantitative data collection. IMREF's trained enumerators identified members of the target population using several entry points in the priority geographies: local organisations, migrant associations, local community members, ghetto owners, bus station managers, personal networks in the community, and migrants themselves. Enumerators asked seed contacts for referrals to other subjects within the population of interest. Finally, they asked research participants to recruit other participants from among their acquaintances where relevant.

1.3 Limitations

Several methodological and practical limitations affected the findings of this study. Key limitations included:

- The study's findings provide insight into the experiences of study participants but are not statistically representative. IMREF did not interview a representative sample of transit migrants due to access and safeguarding challenges. IMREF did not engage certain hard-to-reach groups, such as migrants actively hiding from authorities and humanitarian actors by taking alternative routes and hidden by smuggling networks, children (anyone under 18), older migrants, migrants with disabilities or chronic diseases, migrants in detention, and victims of trafficking. IMREF also did not seek access to the humanitarian centre of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Agadez, and therefore does not include direct insights from asylum seekers hosted in this centre.
- This report's findings are specific to a certain time and geography. It provides a snapshot of migrant and local community perceptions and attitudes at the time of data collection, specifically in Agadez and Gao. The report roots its analysis in the historical, political, and economic situations of the two locations. Results should not be applied to other contexts without further data collection.

- The study adopted a remote methodology due to COVID-19 safeguarding concerns, preventing the collection of supplementary contextual data. Because all interviews took place over the phone, enumerators were unable to directly observe the living conditions of the migrants they interviewed, and to identify vulnerabilities that research participants did not report directly. Moreover, the absence of visual cues due to remotely interviewing study participants via telephone may have affected the interpretation of responses.⁷

1.4 Analytical framework and report structure

Of the available desk review sources, very little literature was directly relevant to relations between local communities and transit migrants in Agadez and Gao. There is however high-quality evidence on the factors which shape relations between local communities and settled migrants in Europe, and those which shape relations between local communities and displaced populations in Africa and the Middle East.⁸ There is a consensus among these sources that attitudes towards migrants and displaced persons are influenced by interactions between the two groups, the characteristics of individuals within both groups, and the perceived economic and social impact of migrants on the community. To analyse these factors, and how they shape relations in Agadez and Gao, the research looks at three interrelated dimensions of migrant–community relations. These include:

- **Perceptions of migrants.** The way that migrants are viewed influences local communities' attitudes towards them.
- **Attitudes towards migrants.** Attitudes are a mindset or tendency to behave in a particular way, which are shaped by perceptions.
- **Interactions with migrants.** Interactions are occasions when local communities and migrants communicate with or react to one another. Perceptions and attitudes influence interactions between migrants and local communities, and whether they will lead to positive outcomes (i.e. solidarity, support, friendship) or negative outcomes (i.e. mistrust, tension, abuse). The outcomes of these interactions also influence the vulnerabilities of migrants.

Drawing on these three interrelated dimensions of migrant–community relations, the report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** describes the local communities' perceptions of, and attitudes towards migrants, and the types of interactions between the two groups (RQ1 and RQ2).
- **Section 3** analyses the factors that influence the local communities' varying perceptions of, attitudes towards, and interactions with migrants. It explores the role of interactions, individuals' characteristics within both groups, and the perceived impact of migrants on the community – and how these factors differ between Agadez and Gao (RQ3).
- **Section 4** looks at the impact of interactions between the local community and transit migrants on the latter's personal safety, mental health, and overall wellbeing (RQ4).
- **Section 5** highlights two recent developments that stakeholders think may influence relations between migrants and local communities in Agadez and Gao: the increase in migration programming and the COVID-19 outbreak (RQ5 and RQ6).

⁷ The research design did not include direct questions on sensitive issues such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to minimise the risk of harm to the psychosocial wellbeing of the participants. Enumerators asked informants generic questions about sensitive issues (e.g. "Have you faced challenges that you think are specific to women?"). IMREF field teams were trained on safeguarding principles, including how to engage vulnerable migrants, how to spot and respond to indicators of distress over the phone, how to report concerns and how they should be dealt with. Novick, G. (2008). [Is there a bias against telephone interviews in qualitative research?](#) Research in nursing & health, 31(4), 391-398.

⁸ The analytical framework draws from sources listed in [Annex 2](#), in particular Dennison, J., Drazanova, L. (2018). [Public attitudes on migration: rethinking how people perceive migration: an analysis of existing opinion polls in the Euro-Mediterranean region](#). European University Institute; Miller, S. (2018). [Assessing the Impacts of Hosting Refugees](#), World Refugee Council Research Paper 4, Centre for International Governance Innovation; Talo, T. (2017) [Public attitudes to immigration in Germany in the aftermath of the migration crisis](#). Migration Policy Centre; Van Laer, T. (2019). [Understanding conflict relations around refugee settlements in northern Uganda](#). International Refugee Rights Initiative.

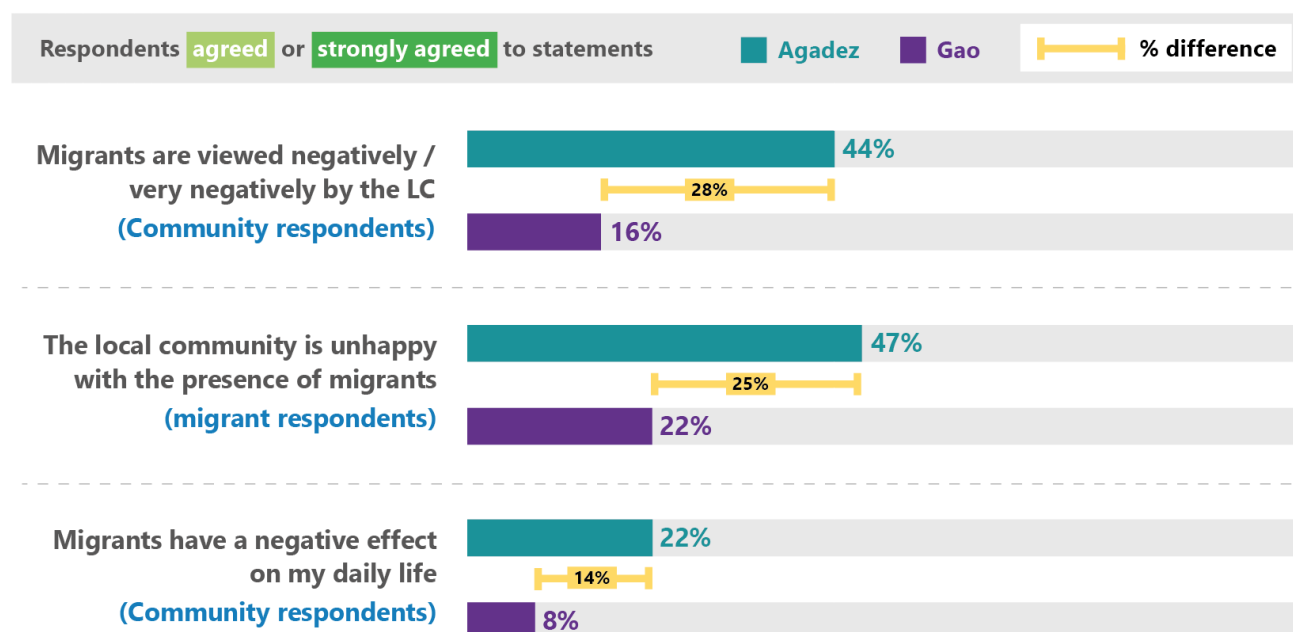
2 Perceptions, attitudes and types of interactions

This section describes local communities' reported perceptions of migrants and local communities' interactions with migrants. The factors that influenced these perceptions are analysed in Section 3.

2.1 Perceptions of migrants among the local community

Perceptions of migrants and attitudes varied greatly between community respondents in Agadez and Gao. In Gao, a vast majority of community members (82%) reported overall positive or neutral perceptions of migrants. In Agadez, a smaller proportion of community respondents reported positive or neutral perceptions of migrants (55%). In Agadez, 44% reported that migrants were viewed negatively or very negatively, compared to 16% in Gao. Qualitative and quantitative data collected across other indicators support the conclusion that negative attitudes towards migrants are more prevalent and migrant–local community relations are more strained in Agadez than Gao (Figure 2). Contextual differences that shaped these differences are explored in [Section 3.4](#).

Figure 2: Differences in perceptions between Agadez and Gao

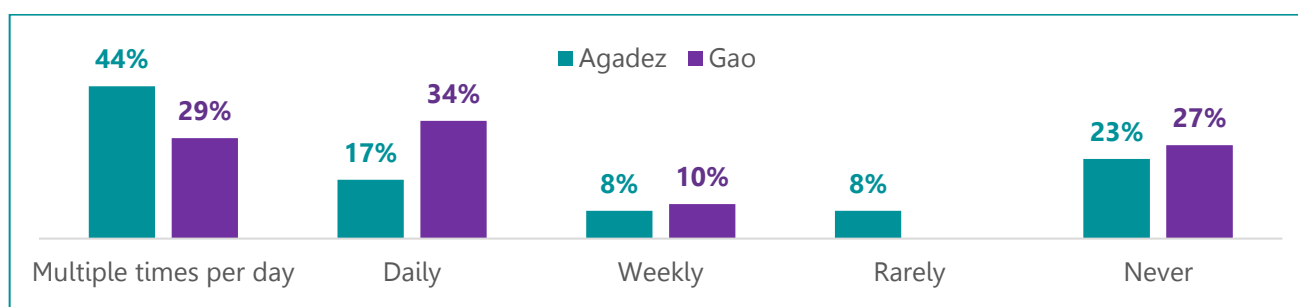


Views of migrants often reflected a range of perceptions with regards to different segments of the migrant population living in the study locations. Qualitative interviews suggest that the way migrants are perceived depends on their gender, nationality, and the individual experiences of community members. How these factors shape perceptions is explored in detail in [Section 3.2](#) and [Section 3.3](#).

2.2 Types of interactions

In both Agadez and Gao, most community members and migrants said they interact with one another regularly. As illustrated in Figure 3, 75% of community quantitative respondents (n=180) said they interacted with migrants, most of them multiple times a day or daily, while 63% of migrant quantitative respondents said they interacted with community members with the same frequency (n=152).

Figure 3: Frequency of interactions (community respondents [n=240] and migrant respondents [n=240])



Despite frequent contact, the types of interactions between local communities and migrants were mostly characterised by weak social and economic ties.⁹ Figure 4 shows that the vast majority of interactions reported took place in the neighbourhood, in the street, or at the market. This suggests that most community members and migrants in the sample have absent or weak inter-personal ties, as shown in Figure 5. Many migrant qualitative respondents explained that interactions in the neighbourhood or in the street had not led to stronger ties with community members. On the other hand, the minority of community qualitative respondents that interacted with migrants in the workplace talked of stronger inter-personal ties.

Figure 4: Where community respondents interact with migrants (community respondents [n=180])

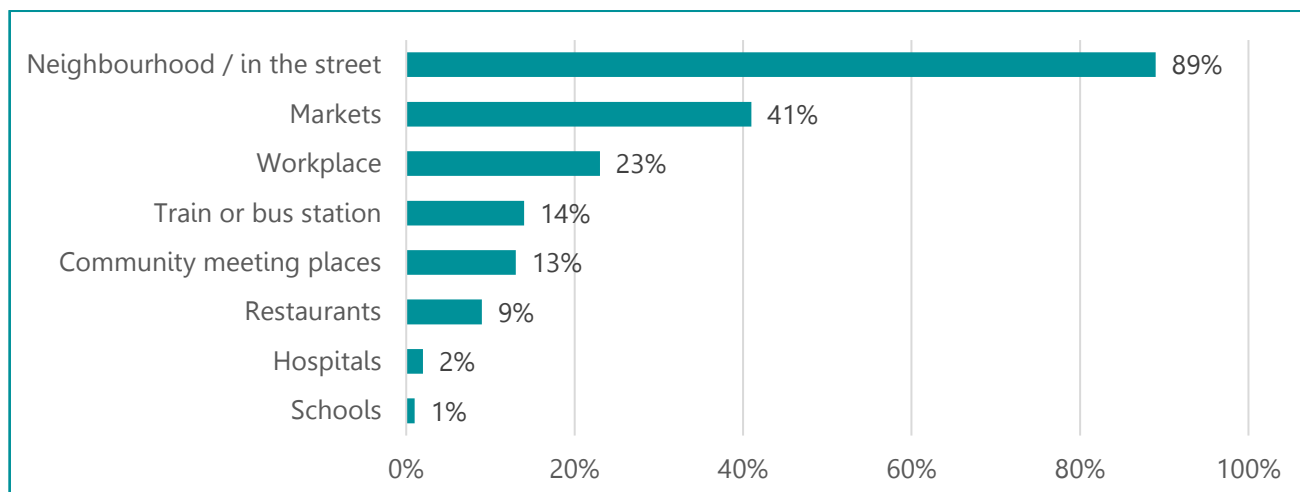
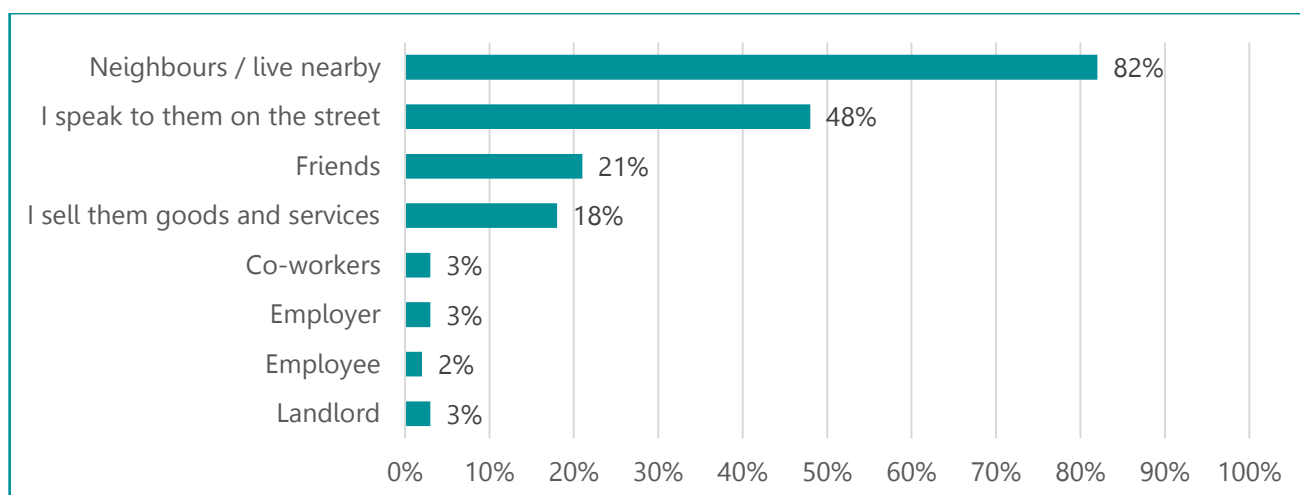


Figure 5: Types of interactions community respondents had with migrants (community respondents [n=180])



Positive attitudes towards migrants were linked to interactions involving stronger social ties between community members and migrants rather than the frequency of interactions alone. More than a third of migrant respondents (37%) said they had made friends with community members, and linked their friendships to more positive interactions with the community as a whole. Migrants and local communities interviewed in the qualitative sample often associated friendships with religious interactions in mosques and churches, their participation in grins and fadas (public meeting places where groups of men drink tea and talk, usually in the evenings),¹⁰ and football games.

⁹ Social ties are interpersonal relationships between people that can be defined as strong, weak, or absent. A social tie is the result of the "combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy, and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie." Absent social ties are the result of casual interactions, such as those between "people living on the same street", or client-seller relationships. Granovetter, M. S. (1973). [The strength of weak ties](#). American journal of sociology, 78(6), 1360-1380.

¹⁰ See a definition of 'fada' and 'grin' here: Boyer, F. (2014). [Faire fada » à Niamey \(Niger\) : un espace de transgression silencieuse ?](#)

Migrant and community qualitative respondents described that migrants' living arrangements, gender, and length of stay shaped whether interactions and subsequent ties between the different groups were strong or weak:

- **Living arrangements.** Migrants living in ghettos and NGO-run centres were more likely to report having limited interaction with the local community. For example, 41% of migrants staying in ghettos and 48% of migrants who lived in NGO-run centres said they never interacted with community members, compared to 17% of those who paid for private accommodation and 23% of those hosted for free in private accommodation by other migrants or community members. Migrant qualitative respondents staying in ghettos explained that smugglers discourage them from accessing community members.¹¹ Migrants housed in NGO-run centres explained that they had little need to engage with community members as they were waiting for return or resettlement.
- **Gender.** Female migrants said they struggled to create close social ties with community members more than men. They attributed difficulties in making friends in the community to negative attitudes towards them and their exclusion from male-dominated positive places of interactions (i.e. sports games, fadas and grins).
- **Length of stay.** Migrant qualitative respondents who had stayed longer in the community, outside of ghettos, reported more positive interactions with local communities thanks to their ability to participate in shared spaces (religious, shared events) and to work alongside local communities as colleagues, sellers or clients.

The most common negative interactions that local communities and migrants reported in the migrant quantitative sample were verbal insults or threats. Migrant qualitative respondents also agreed that the majority of negative interactions consisted of verbal disagreements, rather than instances of physical violence, as shown in Table 1. Several migrant qualitative respondents reported cases of being called out by community members, including accusations of disturbing women, accusations of stealing from the community, being called derogatory terms, or being told that they are not welcome in the community. Women migrant respondents reported more instances of verbal abuse than men (28% of women respondents, compared to 18% of men).

Findings suggest that instances of community members perpetrating physical violence against migrants are uncommon. Out of the 240 migrants sampled, 10 reported cases of assault. All respondents and key informants agreed that cases of physical violence towards migrants by local community members are rare and sporadic.

Table 1: Number and types of incidents with the community (migrant respondents, multiple responses, by sex [n=240])

Number and types of incidents with community members, reported by migrants	Female	Male	Total (n)	Total (%)
I was insulted	18	32	50	21%
I was robbed	11	15	26	11%
I was threatened verbally	3	18	21	9%
I was assaulted/beaten	1	9	10	4%
I was forced to work for free	0	2	2	1%
I was evicted forcefully	0	1	1	0.5%

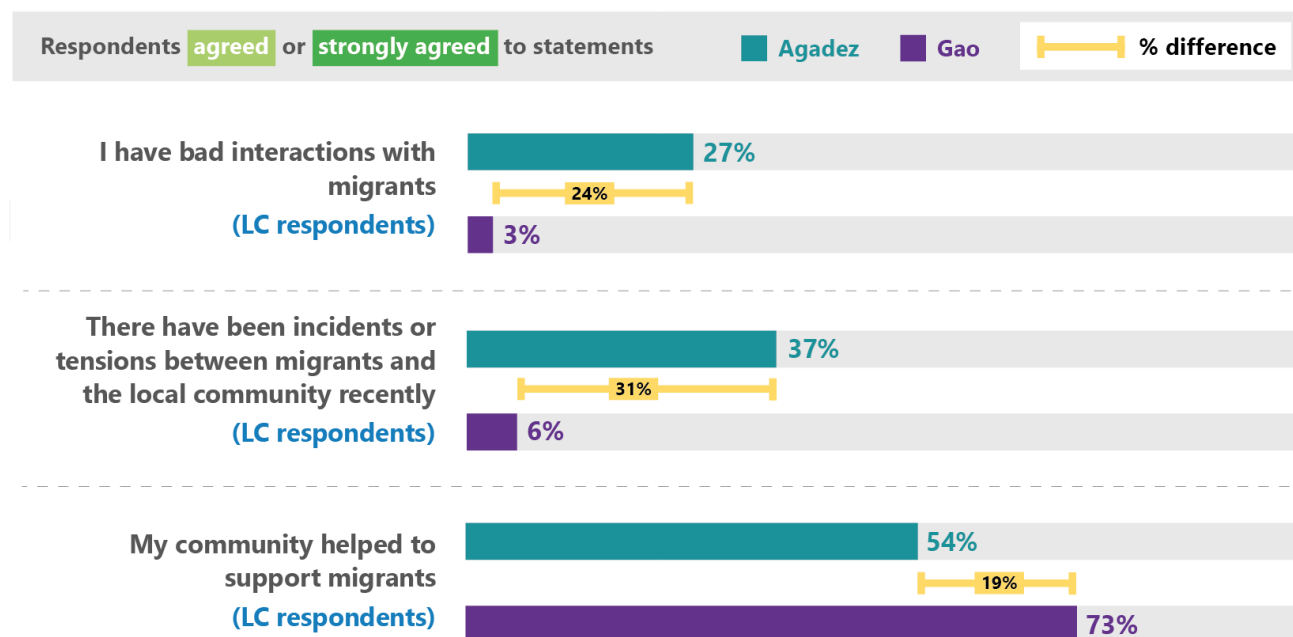
There were notable differences in the reported quality of interactions in Agadez and Gao. Migrant and community quantitative respondents consistently reported more negative interactions and fewer instances of mutual support in Agadez. In Gao, only 3% of community members described their interactions with migrants as 'bad' or 'very bad', compared to 22% of community members interviewed in Agadez. The clear differences between Agadez and Gao on all indicators suggest that contextual differences between the two locations influence attitudes towards migrants among the local community, as shown in Table 2 and Figure 6. These contextual differences are explored in [Section 3.5](#).

¹¹ See [Annex 6](#) for a discussion on the role of smugglers in the relations between migrants and local communities.

Table 2: Number and types of incidents with the community (migrant respondents, multiple responses, by location [n=240])

Number and types of incidents with community members, reported by migrants	Agadez	Gao	Total (n)	Total (%)
I was insulted	27	23	50	21%
I was robbed	16	10	26	11%
I was threatened verbally	15	6	21	9%
I was assaulted/beaten	10	0	10	4%

Figure 6: Differences in interactions between Agadez and Gao



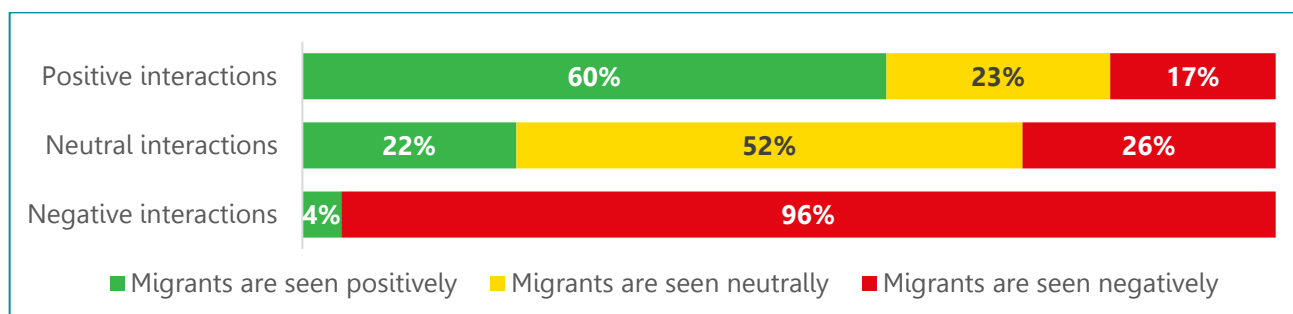
3 Factors explaining perceptions and attitudes

This section analyses the factors that influenced perceptions of, attitudes towards, and interactions with migrants among community members. It explores how the nature and types of interactions, migrants' characteristics, and perceptions of how migrants impact communities, shape the differences between Agadez and Gao in migrant–local community relations.

3.1 Interactions with migrants

The perceived quality of interactions with migrants plays a clear role in shaping attitudes towards migrants. In the quantitative data shown in Figure 7, community respondents who reported having positive interactions with migrants more frequently reported positive or very positive perceptions of the latter. The same trend applies to community respondents reporting neutral or negative interactions, who more frequently reported either neutral or negative perspectives (respectively). This was likewise reflected in community qualitative respondents, where those who voiced negative perceptions attributed them to negative experiences with migrants. For instance, a local association leader in Gao explained that he no longer let migrants charge their phones at his house, because his neighbours told him that migrants were not trustworthy and would steal from him.

Figure 7: Perceptions and quality of interactions (community respondents [n=179])



Similarly, the nature of interactions and the types of socio-economic ties they imply were also directly linked to perceptions of and attitudes towards migrants. For instance, a single migrant may have vastly different interactions with different members of the community, depending on the nature of their personal relations. A 26-year-old Liberian woman in Agadez described how her interactions with community members differed depending on the nature of their social engagement: “I am Christian so our relations with the church people are great, and at the hospital we are welcome as nationals with no discrimination. I also have good relationships with my Nigerien neighbours I share the courtyard with [...] On the other hand, when I work at the bar, interactions are not easy, there is contempt, lack of respect, [...] they call us prostitutes and can be violent against us.”

3.2 Personal characteristics

[Section 2](#) suggested that attitudes towards migrants are influenced by certain perceptions of different segments of the migrant population and how the latter impact the local community. According to community qualitative respondents, the ways that migrants are perceived depends on their gender, nationality, and the migration experiences of community members.

Gender played a significant role in shaping attitudes of community respondents, who commonly expressed negative views of female migrants. Almost all local community members, whether men or women, who participated in qualitative interviews said that female migrants engage in sex work and linked female migrants to the disruption of the area’s traditional gender roles. Many also explained that they perceive migrant women negatively due to behaviours viewed as “inappropriate given local customs” (local CSO leader, Gao), and opposed to Muslim religious values. They also cited concerns that their daughters would adopt the same behaviours as foreign women. Examples of inappropriate behaviours cited included bringing men over to their houses, not covering their heads, wearing shorter clothes, going out after nightfall, and smoking cigarettes.

Box 2: Descriptions of women as sex workers in Agadez and Gao

“The group of migrants that is not much appreciated here is rather the female migrants who come here very often to prostitute themselves. Prostitution is an act that is condemned by our culture, that’s why we don’t appreciate the women who practice it.” **30-year-old local woman in Gao**

“Migrant women are given less respect here because, in general, they work as prostitutes in bars. And Gao is a community that condemns this kind of practice.” **34-year-old male employer, Gao**

“Female migrants dress in mini-skirts and deep necklines, almost naked in the streets. It is very unpopular in our society and culture for a half-naked girl to go out and walk around in plain sight.” **38-year-old local woman in Agadez**

Perceived cultural proximity also appeared to influence attitudes towards different migrants, with community members often associating certain nationalities with negative stereotypes. Migrants in the qualitative sample who shared language, religion, and ethnic identity with local communities in Agadez and Gao explained they found it easier to interact. For instance, a 22-year-old male migrant from Burkina Faso in Gao explained that “there is no difference between us Malians and Burkinabés because we all have the same ethnic groups, with the same cultures and languages so their behaviour is normal for me.” On the other hand, local community members frequently stereotyped migrants of certain nationalities, including Nigerians, Cameroonians, Ghanaians, Guineans, and Sierra Leoneans and associated them with behaviours described as incompatible with local values. These included consumption of alcohol and drugs, selling drugs to local youth, engagement in illegal businesses such as money laundering and sex work, making excessive noise at night, wearing inappropriate clothes, and violence and aggression against local youth.

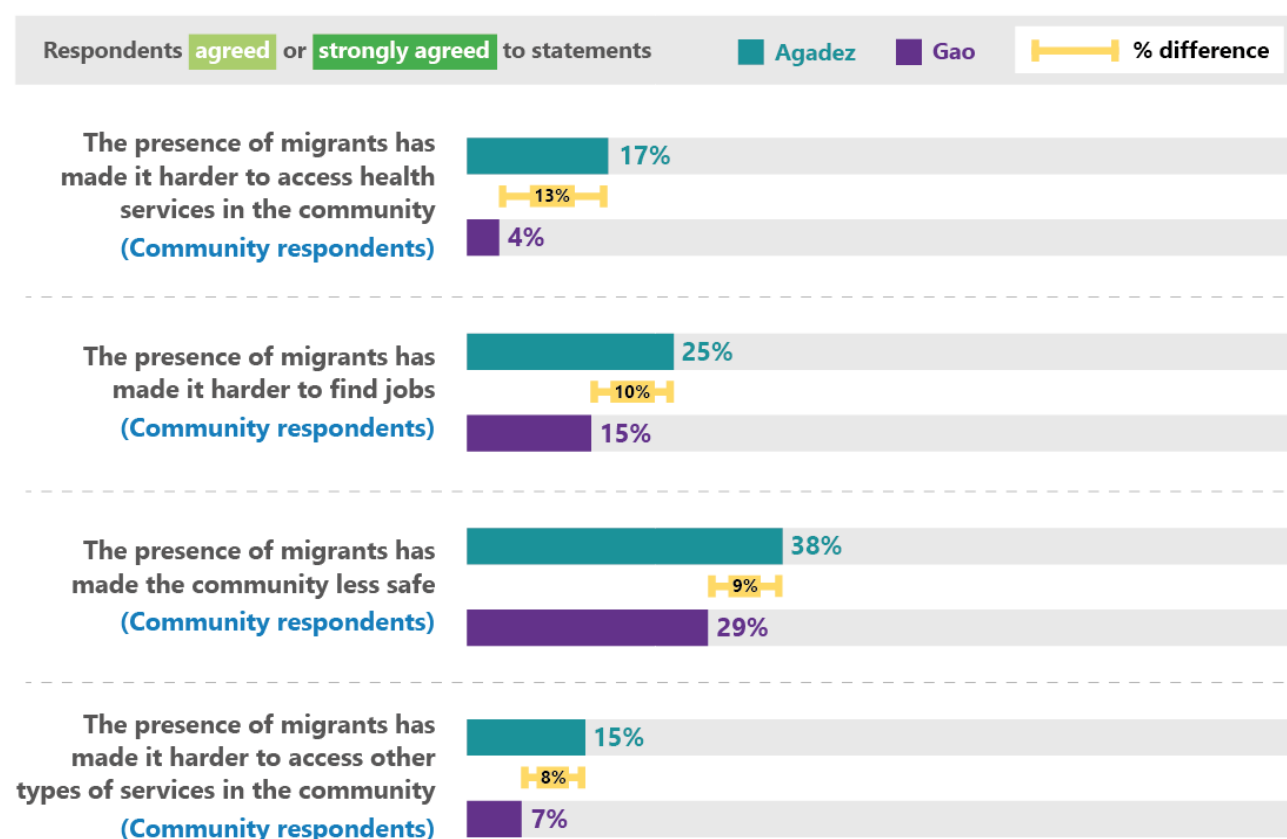
Local community members did not generally differentiate between economic migrants and asylum seekers, with the notable exception of those staying in UNHCR humanitarian centres. Some key informants highlighted that the community members could not necessarily differentiate between asylum seekers and transit migrants, unless they were continuing their journeys independently. Asylum seekers could be identified only if they were hosted in centres managed by UNHCR and its delivery partners. Community qualitative respondents generally said that they perceived asylum seekers more negatively than economic migrants, as explained in [Section 3.3.1](#).

Community members also had different attitudes towards migrants depending on their own migration experiences. Community and migrant qualitative respondents linked their own individual migration histories with more positive attitudes towards migrants. Several community members explained that they felt solidarity with migrants because they themselves had undertaken migration previously. For instance, in Agadez, a local neighbourhood chief said that “when [he was] a migrant, [he was] also accused falsely by the local community.” As a result, when community members come with complaints against migrants, he asks for proof before making a decision. Community members also explained that positive attitudes towards migrants were due to familiarity with the presence of migrants, and the history of Agadez and Gao as hubs on the Sahara trail.

3.3 Perceived impact of migrants on the community

Existing literature suggests that attitudes towards displaced populations or migrants within host or local communities in other contexts are often shaped by perceptions regarding migrants’ impact on the local economy and job competition, security, and availability of resources and services.¹² This section examines the role these factors play in driving perceptions and attitudes in the context of Agadez and Gao. It also examines key contextual factors within the two study locations that might explain the significant differences in attitudes towards migrants, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Differences in the perceived impact of migrants between Agadez and Gao



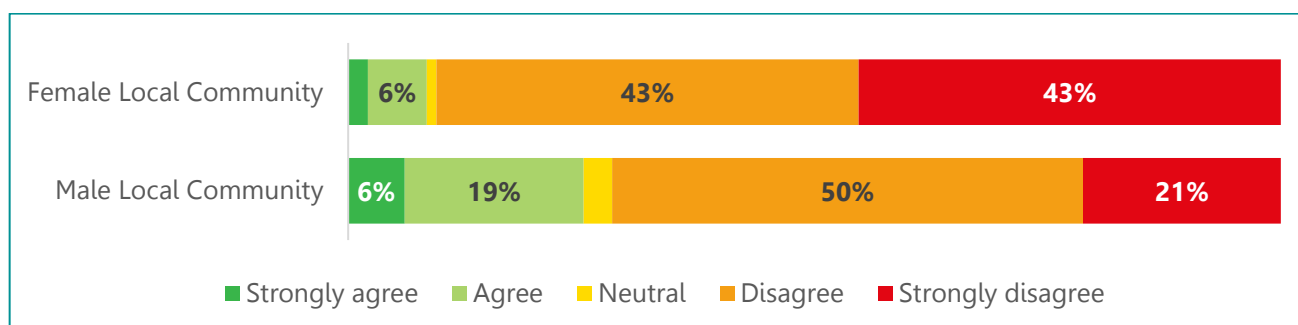
¹² See for instance: Idris, I. (2016). [Building social cohesion in post-conflict situations](#); World Bank (2016) [Local Solutions to the Global Forced Displacement Crisis](#); Miller, S. (2018). [Assessing the Impacts of Hosting Refugees](#); World Bank (2017). [Finding Harmony Between Refugees and their Host Communities in Chad](#); Fajth, V., Bilgili, O., Loschmann, C., Siegel, M. (2019). [How do refugees affect social life in host communities? The case of Congolese refugees in Rwanda](#), Comparative Migration Studies (33); REACH (2014). [Understanding Social Cohesion & Resilience in Jordanian Host Communities](#); Mercy Corp (2012). [Analysis of Host Community-Refugee: Tensions in Mafrq, Jordan](#).

3.3.1 Perceived economic impact

Migrants were frequently perceived to contribute significantly to local economies, which was directly linked to positive attitudes. Migration is historically an integral part of local economies, in both Agadez and Gao. Local leaders in Agadez and Gao described an entire sector of the migrant transportation economy that benefits many layers of the population, including renters, transporters, local businesses, and restaurants. Community respondents also described migrants as benefiting the economy by bringing competencies and cheap labour, especially in the construction sector. For instance, a 39-year-old moto driver in Agadez explained that he perceived migrants positively because he “earned a lot of money driving migrants within the city. Thanks to this income, [he] was able to pay for a tricycle, and for a plot of land.”

Perceived competition for economic opportunities between migrants and community members appeared to be relatively limited. As shown in Figure 9, the majority of male and female respondents in both locations, 86% and 71% respectively, either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the presence of migrants made it harder to find jobs. Whether a perceived competition for jobs shapes attitudes towards migrants appeared to be linked to community members’ employment status – unemployed community quantitative respondents were more likely to say that their interactions with migrants were bad to very bad (20%) compared to employed community members (10%). Community respondents in Agadez were more likely to report that migrants have made it harder to find jobs compared to those in Gao (25% compared to 15%).

Figure 9: The presence of migrants has made it harder to find jobs, disaggregated by sex (community respondents [n=240])

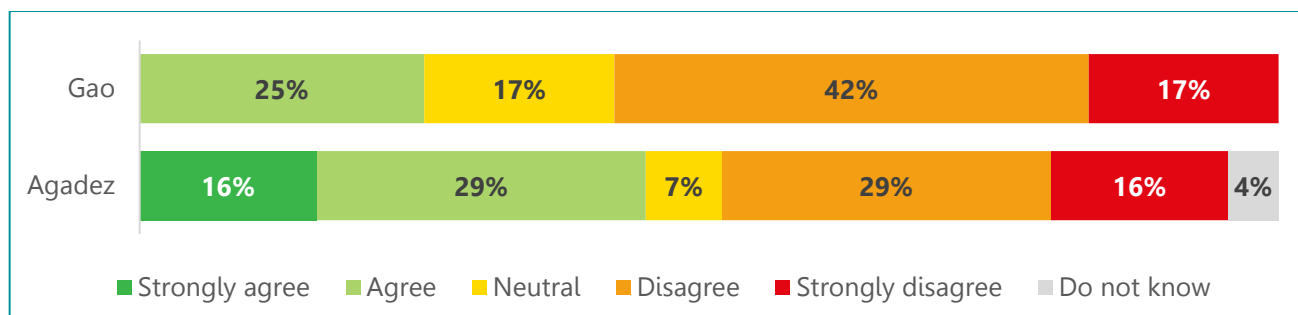


Respondents often expressed specific negative views about the economic role of asylum seekers in UNHCR centres in Agadez. While community qualitative respondents linked positive perceptions with the contribution of transit migrants to the local economy due to their skills or spending power, the asylum seekers hosted in UNHCR humanitarian centres were described as an economic and social burden on the community.

3.3.2 Crime and security

Negative attitudes towards migrants were often linked to the perception that the presence of migrants increases local crime. Overall, 33% of community quantitative respondents found that the presence of migrants made the community less safe, particularly in Agadez, as shown in Figure 10. In qualitative interviews, some local community members and leaders linked migrants to the incidence of theft, sexual harassment, and petty crime. For instance, an opinion leader in Gao explained that “the community has gravely suffered from theft and rape from migrants, so we decided to stop helping them.” This was likewise reflected in interviews with migrants, with one 28-year-old male migrant from Togo in Agadez explaining: “Some locals think we are here to steal from them and see us as profiteers.”

Figure 10: The presence of migrants has made the community less safe, disaggregated by location (community respondents [n=240])



Local women in the qualitative sample linked more negative attitudes towards migrants with their fears of sexual abuse, particularly in Agadez. As a 29-year-old local woman in Agadez explained: “During our community discussions, women talk about their concerns about these migrants. They are afraid for themselves and for their daughters of being raped or abused by these men.”

3.3.3 Impact on access to services

Most respondents did not believe that the presence of migrants increased competition for services at the individual level, suggesting it did not affect individual attitudes towards migrants. Overall, just 11% of community members agreed or strongly agreed that the presence of migrants made it harder to access health services and other types of services in the community, most of them in Agadez, as shown in Figures 11 and 12. This was likewise reflected in qualitative interviews: community respondents did not give specific instances when they could not access services because of the presence of migrants. The lack of competition over services can be attributed to the limited availability of public services in both Agadez and Gao, and to the transient nature of migration to Agadez and Gao, among other factors.

Figure 11: The presence of migrants has made it harder to access health services, disaggregated by location (community respondents [n=240])

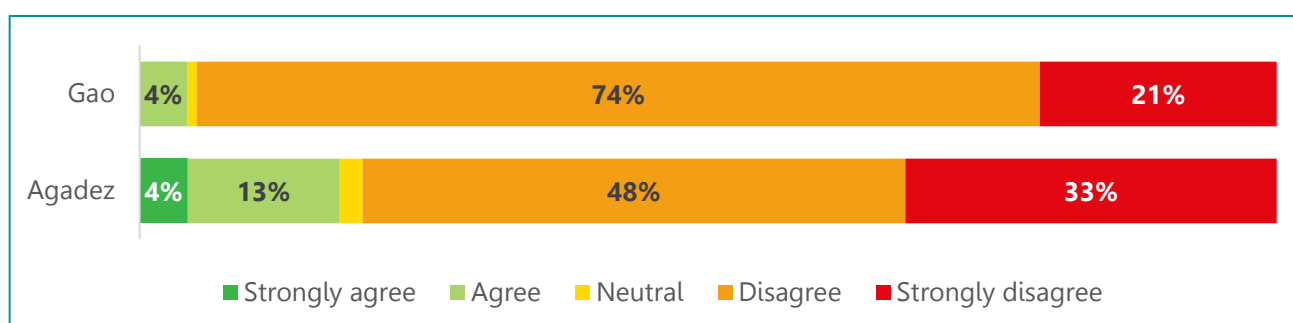
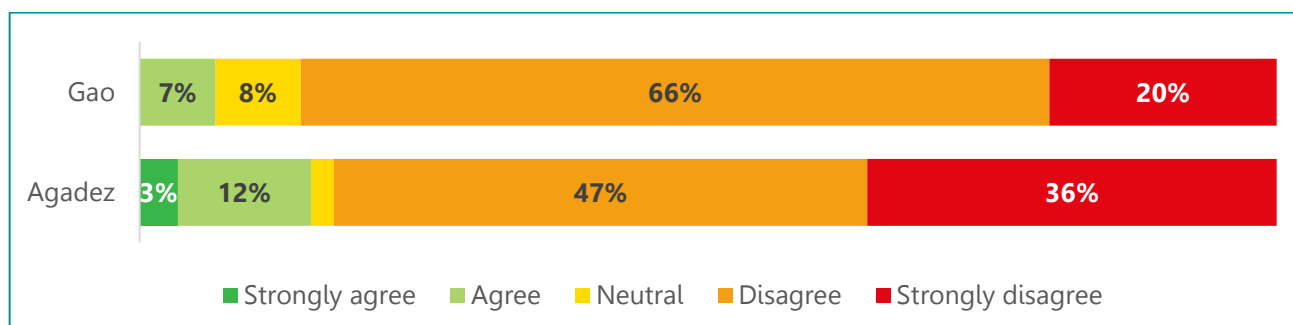


Figure 12: The presence of migrants has made it harder to access other types of services, disaggregated by location (community respondents [n=240])



However, at the community level, some community qualitative respondents and local leaders in Agadez argued that the presence of migrants strained service provision. One Agadez leader explained that “migrants place great pressure on social services, reducing our ability to meet local challenges.” This included the impact of migrants on water provision – a key informant from a local humanitarian organisation said that “local communities attribute water cuts to the massive arrivals of migrants because the [national water provider] calculates water provision based on the estimated number of community members.”

3.4 Contextual factors shaping attitudes towards migrants in Agadez and Gao

As highlighted in [Section 2](#), data showed significant differences as to how migrants were perceived in Agadez and Gao. This confirms that contextual factors in key migration hubs play a critical role in shaping attitudes towards migrants. Key contextual factors that appeared to explain different attitudes in the two locations include:

- **Volume of flows in Agadez.** Key informants suggested that a greater volume of flows was associated with more negative attitudes in Agadez. According to the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2019, over three times as many foreigners transited through the Agadez region compared to Gao. In 2019, DTM recorded 15,000 foreigners at the Arlit and

Séguedine Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs) from Agadez towards Algeria and Libya respectively.¹³ This compares to 4,000 at the Wabaria FMP towards Gao.¹⁴ Key informants suggested that the visibility of flows in Agadez, coupled with the politicisation of migration issues in Niger, led to more negative attitudes towards migrants in Agadez than in Gao. For instance, a field-based humanitarian staff member in Gao who had also worked in Agadez suggested that the visibility “flows here [in Gao] are less, so [migrants] are less visible and people care less.”

- **Number of stranded migrants in Agadez.** Although there is no reliable data on the number of stranded migrants in both locations, key informants believe that the number of stranded migrants and the length of their stay is greater in Agadez than Gao. This was thought to fuel further perceptions among community qualitative respondents that migrants are a burden on the Agadez community. Local communities often saw the rise in stranded migrants negatively, linking it to increased economic competition, over-burdened services, and broader security concerns. For instance, when talking about stranded migrants, some said that the community was “overwhelmed by new arrivals,”¹⁵ expressing the hope that international organisations could return them to their countries of origin.¹⁶
- **Political-economic implications of migration policy in Niger.** There are notable differences in the politics of migration and corresponding economic implications in the two study locations. In 2015, Niger passed a law on “illegal trafficking of migrants” (Law 2015-36) that criminalised the activities of people involved in the transportation of migrants. This had significant economic consequences and contributed to a loss of livelihoods in migration hubs as many actors involved stopped transporting migrants, and those who provided goods and services to migrants (restaurants, shops, transportation) saw a decrease in demand, leading to increased unemployment. The deterioration of other income-generating sectors in Agadez (i.e. tourism, uranium mines) has limited alternative work opportunities.¹⁷ Several community respondents attributed negative attitudes towards migrants to economic losses that resulted from the criminalisation of migration. In Mali, the absence of a link between the presence of humanitarian organisations and loss of income from the criminalisation of smugglers appears to explain more positive attitudes towards migrants in Gao than in Agadez. Currently, the transportation of migrants is not criminalised in Mali, as the country is more focused “on the entire security response and peace process”.¹⁸
- **The scale and visibility in migrant-targeted programming in Agadez** also played a significant role in shaping differences in attitudes towards migrants between the two locations. Section 5.1 describes how Agadez community members grew frustrated with migrant-targeted programming due to beliefs that assistance is not fairly distributed, which created more negative attitudes towards migrants.

¹³ “Between 2016 and 2019, IOM observed a total of 1,055,214 persons travelling from (55 per cent), to (29 per cent), and within (16 per cent) Niger at the Arlit and Séguedine FMPs, 75 per cent of whom are Nigerien. As a result of the Law 2015-36 and the subsequent rise in patrols along migratory routes north of Agadez, a sharp decrease of 79 per cent was observed in outgoing flows between 2016 and 2017, most visibly in Séguedine where the number of outgoing migrants dropped from almost 300,000 in 2016 to just over 35,000 in 2017.” See: IOM (2020). [Migration Trends From, To and Within the Niger 2016-2019](#).

¹⁴ Compilation of [DTM updates](#) in 2019.

¹⁵ 52-year-old local man, Agadez.

¹⁶ This reflects previous literature on dynamics between refugees and local communities that highlights how prolonged presence is a source of conflict. Search for Common Ground (2014). [Dialogue and local response mechanisms to conflict between host communities and Syrian refugees in Lebanon](#).

¹⁷ The tourism sector used to be one of the most important economic sectors in Agadez, but concerns for travellers’ safety due to the “2007 Tuareg rebellion effectively halted tourism,” leading people involved in the sector to engage in the transportation of migrants. The lack of tourists also led to a decrease in demand for artisanal goods. The IRC also reports that the “uranium mines in the region are becoming less and less profitable due to rising maintenance costs and international competition combined with reduced prices on the global market.” See: IRC (2019) Agadez Region - Conflict Sensitivity Analysis.

¹⁸ Key informant, researcher.

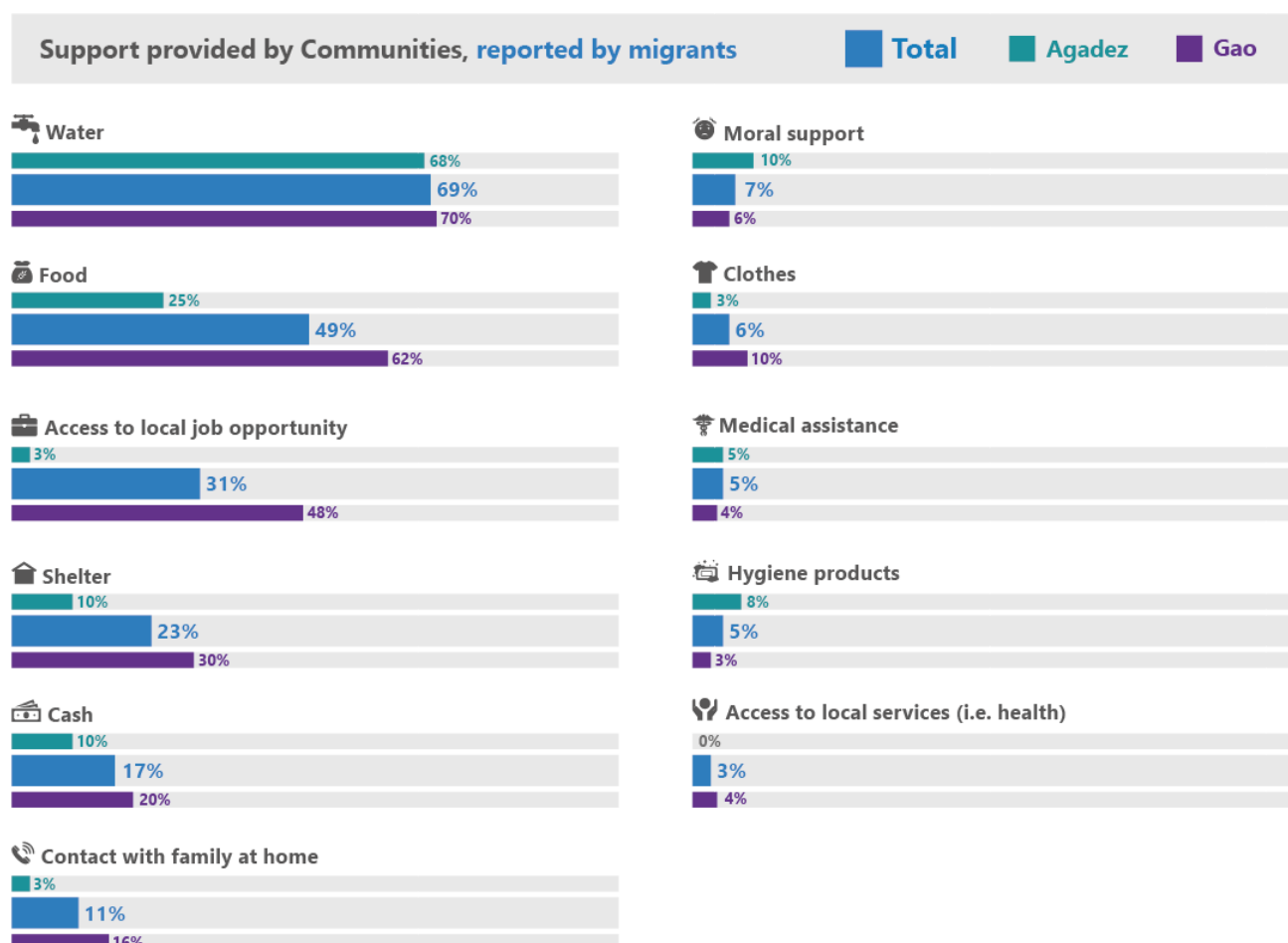
4 Impact of migrant-community relations on migrant vulnerabilities

This section looks at how the local communities' attitudes towards and interactions with migrants affect the vulnerabilities of migrants. It explores the extent to which migrants both receive support and assistance from local communities and how local communities can also negatively affect migrants' ability to cope with or avoid situations of harm. To understand how local communities contribute to migrants' vulnerability in the two study locations, this section examines the impact of migrant–local community relations on factors that previous research has shown play an important role in influencing migrants' vulnerability: financial resources, physical wellbeing, and mental health.¹⁹

4.1 Positive impact on vulnerabilities

Migrants confirmed that the local community is often an important source of support and assistance. In the quantitative sample, close to half of migrant respondents (45%) said that the community had provided them with assistance. Half (51%) also agreed that "local people are helping [them] meet [their] needs." As shown in Figure 13, local communities most frequently provided migrants with water, food, or cash to help them meet their basic needs. Shelter was also a common form of support, followed by lending phones to call family at home. Several migrants in the qualitative sample explained that receiving support from community members directly contributed to their wellbeing and helped them cope with losses. For instance, a 26-year-old Cameroonian woman explained that she lost her money during her journey to Agadez. She approached a local girl who "gave [her] money and shelter when [she] had nowhere to go to."

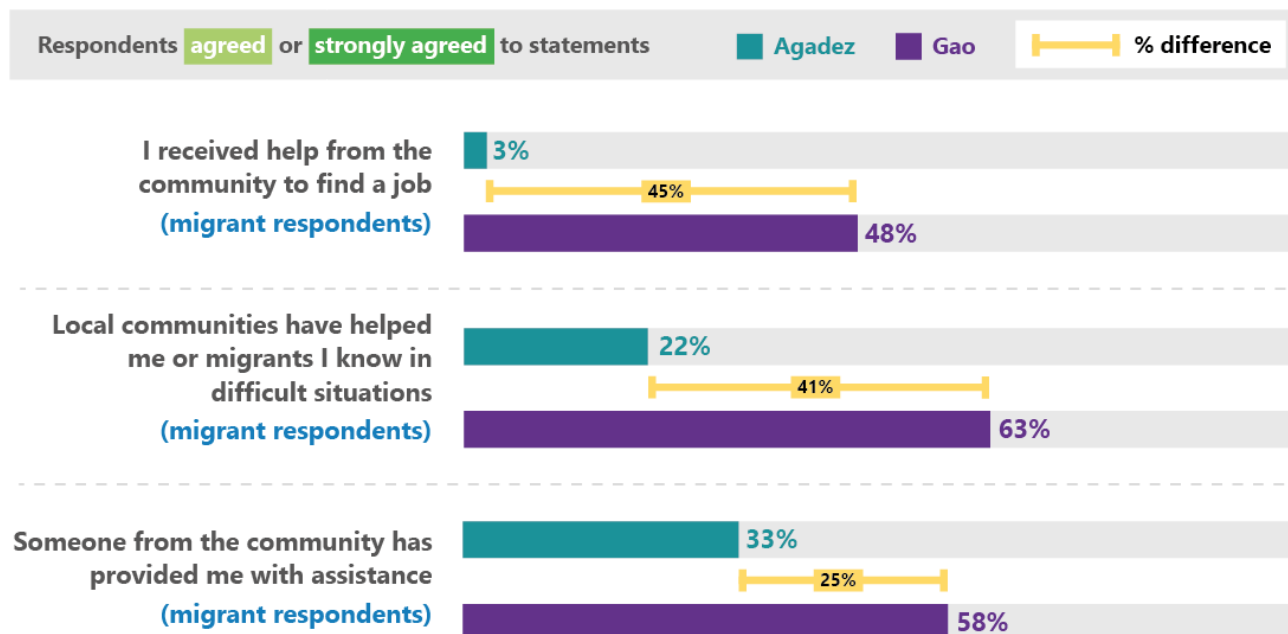
Figure 13: Support provided by local communities, multiple responses, by location (migrant respondents [n=109])



¹⁹ IMREF (2020b). [Accessing the Most Vulnerable in Agadez and Ouagadougou](#).

Similar to other indicators, migrants more frequently reported receiving support from the local community in Gao than Agadez. In Agadez, 22% of migrants said that local communities had helped them or migrants they know in difficult situations, compared to 63% in Gao, as shown in Figure 14. Likewise, migrants were far less likely to report receiving help from the community to find a job in Agadez than Gao (3% compared to 48%, respectively). This suggests that attitudes play an important role in shaping communities' willingness to support and assist migrants.

Figure 14: Support provided by local communities (migrant respondents [n=240])



Local communities also helped refer migrants to humanitarian organisations when migrants needed help, suggesting they can facilitate access for migrants. Several community members provided examples when they had told a migrant to go to IOM, the Red Cross, and Médecins du Monde (MDM) for support, or transported migrants to humanitarian organisations or the hospital.

Sustained social contact and interaction with the local community also contributed to psychosocial wellbeing and financial opportunities. Migrant qualitative respondents described situations where they built close bonds with community members, including in mosques and churches, grins and fadas, and shared events. For instance, a 41-year-old Guinean migrant in Gao made a direct link between participation in a grin, feelings of belonging, and ability to find work, saying: "When I go to the grin, I interact well with friends as if I were a member of the community. People consider me as their friend and when there is work to be done on a construction site, they offer it to me."

4.2 Negative impact on vulnerabilities

Most migrants did not believe community attitudes towards them negatively affected their lives or shaped vulnerabilities. Among migrant respondents, only 8% felt that the local community had a negative impact on their lives – with a variation between Agadez (14%) and Gao (2%). As highlighted in [Section 2.2](#), there were very few reports of tension as well as violent or other incidents that might cause harm to migrants. This was also the case with regards to financial resources, access to work, and access to health or other types of services, reflecting findings from past IMREF and MMC research that migrants rarely report direct discrimination as a barrier to accessing healthcare in Agadez and Gao.²⁰

²⁰ IMREF (2020a). [Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on the vulnerabilities of migrants in Agadez, Gao and Ouagadougou](#).

A minority of migrants reported the following negative effects that resulted from relations with the local community:

- **Decreased financial resources and access to employment.** A quarter of migrant respondents found that communities' attitudes towards transit migrants affected their access to employment.²¹ Several community qualitative respondents who did not have close ties with migrants expressed beliefs that migrants were not trustworthy as employees or in business. Migrants identified being charged higher prices than locals as the most common instance of discrimination, and the most visible one. Discussions over prices also reportedly could lead to tensions with the seller.
- **Limited access to shelter.** A quarter of migrant respondents found that local communities' attitudes towards transit migrants affected their access to rental accommodation in both locations. In Gao, some migrants described instances when locals charged higher rent, as well as a higher deposit, or refused to rent them accommodation.
- **Stress and insecurity.** Some migrant qualitative respondents explained they did not seek to engage with community members because of fears of conflict or bad treatment, as outlined in Box 3. In the quantitative sample, 16% of migrants reported that they had felt unsafe interacting with the local community in the last 3 months, and most migrant qualitative respondents linked feeling a lack of safety to verbal insults. These migrants explained that feelings of rejection led to stress and concerns over risks in everyday interactions with community members. Verbal abuse from the local community furthered these feelings of alienation.

Box 3: Lack of trust in the local community

"Migrants are distant with people. They are afraid of being in conflict with someone in the community because we are only here for a short stay. Everyone tries to behave as well as possible so as not to be victimised by bad people." **26-year-old Beninese migrant in Gao**

"We migrants in general, when we come, we shut ourselves up, and we tell ourselves that these people will never accept us because we don't have the culture and the religion. Many migrants have a bad perception of the local community." **27-year-old Guinean woman in Agadez**

"Migrants feel misunderstood and mistreated by some members of the local community, [that is] why they are afraid to integrate for fear of being rejected." **26-year-old Liberian woman in Agadez**

A greater share of female migrants reported that local community attitudes negatively affected them.

For instance, 34% of women found it difficult to access work other than sex work due to negative community attitudes towards them, as compared to 25% of men. As a result, they struggled to find employment in legal sectors, and were driven further towards criminalised activities such as sex work. A greater share of migrant women than men also reported facing verbal abuse, explaining it was a significant source of psychosocial distress. This was the case among 28% of women migrant respondents, compared to 18% of men. Some women also noted how verbal insults could quickly escalate into physical abuse. For instance, in Gao, a 38-year-old Togolese woman explained that she was dressed in sport gear to exercise outside and that children insulted her and started "stoning [her] with pebbles in the presence of their parents". This woman said she had stopped asking for help from the local community since that incident. Many women reported resorting to coping mechanisms to minimise the chance of negative interactions, ranging from changing their dress, donning the hijab, or avoiding public places.

²¹ Migrants interviewed in Gao were far more likely to report working than those interviewed in Agadez: while close to half of the sample worked in Gao, only 10% worked in Agadez. In Agadez, most migrants surveyed worked for another person of their nationality (11 out of the 12 who worked). In Gao, migrants were more likely to work for a local person (37 out of 61 respondents who worked). Key informants suggested that this was due to the prevalence of the construction sector in Gao compared to Agadez. The construction sector was considered an exception because of employers' confidence in migrants' skills, migrants' willingness to be paid lower wages, as well as the ability of the sector to hire people on a daily basis.

5 Contextual developments influencing migrant-community relations: migrant-targeted programming and COVID-19

This section examines the extent to which two recent developments have influenced relations between migrants and local communities in Agadez and Gao: the increase in migration programming and the COVID-19 outbreak.

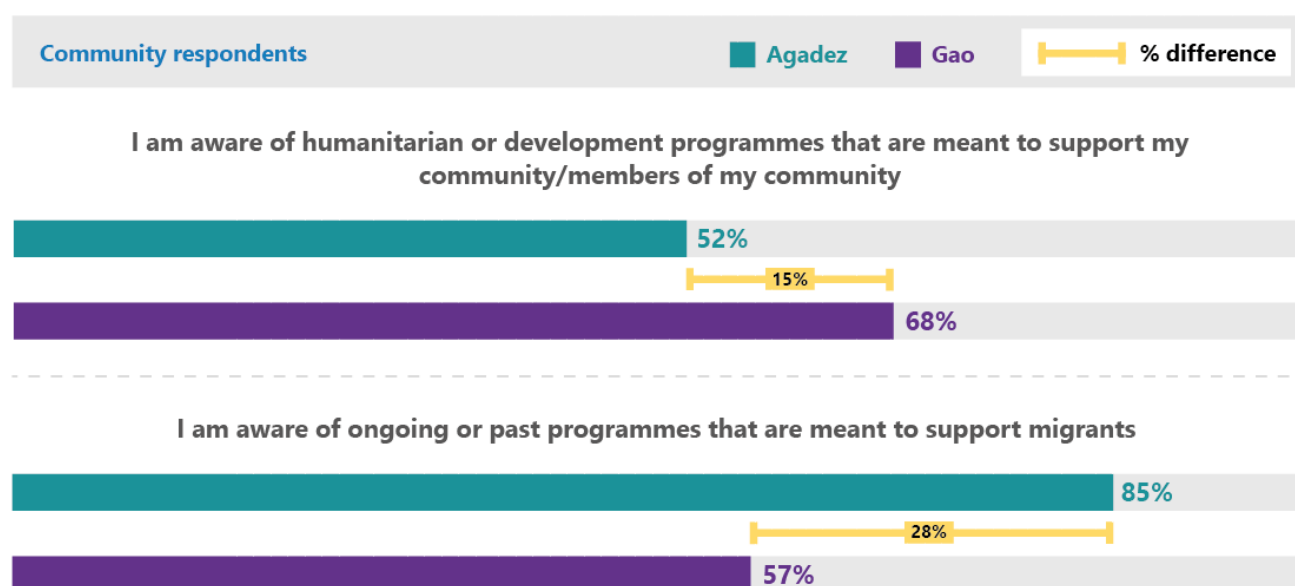
5.1 Increase in migrant-targeted programming

Since 2016, Agadez and Gao have received significant attention from programmes aimed at managing migration towards North Africa and Europe, and providing humanitarian support to migrants during their journeys. This subsection explores how migrant-targeted programming has had an impact on relations between migrants and local communities in Agadez and Gao.

5.1.1 Perceptions of humanitarian programming among the local community

Most local community members in both locations were aware of humanitarian and development programmes providing assistance to migrants and local community members. The majority were also able to accurately cite specific organisations that provide assistance to migrants.²² In Agadez, community members surveyed showed greater awareness of ongoing or past programmes meant to support migrants compared to programmes that are meant to support the community, as shown in Figure 15. This may be linked to the higher number and visibility of migrant-targeted programmes and actors in Agadez. The number of humanitarian and development programmes is similar in Agadez and Gao (see [Annex 8](#) for a rapid overview of the aid landscape in both locations).

Figure 15: Awareness of humanitarian programmes (community respondents [n=240])



Despite being aware of the main organisations implementing programmes, many local community members in both locations were ill-informed about the activities of programmes. Few local community members and local leaders interviewed knew of specific programmes and activities, suggesting the need for increased communication with local communities about programming.²³ For instance, a 29-year-old woman in Agadez explained that “the community finds it abnormal that NGOs do not clarify what they do, and what they will do to help us as they promised.”

Community members repeatedly voiced the perception that international organisations exclude local communities from humanitarian and development support and assistance is not equitably distributed, particularly in Agadez. Several community members or leaders in Agadez used terms such as “discrimination” or “segregation” to describe preferences given to migrants in humanitarian support, as outlined in Box 4. Community members and leaders in Agadez also expressed clear discontent and frustration over the perception

²² For instance, out of 240, 48 cited IOM, 12 cited the Red Cross, 10 cited Médecins du Monde, 6 cited UNICEF and 6 cited DRC.

²³ A recent IRC study in Agadez reached similar conclusions, finding that “knowledge around [IRC] programmes is very vague, even among community leaders, despite us presenting our objectives. People tend to make a very partial and personal analysis of what humanitarian actors do in Agadez.” IRC (2019) Agadez Region - Conflict Sensitivity Analysis

that humanitarian organisations are prioritising migrants' over locals' needs, and assistance is not distributed based on actual vulnerabilities.²⁴ However, these perceptions do not appear to reflect the actual distribution of aid in these areas, provided in [Annex 8](#). For instance, according to research by Clingendael, in 2018, significantly more funding from the European Union Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), which is the largest source of funding in Agadez, went to supporting local communities over migrants.²⁵

Box 4: Voices from the field: frustration with migrant-targeted programming

"The population criticises this segregation made by humanitarians regarding support to migrants." **45-year-old local community man in Agadez**

"Here the migrants have a great support, more than even the local population because there are several organisations that have come to take care of them for free, but what does the population earn? Nothing, all those who intervene in the region of Agadez only give their support to the migrants." **Former smuggler, Agadez**

"People cannot even manage to eat but foreigners from other countries are taken care of. Migrants receive optimal consideration." **Former smuggler, Agadez**

"It is the local population that must be supported instead of the migrants because the locals also suffer the same evils if not more than the migrants." **Local organisation representative, Agadez**

"The population is seeing the discrimination of [international organisations]. They are favouring migrants [...] and marginalising local youth." **Local leader, Agadez**

Discontent with migrant-targeted programming also seems closely related to the broader political-economic implications of migration policy in Niger, instead of the content of programmes. A number of key informants felt that humanitarian and development organisations had failed to support local communities in recovering from the economic losses following the criminalisation of migrant transportation. Programmes that were developed to help local communities, including former smugglers, were often found to have failed to show and communicate results.²⁶ These key informants argued that amid broader economic losses, migrant-targeted assistance programmes had fuelled perceptions and discourses that assistance was distributed unfairly between migrants and local communities.

5.1.2 Influence of migrant-targeted programming on attitudes towards migrants

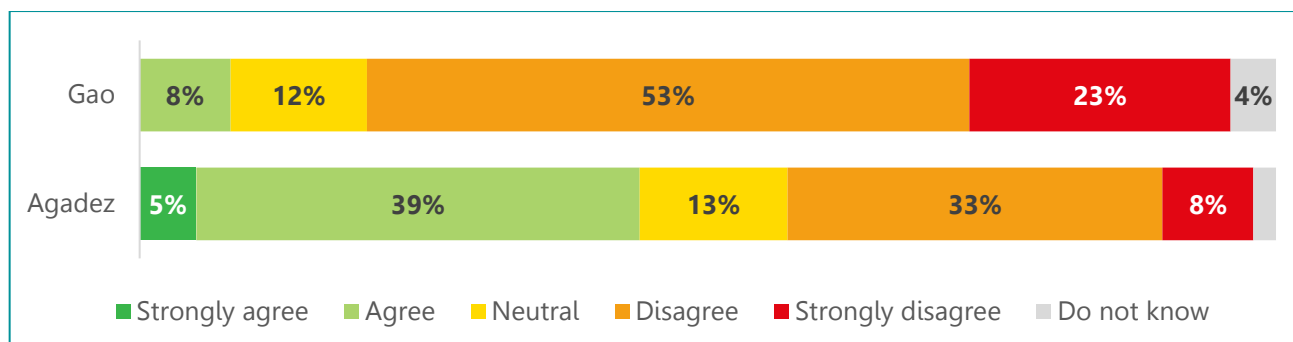
Overall, data suggests that there is significant discontent among the local community in Agadez with migrant-targeted programming, which seems to contribute to the higher prevalence of negative attitudes than in Gao. As shown in Figure 17, 44% of community respondents in Agadez agreed that the local community is unhappy about the level of support given to migrants, as compared to 9% in Gao. Qualitative respondents in Agadez echoed those beliefs, arguing that the distribution of assistance between community members and migrants is not fair. Some key informants explained that there have been fewer complaints in Gao because support to local communities is more visible, and due to differences in the respective government's approaches to migration policy in the two locations.

²⁴ These insights echo feelings expressed by host communities in refugee settings. "Locals' trust and general attitudes towards IOs and NGOs can be influenced by the perceived (un)fairness of the assistance and support provided to refugee populations, which is often seen as neglecting the local poor." See: Fajth, V., Bilgili, O., Loschmann, C., Siegel, M. (2019). [How do refugees affect social life in host communities? The case of Congolese refugees in Rwanda](#). Comparative Migration Studies (33) Par 15.

²⁵ For instance, in 2018, out of EUR 214.9 EUTF funding, only EUR 29 million was specifically destined for migrants and refugees. Molenaar, F., Tubiana, J. & Warin, C. (2018). [Caught in the middle](#), CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael Institute.

²⁶ In 2018, the EUTF funded the HACP through a 'Reconversion Plan' that provided seed funding to allow former smugglers to set up new economic projects. Clingendael (2020) found that "the plan has had minimal impact" and that "several interviewees have voiced their disappointment with what they call broken promises." Furthermore, Clingendael (2020) found that "while efforts were made to mitigate the impact of the measures taken, they fell short." Claes, J., Schmauder, A. (2020). [When the dust settles: Economic and governance repercussions of migration policies in Niger's north](#), CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael Institute.

Figure 17: People in the community are unhappy about the support given to migrants (community respondents [n=240])



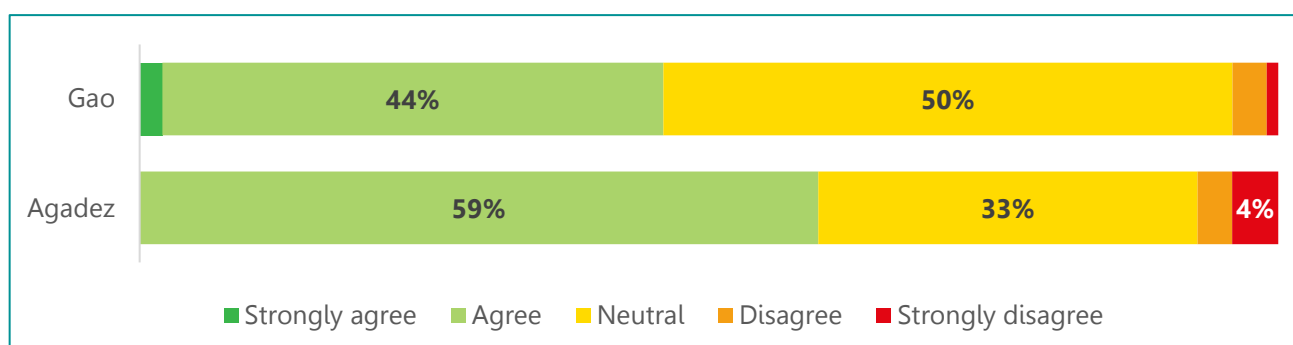
Reflecting discontent with migrant-targeted programming in Agadez, several key informants in Agadez linked programming to increased volumes of mixed-migration flows and security concerns. Several local leaders said that the help migrants receive from international organisations is incentivising “dangerous people on the move” to come to Agadez and has contributed to “destabilising the region”. A representative from the local administration said that “UNHCR has brought asylum seekers and refugees [...] and there were mercenaries among them.”

Findings suggest there is a risk that discontent with programming may make local communities more reticent to support migrants, particularly in Agadez. Community respondents described instances when they, or other community members, turned away migrants who asked for help because of the availability of assistance from humanitarian organisations. For instance, a 29-year-old local woman in Agadez said that “they ask for help saying that they have no one, no shelter and no food. But the truth is that IOM and UNHCR take care of them.” This kind of attitude may explain the significant difference in how frequently local communities assisted migrants between Agadez and Gao (see [Section 4.1](#)).

Several field-based key informants from humanitarian organisations warned that local communities’ frustrations in Agadez may create risks to accessing migrants. Risks include a lack of cooperation in helping organisations identify the most vulnerable migrants or referring migrants to organisations, retaliation against humanitarian organisations, or increased levels of violence between local communities and migrants. While risks had not materialised, some key informants felt that organisations should change their ways of working to proactively mitigate these risks.

However, complaints about unfair distribution of support did not necessarily mean that respondents think that humanitarian support to migrants should end. Only 6% of local community respondents in Agadez said humanitarian organisations should not help migrants, as Figure 16 shows. Virtually all respondents said child migrants, women and disabled migrants need to receive support from humanitarian and development organisations. Community qualitative respondents often acknowledged the protection needs of migrants, suggesting that they do not want the end of migration programming but are seeking more equitable support.

Figure 16: Humanitarian and development organisations should help and support transit migrants in my area (community respondents [n=240])



5.2 COVID-19 outbreak

Preliminary evidence published in earlier stages of the outbreak suggested that COVID-19, and its socio-economic consequences could potentially amplify tensions between transit migrants and local communities.²⁷ This sub-section explores respondents' beliefs on how COVID-19 has had an impact on relations between migrants and local communities in Agadez and Gao.

Data collected for this study does not suggest that COVID-19 has significantly amplified tensions between migrants and local communities. Findings suggest this is partially linked to a general ambivalence towards the virus in both study locations at the time of data collection. Field-based humanitarian staff explained that there were so few known cases in Agadez and Gao that people were not particularly concerned about the virus. 4Mi data collected between July and August 2020 also aligns with these findings: 68% of 4Mi migrant respondents in Gao and Agadez (n=149) said that the COVID-19 situation had either no impact, had gotten better or was back to how it was before the outbreak.²⁸

Most community respondents also do not believe migrants increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission. As shown in Figure 18, only 38% of community respondents in Agadez and 31% in Gao agreed or strongly agreed that migrants increased the risks of transmission. Many community members explained that the lack of known cases where migrants transmitted the virus had eased any concerns they had.

Figure 18: The presence of migrants has increased the risks of COVID-19 transmission, by location (community respondents [n=240])

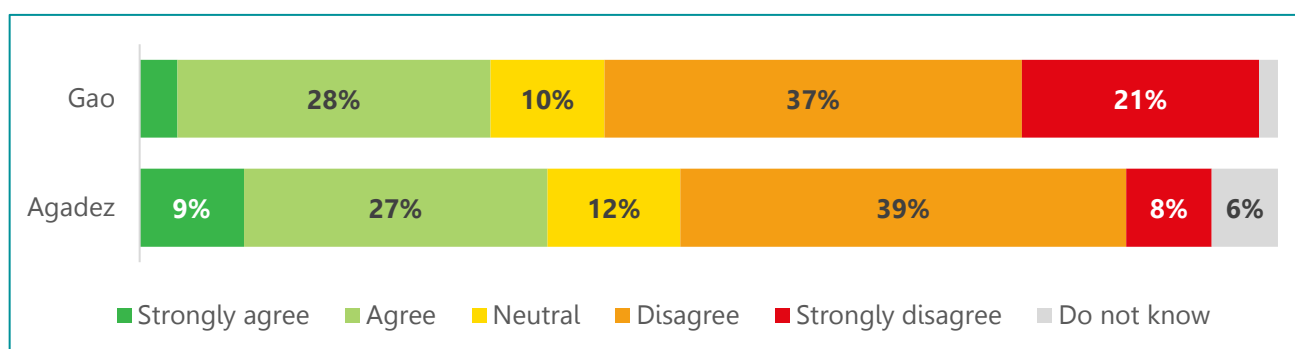
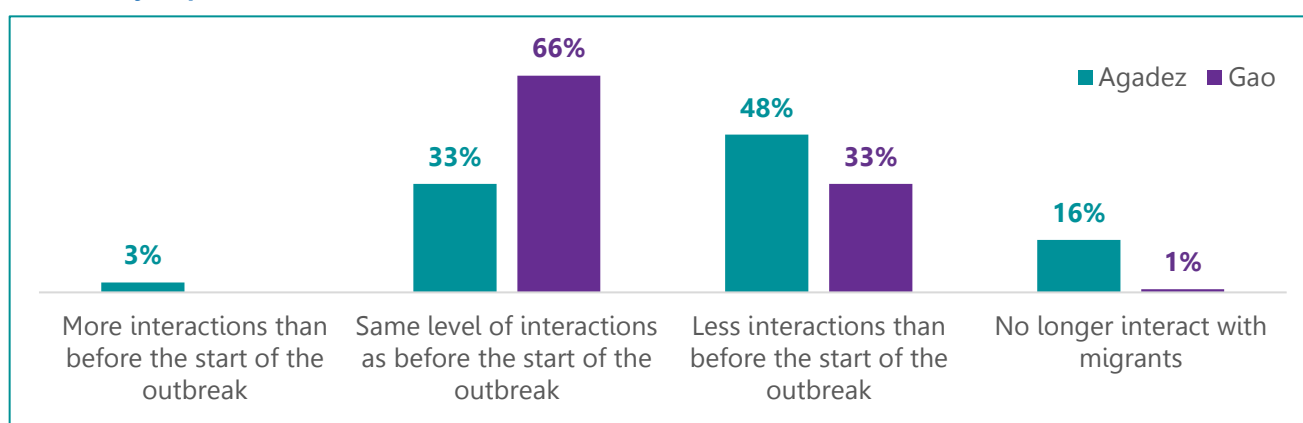


Figure 19: Impact of COVID-19 on the frequency of interactions between community members and migrants (community respondents [n=240])



²⁷ IMREF (2020a). [Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on the vulnerabilities of migrants in Agadez, Gao and Ouagadougou](#).

²⁸ Database provided by MMC to IMREF. 4Mi data presented in this report was collected from 3 March to 30 October 2020 with 149 migrants in Agadez and Gao.

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examines relations between local communities and transit migrants in Agadez and Gao. It provides insight into how local communities perceive migrants and the factors that appear to be shaping attitudes. Recommendations below draw from key issues and findings in the study to help implementers and donors: 1) to promote positive community perceptions and attitudes, and willingness to support migrants to meet migration objectives; and 2) to minimise risks of creating tensions within local communities in programme locations.

6.1 Recommendations to donors

Issues	Recommendations
Migrant-targeted programming in Agadez has created perceptions of unfair resource distribution, which is contributing to negative perceptions of migrants. This creates the risk of undermining the protection environment for migrants and objectives of making migration safer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider adopting an area-based development programme in key migration hubs that contributes to humanitarian, stabilisation, and development outcomes in the Sahel. Steps for adopting an area-based development programme that supports migrants and local communities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaking a needs and capacity-based assessment that draws on community consultation to understand priority areas for a mix of shorter-term humanitarian and longer-term development programming. This could explore options to improve the availability and quality of local government services to both migrants and local communities. Conducting an updated mapping exercise of development, humanitarian, and stabilisation programming in key areas. Consider existing vulnerabilities, gaps in programming, and the political economy setting when deciding whether programmes will target both migrants and members of the community. Increase the inclusion of migrants as beneficiaries of development programmes. Explore opportunities with other donors to integrate migration objectives into existing development programmes. Commission periodic surveys in key migration hubs in partnership with other key donors to monitor the relationships between migrants and local communities. Commission a review of existing social cohesion initiatives and practices relevant to migration programming to better understand what works and what could be scaled up. This could build on and analyse individual reviews by implementing partners but would likely be more valuable if undertaken as independent research. As part of the design of future migration programming, arrange an event for donors and implementers to share lessons learned of what works on social cohesion in migration hubs. Ensure there is strong internal capacity on conflict sensitivity and that it is mainstreamed into the design of migration-related protection programming. Conflict Advisers with experience related to programmatic structures and 'do no harm' should play a key role in the design and remain engaged during the implementation.

6.2 Recommendations to implementers

Key findings	Recommendations
<p>Migrant-targeted programming can create perceptions of unfair resource distribution. These perceptions appear to be linked to the fact that activities and objectives of programming are not well understood.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance communication strategies to ensure the objectives and results of programmes are shared with local communities. This could include regular town halls or consultations with local community members in locations close to project activities. Key messages could focus on migrants' positive contributions to local communities, local benefits of migration, and social cohesion. • Hold consultations with local community leaders and members in the design of programme activities, including on how to improve attitudes and relations with migrants in Agadez. Actions taken in response to consultations should be communicated back to community members to support trust. • Identify key indicators of migrant–community tensions (for instance, perceptions that existing support is inequitable, discontent over increases in the number of stranded migrants) and monitor these. • Systematically identify opportunities to include community members in assistance and/ or in recreational events organised for migrant beneficiaries. • Reflect in lessons learned on what types of joint social cohesion events will lead to more sustained engagement between local community members and migrants.
<p>Local communities play a key role in referring migrants to humanitarian organisations when migrants need help. They are also an important source of assistance and help to migrants. Evidence suggests that sustained social interactions and ties between migrants and local communities improve attitudes and relations towards migrants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate lessons learned on social cohesion from current migration programming to develop a strategy for mainstreaming social cohesion approaches. Although the research suggests social cohesion should be an integral part of migration programming, the literature review for this study suggests there is limited evidence on what works in these contexts. Implementers could consider how social cohesion approaches can counter negative attitudes expressed towards women and migrants of specific nationalities. • Identify a small number of local NGOs, diaspora groups, or local leaders (including those with past migration histories) to advise on the design of social cohesion strategies and initiatives. • Fund community-based services provided by local communities to promote positive interactions and more sustained social ties. Organisations could explore community-based housing options for less vulnerable migrants instead of housing them in reception centres, generating a source of income for community members that directly derives from the presence of migrants.
<p>Local communities perceive specific groups, including certain nationalities and female migrants, more negatively. In the case of women, negative perceptions make it harder for women to partake in income-generating activities outside of sex work, raising protection concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct cultural awareness and orientation sessions for migrants in key migration hubs for migrants seeking assistance. • Explore joint livelihoods programming for female migrants and community members. These could include joint trainings for local and migrant women, and engaging community women who would be willing to act as mentors in relevant sectors of the economy (e.g. hairdressing, sewing). Joint trainings have the potential to improve attitudes towards female migrants by 1) creating more sustained social ties between trainees from the migrant and local communities and 2) reducing perceptions that assistance is not distributed fairly.

There are significant differences in how migrants are perceived in key programming hubs, based on complex contextual factors.

- Conduct targeted research to understand prevailing perceptions of and attitudes towards migrants in other key programming hubs along the CMR.
- Use the inception phase of programmes to develop community engagement plans and partnership strategies with different members of local communities to promote visibility, transparency, and positive migrant–local community relations.
- Strengthen internal conflict sensitivity structures for working in locations such as Gao and Agadez. Ensure Conflict Advisers, or focal points, from regional headquarters spend time on design and developing beneficiary feedback structures, risk management, and social cohesion approaches.
- Mainstream risk mitigation by ensuring that risk registers include risks in specific higher-risk locations related to relationships with local communities, access and managing tensions between migrants and local communities. Ensure mitigation strategies are meaningful activities regularly undertaken by teams and included in narrative reporting.

Annex 1: Glossary

Central Mediterranean Route	The Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) refers to the collection of pathways taken by people in mixed migration journeys from West and Central Africa towards North Africa that can result in attempts to cross the sea towards Italy and Malta from Libya, Algeria, Egypt or Tunisia. (UNSMIL and OHCHR) ²⁹
Do no harm	The form of humanitarian assistance and the environment in which it is provided do not further expose people to physical hazards, violence or other rights abuse. Under the “do no harm” principle, “assistance and protection efforts do not undermine the affected population’s capacity for self-protection (Sphere Handbook). ³⁰
Exploitation	Exploitation is not specifically defined in the Palermo Protocol but stipulated to include, at a minimum “the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.” (Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons) ³¹
Forced migration	“A migratory movement which, although the drivers can be diverse, involves force, compulsion, or coercion.” (IOM) ³² Forced migrants may be seeking asylum or be recognised as refugees.
Ghettos	Ghettos are “compounds controlled by operators involved in the irregular migration industry.” (Clingendael) ³³
Local communities	The population that resides in areas that mixed migrants transit through. ³⁴ Local communities are dynamic and changing, composed of groups with different interests and stakes. ³⁵ It includes all those who self-identify as members of the ‘local community’.
Migrant Targeted Programming	Programmes that focus exclusively on migrants, but may include funding to local activities to build acceptance in the local community and secure access to beneficiaries. (FCDO)
Migrant Sensitive Programming	Programmes that target beneficiaries based on their level of vulnerability and not on their migration status. These programmes take into account the specific vulnerabilities of migrants in their planning and implementation. (FCDO)
Mixed migration	“Mixed migration refers to cross-border movements of people including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people in mixed flows have different legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Those in mixed migration flows travel along similar routes, using similar means of travel – often travelling irregularly and wholly or partially assisted by migrant smuggling facilitators.” (MMC) ³⁶
Protection services	Protection services include safety, food, shelter, legal support, physical health and psychosocial health services. ³⁷ (Inter-Agency Standing Committee)
Refugees	A refugee is any person “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside of the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such, is unwilling to avail

²⁹ UNSMIL and OHCHR (2018). [Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya](#).

³⁰ The Sphere Handbook (2011). [Protection Principle 1: Avoid Exposing People to Further Harm as a Result of Your Actions](#).

³¹ Article 3, paragraph (a) of the [Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons](#).

³² IOM (2019), [Glossary on Migration](#).

³³ Molenaar, F., Tubiana, J. & Warin, C. (2018). [A human rights and peace-building approach to migration governance in the Sahel](#), CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael Institute.

³⁴ Adapted from UNHCR (2011). [UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement. Community Outreach - Outreach to Host Communities: Definitions and FAQs](#).

³⁵ Masolo, D.A., 2002. [Community, identity and the cultural space](#). Rue Descartes, (2), pp.19-51.

³⁶ MMC (undated), [What is Mixed Migration?](#)

³⁷ Adapted from Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2016). [Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#).

	himself of the protection of that country." (Article 1 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees)
Relations between local communities and migrants	Outcomes of everyday interactions between migrants and local community members. Members of the local community can be employers and clients of migrants in workplace situations. They may participate in the transportation of migrants (bus drivers, members of a smuggling network). They may be local officials and authorities. They may provide services to migrants (e.g. hospitals, social services). Or they may simply be in the same location (e.g. neighbourhood, places of worship).
Returnees	"Returning migrants are persons returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants (whether short-term or long-term) in another country." (OECD) ³⁸ Return can be spontaneous and independent, forced by the authorities or assisted by the IOM via Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR). ³⁹
Smuggling	"The procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or permanent resident." (UNODC) ⁴⁰ In practice, a "voluntary transaction takes place between the migrant and the smuggler, where the latter facilitates the former's irregular movement." (Clingendael) ⁴¹ Actors in smuggling networks may include drivers, car owners, 'coaxers' (intermediaries) and 'ghetto' owners. ⁴²
Social cohesion	The capacity of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members – minimising disparities and avoiding marginalisation – to manage differences and divisions and ensure the means of achieving welfare for all members. ⁴³
Social ties	Social ties are interpersonal relationships between people that can be defined as strong, weak, or absent. A social tie is the result of the " combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy, and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie." ⁴⁴ Absent social ties are the result of casual interactions such as those between "people living on the same street", ⁴⁵ or client-seller relationships.
Stranded migrants	A migrant who for "reasons beyond their control has been unintentionally forced to stay in a country" (European Commission). ⁴⁶ Migrants become stranded when they are unable or unwilling to return to their state of nationality or former residence, are unable or unwilling to integrate in the state in which they are physically present, and/or are unable to move to the next leg of their journeys due to lack of resources or legal constraints. ⁴⁷
Tensions	Tensions include conflicts (including physical conflict and abuses) and negative attitudes (negative perceptions, distrust). Adapted from: Conflict Sensitivity Consortium (2012) "How to guide to conflict sensitivity."
Transit migrants	Individuals who have the intention of continuing their journey on the Central Mediterranean Route as soon as they are able to do so. ⁴⁸ In Agadez and Gao, transit migrants are defined as "individuals who have the intention of continuing their journeys towards North Africa and/or Europe as soon as they are able to do so". ⁴⁹ It includes, but is not limited to, migrants who have recently arrived and are staying in ghettos, ⁵⁰ stranded

³⁸ OECD (2001). [Glossary of statistical terms](#).

³⁹ Adapted from IOM (2019). [Glossary on Migration](#).

⁴⁰ UNODC (2017). [The Concept of "Financial or Other Material Benefit" in the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol](#).

⁴¹ Molenaar, F., Tubiana, J. & Warin, C. (2018b). [Caught in the middle](#), CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael Institute.

⁴² Molenaar, F., Tubiana, J. & Saeneen, G. (2018a). [Multilateral Damage: The impact of EU migration policies on central Saharan routes](#), CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael Institute.

⁴³ Governance, Social Development, Conflict and Humanitarian Knowledge Applied Services (2016). [Building social cohesion in post-conflict situations](#).

⁴⁴ Granovetter, M. S. (1973). [The strength of weak ties](#). American journal of sociology, 78(6), 1360-1380.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ European Migration Network (undated). [Stranded migrant](#).

⁴⁷ Adapted from IOM, UNHCR & Save the Children (2016). [Addressing the challenges of mixed migration: training guide](#).

⁴⁸ IOM (2019). [Glossary on Migration](#).

⁴⁹ Adapted from IOM (2019) [Glossary on Migration](#).

⁵⁰ Ghettos are "compounds controlled by operators involved in the irregular migration industry". Molenaar, F., Tubiana, J. & Warin, C. (2018). [A human rights and peace-building approach to migration governance in the Sahel](#), CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael Institute.

Trafficking in persons

migrants, and migrants who have been expelled from Algeria and Libya but are planning to travel to North Africa or Europe as soon as they have the means to do so. Transit migrants fall under different protection regimes, e.g. "refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking and people seeking better lives and opportunities."⁵¹ This definition does not include regional migrants.

Vulnerability in mixed migration settings

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. (Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons)⁵² Trafficked persons may be migrants [of any legal status], but people are also trafficked within their own country of origin. (Clingendael)⁵³

The inability to avoid, cope with, and recover from exposure or experiences of harm (IOM).⁵⁴ Vulnerability is not "predetermined by personal characteristics (e.g. by describing persons with a physical disability as a vulnerable group), but as susceptibility to some type of harm under the influence of personal and situational factors." (Vogel & Krahler, 2017)⁵⁵

⁵¹ Mixed Migration Center. 2020. [Mixed Migrants](#).

⁵² Article 3, paragraph (a) of the [Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons](#).

⁵³ olenaar, F., Tubiana, J. & Warin, C. (2018b). [Caught in the middle](#), CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael Institute.

⁵⁴ IOM (2019), [IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse](#); OHCHR (2017), [Principles and Guidelines migrants in vulnerable situations](#); ICRC (2017), [Approach to Migration](#).

⁵⁵ Vogel and Krahler. (2017), [Demand-side Interventions Against Trafficking in Human Beings: Towards an Integrated Theoretical Approach](#). DemandAT Working Paper No. 14.

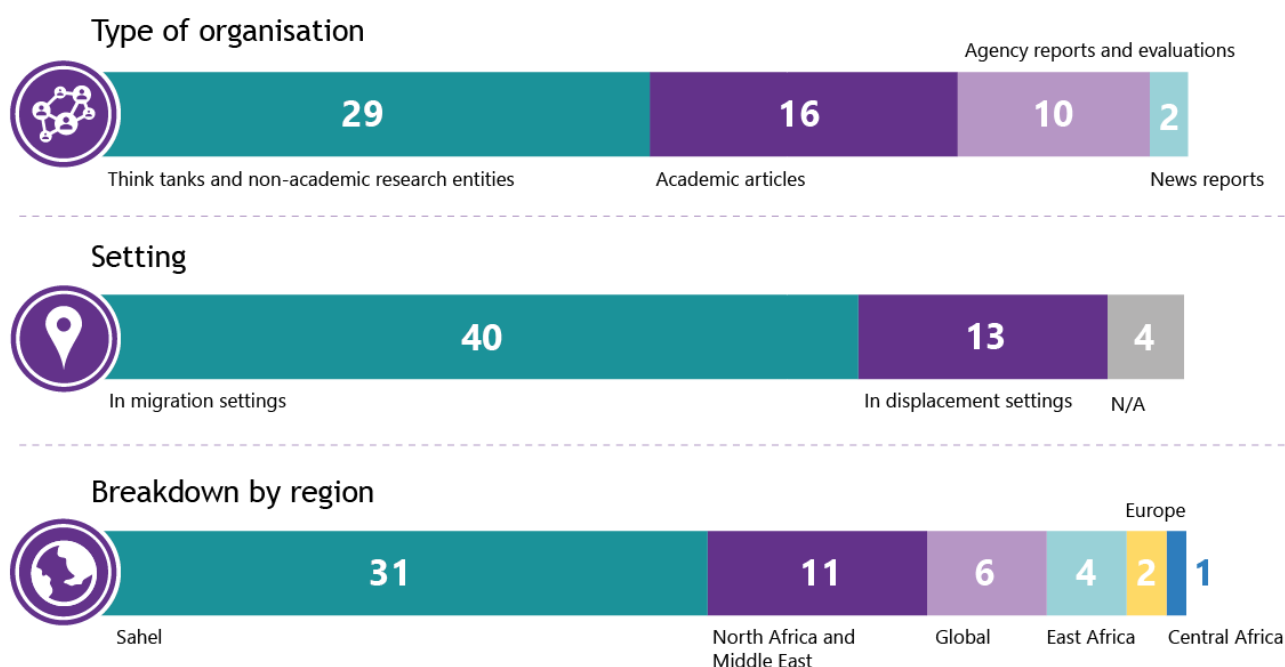
Annex 2: Desk Review

The desk review followed a structured approach that entailed: 1) generating a list of keywords (e.g. “migrant”, “Host community”, “Local community”) and modifiers (e.g. “Gao”); 2) running searches for these keywords (in English and French) in academic databases, humanitarian and development websites, raw data repositories and elsewhere; 3) gathering additional evidence via outputs from relevant networks and consortium members’ existing reference databases; 4) rapidly screening these sources by recency and relevance; and 5) analysing the sources to inform the design of the other research tools and the study itself.

IMREF reviewed a total of 58 sources. Figure 20 provides an overview of the desk review, disaggregated by type of organisation, setting, and region.

- The desk review revealed that there is little available literature on relations between local communities and transit migrants in Agadez and Gao. Only one report written by the International Rescue Committee (IRC, 2019) directly explores this topic in Agadez. Although this report was highly valuable in triangulating the report findings, it has significant methodological limitations, drawing from a limited number of sources and qualitative interviews with community members. Five other sources, written by think tanks, discuss the factors that influence relations between migrants and local communities in Agadez and were used to support findings (Claes & Schmauder, 2020; IMREF, 2020a; IMREF, 2020b; Molenaar, 2018; Molenaar, Tubiana & Warin, 2018).
- IMREF reviewed agency and think tank reports focusing on Mali and Niger that provided context to the main findings. Those sources focused on the humanitarian and migration contexts in Agadez and Gao ([Section 3.4](#) and [Section 5.1](#)), and on the vulnerabilities of migrants ([Section 4](#)). This category also includes mid-term reviews and programme documents.
- IMREF also reviewed academic articles and agency reports focusing on relations between displaced and local communities in other regions, including North and East Africa and the Middle East. Most of these sources were used to shape the analytical framework ([Section 1.4](#)), to identify the main factors that influence relations between displaced people and local communities ([Section 3.3](#)), and to rapidly review good practices in social cohesion programming ([Section 6](#)).

Figure 20: Overview of the desk review



Relations between local communities and transit migrants

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Annex 3: List of key informants

IMREF conducted all interviews between 5 October and 9 November 2020.

Table 3: List of key informant profiles

	Donors and researchers	Humanitarian staff	Total
Agadez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MMC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRC • IOM • Catholic Relief Services (CRS) • MDM • APPN • COOPI 	12
Gao	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REACH/Impact • MMC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRC • IOM • Maison du Migrant • Danish Red Cross • UNDP 	8
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCDO (London, Malta) • Independent Researcher (Dakar) • Clingendael (Brussels) • IFRC (Dakar) • MMC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRC (Tunis) 	10
Total	11	19	30

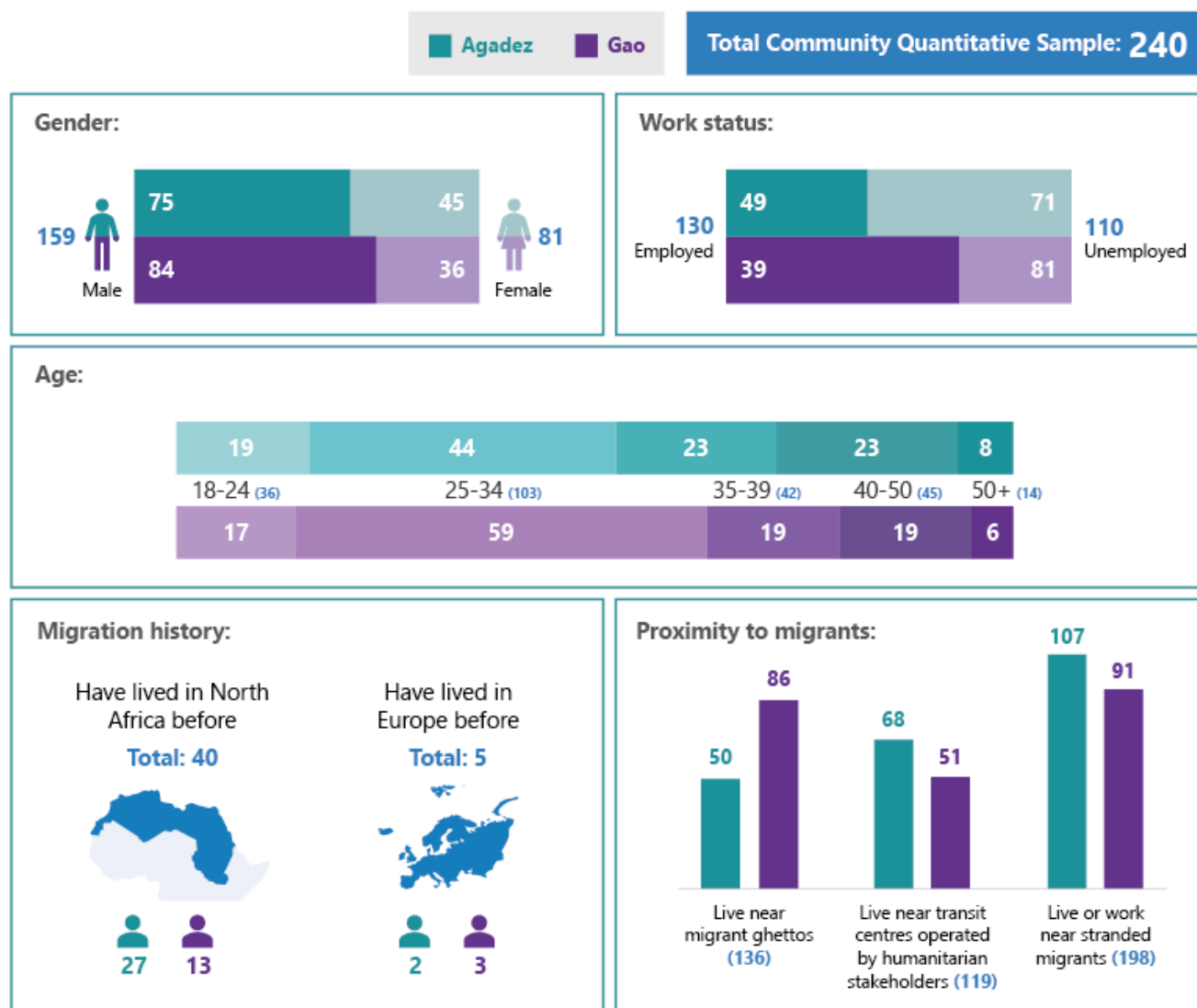
Annex 4: Quantitative respondents

IMREF conducted all phone-based quantitative interviews between 5 October and 9 November 2020.

Local community quantitative respondents

IMREF interviewed 240 community respondents via phone-based quantitative interviews. Interviewees are equally distributed between Agadez and Gao. Figure 21 provides the countdown of community quantitative respondents by location, sex, work status, age, category and migration history.

Figure 21: Local community quantitative sample



The main characteristics of the community quantitative sample include:

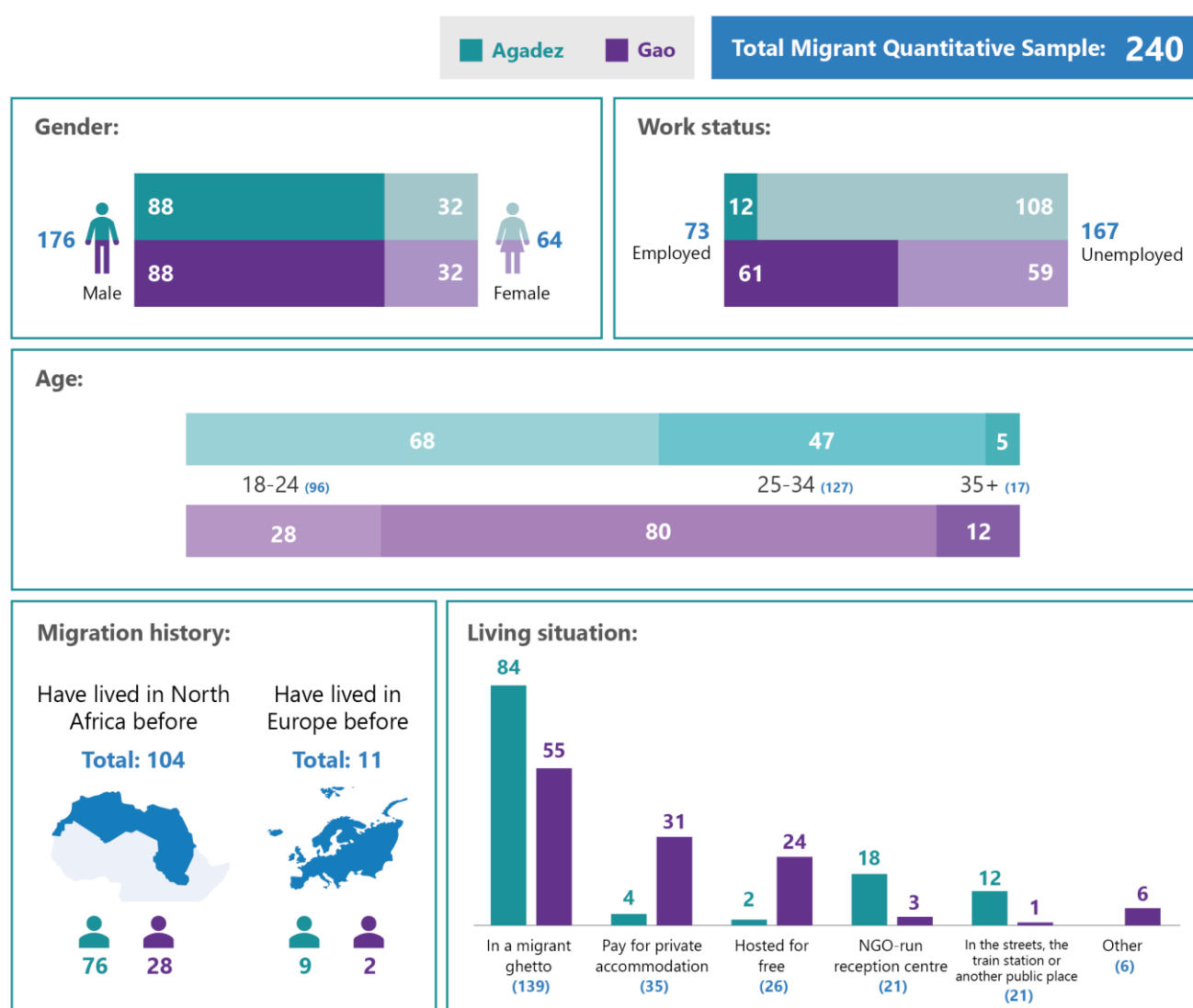
- From the 240 respondents interviewed, the majority are male. (63% in Agadez and 70% in Gao)
- The majority (68%) of the 120 respondents from Gao reported being employed. Of the 120 respondents from Agadez, 41% reported being employed.
- The majority (103) of the 240 respondents are aged 25-34, 87 between the ages of 35-50 and only 14 respondents reported being older than 50.
- Most respondents from Gao (72%) reported living near a migrant ghetto, in comparison to only 42% of respondents from Agadez.
- Most respondents from Agadez reported living near transit centres operated by humanitarian stakeholders, in comparison to only 43% of the respondents from Gao.

- From the 240 respondents interviewed, 198 reported that migrants live near where they live or work. Of the 42 respondents who answered this question negatively, 29 were from Agadez.
- From the 240 respondents interviewed, only 40 had previously lived in North Africa. Of the 40 respondents who answered this question positively, 27 were from Agadez.
- Only 5 of the 240 respondents reported previously living in Europe, 3 of whom were from Gao.
- Of the 43 respondents who reported previously living in either Europe or North Africa, the majority (56%) reported leaving voluntarily/my return was entirely my choice, and only 5 of whom received assistance during their return.

Migrant quantitative respondents

IMREF interviewed a total of 240 migrants in Gao and Agadez. Interviewees are equally distributed between Agadez and Gao. Figure 22 provides the countdown of migrant quantitative respondents by location, sex, work status, age, category and migration history.

Figure 22: Migrant quantitative sample



The main characteristics of the migrant quantitative sample include:

- 88 out of the 120 migrants interviewed in each location are male.
- The majority (103) of the 240 respondents are aged 25-34, only 17 respondents reported being older than 35.
- Only 10% of the respondents in Agadez, were employed, in comparison to 51% from Gao.

- Most respondents interviewed in both Agadez and Gao live in a ghetto, although the proportion of those living in a ghetto is much greater in Agadez (70%) than in Gao (45.8%).
- Most migrants interviewed from Gao are from Côte d'Ivoire (26%), whereas the majority of migrants interviewed from Agadez are from Guinea (23%).
- Most respondents from Agadez (63%) reported previously living in North Africa, in comparison to only (23%) of respondents from Gao.
- From the 240 respondents, only 11 reported previously living in Europe, the majority of which (9) were in Agadez.
- From the respondents who reported previously living in either North Africa or Europe, 93.4% of respondents located in Agadez reported that they were either forced to leave or were deported. Respondents from Gao reported a shared majority totalling 71.4% split between being deported, being forced to leave and choosing to leave voluntarily without having a choice.
- 91% of respondents from Agadez reported their reason for returning as being deported/forced to leave, whereas respondents from Gao reported a shared majority totalling 57.14% split between family reasons and an irregular administrative situation.
- From the 240 respondents, 10 reported difficulties seeing, hearing or speaking. Six respondents reported difficulties seeing even when wearing glasses and 4 respondents reported difficulties hearing even when using a hearing assistance. Only 4 of the respondents reported having difficulties communicating (understanding or being understood by others) in their own language.
- The majority (38%) of respondents in Agadez reported starting their journey from their country of origin more than 12 months ago, compared to the majority in Gao (28%) who reported starting their journey 3-6 months ago.
- The majority (30%) of respondents in Agadez reported arriving in their current location 3-6 months ago. A shared majority of respondents from Gao totalling 72% of respondents, reported arriving in their current location within the last six months.
- The three most popular destination countries of respondents from Agadez are reported to be France, Italy and Spain. The three most popular destination countries of respondents from Gao are France, Algeria and Spain.
- 3 of the 120 respondents in each location reported having legal permission to travel to their destination country.
- 149 of the 240 respondents cited one of their main reasons for departing their home country as a lack of job opportunities, 148 of the 240 respondents cited one of their main reasons for departing their home country as poor job opportunities and 105 of the 240 respondents cited personal/family reasons as one of their main reasons for departing their home country.
- The majority of respondents from both Agadez and Gao reported traveling with one or more people, with only 32% of respondents reporting traveling alone.
- More than half (53%) of respondents in Agadez reported receiving humanitarian support, in contrast to only 10% of respondents in Gao. The most popular forms of humanitarian support are reported to be food, medical assistance and water.

Annex 5: Qualitative Respondents

IMREF conducted all phone-based qualitative interviews between 5 October and 9 November 2020.

Local community respondents

Table 4: Community qualitative sample

#	Location	Category	Age	Sex
1.	Agadez	Migrant employer	45	M
2.	Agadez	Migrant employer	39	F
3.	Agadez	Migrant employer	28	M
4.	Agadez	Migrant employer	29	F
5.	Agadez	Community member in areas with a concentration of stranded migrants	42	M
6.	Agadez	Community member in areas with a concentration of stranded migrants	35	F
7.	Agadez	Community member in areas with a concentration of stranded migrants	31	F
8.	Agadez	Community member in areas with a concentration of stranded migrants	35	M
9.	Agadez	Community member in areas with a concentration of stranded migrants	40	M
10.	Agadez	Community member near transit centres operated by humanitarian stakeholders	46	M
11.	Agadez	Community member near transit centres operated by humanitarian stakeholders	29	F
12.	Agadez	Community member near transit centres operated by humanitarian stakeholders	39	M
13.	Agadez	Community member near transit centres operated by humanitarian stakeholders	19	M
14.	Agadez	Community member near ghettos	38	F
15.	Agadez	Community member near ghettos	39	M
16.	Agadez	Community member near ghettos	65	M
17.	Agadez	Community member near ghettos	32	M
18.	Gao	Migrant employer	N/A	M
19.	Gao	Migrant employer	N/A	M
20.	Gao	Migrant employer	34	M
21.	Gao	Migrant employer	48	M
22.	Gao	Community member in areas with a concentration of stranded migrants	25	F
23.	Gao	Community member in areas with a concentration of stranded migrants	30	M
24.	Gao	Community member in areas with a concentration of stranded migrants	32	M
25.	Gao	Community member in areas with a concentration of stranded migrants	22	F
26.	Gao	Community member near transit centres operated by humanitarian stakeholders	33	M
27.	Gao	Community member near transit centres operated by humanitarian stakeholders	30	F
28.	Gao	Community member near transit centres operated by humanitarian stakeholders	35	M
29.	Gao	Community member near transit centres operated by humanitarian stakeholders	39	M

30.	Gao	Community member near ghettos	37	M
31.	Gao	Community member near ghettos	29	M
32.	Gao	Community member near ghettos	29	F
33.	Gao	Community member near ghettos	37	M

Migrant Respondents

Table 5: Migrant qualitative sample

#	Location	Nationality	Sex	Age	Length of stay in the community	Expelled
1.	Agadez	Cameroon	F	26	5 months	
2.	Agadez	Cameroon	F	29	4 months	
3.	Agadez	Liberia	F	26	3 months	
4.	Agadez	Guinea	F	27	2.5 months	
5.	Agadez	Guinea	M	20	6 days	Yes
6.	Agadez	Cameroon	M	19	5 days	
7.	Agadez	CAR	M	21	3 months	Yes
8.	Agadez	Cameroon	M	22	5 months	Yes
9.	Agadez	Cameroon	M	30	10 months	Yes
10.	Agadez	Cameroon	M	35	3 months	Yes
11.	Agadez	Cameroon	M	19	N/A	Yes
12.	Agadez	Ivory Coast	M	25	9 months	
13.	Agadez	Ivory Coast	M	27	2 weeks	
14.	Gao	Togo	M	48	N/A	
15.	Gao	Ivory Coast	F	30	4 days	
16.	Gao	Togo	F	38	8 months	
17.	Gao	Guinea	F	43	1 year	Yes
18.	Gao	Ivory Coast	F	29	9 months	
19.	Gao	Guinea	F	20	1.5 years	
20.	Gao	Togo	M	22	4 months	
21.	Gao	Benin	M	25	8 months	
22.	Gao	Burkina Faso	M	22	5 months	
23.	Gao	Benin	M	26	11 months	
24.	Gao	Togo	M	28	N/A	
25.	Gao	Guinea	M	41	3 months	
26.	Gao	Ivory Coast	M	31	8 months	
27.	Gao	Togo	M	32	8 months	
28.	Gao	Benin	M	27	8 months	

Annex 6: Intermediaries in the community

Several actors in the community have a direct influence on the kinds of interactions that migrants experience in local communities, and play a role in easing tensions between migrants and local communities, as well as connecting migrants with, and disconnecting migrants from, the rest of the community.

Migrant communities played a positive but limited role in intervening in some cases of tensions between local communities and migrants – whether as a structured association, an unstructured group, or as individuals. Some key informants suggested that the role of unstructured groups and individual migrants was limited, because they were not involved in existing coordination platforms, and because not all migrants had information on how to identify and access them in case of need.

Some elders from the local community played a positive role in easing tensions between migrants and community members. Migrant qualitative respondents described instances when local elders intervened to help them in cases of tensions. Examples included acting as an intermediary when local youths threatened a migrant and told him to set up his business in another, helping a woman who was publicly insulted in a market and stopping a physical fight between migrants and local youths.

Migrants staying with families of other nationals who resided in the community said their networks in the local community acted as a layer of security.⁵⁶ This was particularly the case in Gao. A 43-year-old Guinean woman in Gao explained that she was hosted by a fellow national, who helped her identify which neighbourhoods to avoid, and how to act to stay secure. In the quantitative sample, migrants who were hosted by someone who lived in the community were less likely to report that they had felt unsafe interacting with the local community (15% compared to, for instance, 31% of migrants who lived by themselves or 31% of migrants who lived in the streets).

There are instances where the local leaders have sought to play a role in resolving tensions between migrants and local communities, but this role might be undermined by local governance relations. Some migrant and community qualitative respondents reported cases when traditional leaders and local authorities played a role in easing tensions between migrants and community members, for instance by organising community discussions to ease tensions between Agadez inhabitants and Sudanese asylum seekers. Despite these efforts, there are structural limits to the action of local leaders in favour of welcoming migrants. The 2016 anti-smuggling law led to a loss of legitimacy for local leaders,⁵⁷ as community members blame them for the detrimental effects of Law 2015-36.⁵⁸ Additional programming engagement with local leaders and authorities could therefore further de-legitimise them, if not associated with economic gains for the community.

Smugglers' roles vary on an individual basis, but it is unclear what determines whether they connect or disconnect migrants from the community. In some cases, smugglers were reported as connecting migrants to local communities. For instance, a 32-year-old local teacher in Agadez explained that the ghetto owner near his house routinely introduced migrants in his ghetto to him. On the other hand, community and migrant qualitative respondents agreed that some ghetto owners discouraged migrants from engaging with the local community.

Annex 7: The role of media in shaping attitudes towards migrants

The role of media in shaping perceptions of migrants among local communities was described as limited by field-based key informants and local leaders. Few informants were able to talk about local media or to give examples when local or national media talked about transit migrants. Key informants explained that the media tends to focus on deaths in the Mediterranean and large-scale returns of nationals, rather than local stories on migration. Key informants also explained that the main exception was when international organisations funded awareness campaigns and funded local media, especially radios. However, those tended to focus on the dangers of migration, rather than acceptance of local migrants.

⁵⁶ This confirms previous IMREF research. IMREF (2020b). [Accessing the Most Vulnerable Migrants in Agadez and Ouagadougou](#).

⁵⁷ Claes, J., Schmauder, A. (2020). [When the dust settles: Economic and governance repercussions of migration policies in Niger's north](#), CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael Institute.

⁵⁸ Molenaar, F. (2018). [Roadmap for sustainable migration management in the Sahel: lessons from Agadez](#), CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael Institute.

Annex 8: Aid landscape in Agadez and Gao

In Agadez, recent aid funding has focused on providing greater economic and employment opportunities to local communities, improving infrastructure, and supporting migration management.

In an analysis from 2018, Clingendael found that most funding was allocated to local community programming, over migration programming, contrary to the beliefs of the local population.⁵⁹ For instance, as of 2018, 87% of EUTF funding was destined for local communities, out of a 215-million-euro budget.⁶⁰ The IOM also implements projects directed at the local population in Agadez via the Community Stabilization Initiatives in Northern Niger (COSINN), funded by the German Federal Foreign Office.⁶¹ Other ongoing development projects seek to improve the infrastructure of the Agadez region. This includes a 160-million-euro World Bank project to improve road connectivity and safety between Agadez and Zinder⁶² and a 32-million-euro project by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) to build a hybrid power plant to supply electricity to the city of Agadez.⁶³ An 8-million-euro Action Plan for Rapid Economic Impact in Agadez (PAIERA) implemented by the Haute Autorité à la Consolidation de la Paix (HACP) focused specifically on providing jobs to Agadez community members who lost income due to the criminalisation of migration in Niger, but ended in 2019.⁶⁴ Several organisations provide direct support to migrants, including the IOM, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Red Cross, Médecins du Monde, UNICEF, and the Catholic Relief Services (CRS). For instance, the FCDO allocated over 10 million euros to implementing partners in Niger to make migration safer and provide critical humanitarian support in Niger, with a focus on Agadez and Niamey.

In Gao, it appears that similar levels of funding were allocated to the local community compared to Agadez, with more focus on security given the ongoing conflict in North Mali.

The EUTF funded 150-million euros worth of development and governance projects in Mali. These included, among others, Humanity & Inclusion's community resilience programme (25 million), Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (SNV)'s youth employment programme (15 million), and LuxDev's support to local economy (10 million). A recent presentation by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) analysed that a total of close to 20 million EUR was invested into the Gao community through Peace and Security Trust Fund projects in Mali, Peacebuilding Fund projects, Stabilisation and Recovery Program Fund projects, and Community Violence Reduction projects.⁶⁵ The Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) also funds agricultural infrastructure projects in the Gao region.⁶⁶ Several organisations provide direct support to migrants, including the IOM, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Red Cross, Terre des Hommes (TDH), UNICEF, Enda and the Maison des Migrants. The FCDO allocated over 10 million euros to implementing partners in Niger to make migration safer and provide critical humanitarian support in Niger, with a focus on Agadez and Niamey.

⁵⁹ Molenaar, F., Tubiana, J. & Warin, C. (2018). [Caught in the middle](#), CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael Institute.

⁶⁰ EUTF development projects aimed at the local community include AFD's Rural Poles project (30 million), GIZ's ProGEM (EUR 25 million), LuxDev's Nig/801 (EUR 6.9 million), and SNV's job creation programme (EUR 30 million). Molenaar, F., Tubiana, J. & Warin, C. (2018). [Caught in the middle](#), CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael Institute.

⁶¹ IOM (2018). [UN Migration Agency Launches Community Stabilization Activities in Northern Niger](#), May 2015.

⁶² World Bank (2019). [Project Information Document : Trans Saharan Corridor Development Project \(P171793\)](#).

⁶³ AFD (2017). [Construire une Centrale Hybride pour Alimenter la Ville d'Agadez et ses Environs en Électricité](#).

⁶⁴ See : [Plan d'Actions à Impact Economique Rapide à Agadez](#) (PAIERA), EUTF website.

⁶⁵ MINUSMA (2020). [La MINUSMA à Gao : 200 projets d'un coût total de 13 milliards de FCFA initiés au profit des habitants](#), February 2020.

⁶⁶ GIZ (2019). [Projet agro-pastoral intégré des régions de Gao et Ménaka](#), Mali (PAI-GM).