

Niger is hosting Malian refugees since the outbreak of the crisis in Northern Mali in 2012 in 3 refugee camps in Tillabery region, 2 refugee hosting zones for nomadic refugees in Tahoua region and in urban areas such as Niamey and Ayourou.

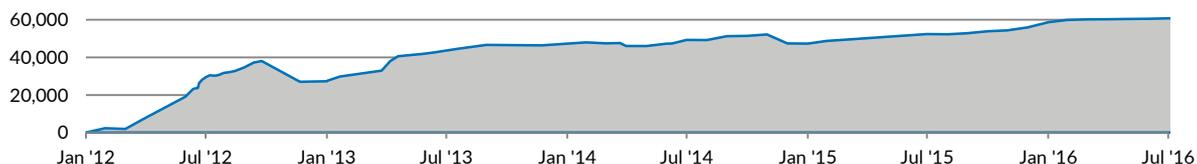
Malian refugees are recognized on a *prima facie* basis and enjoy a favorable protection environment with the right to settle where they wish and to access basic social services and the formal and informal job market.

UNHCR has 5 field units (in Tillabery, Ouallam, Abala, Tahoua and Niamey) assisting Malian refugees in proximity of the settlements.

Population Statistics

As of 31st July 2016, 60,818 Malian nationals (12,958 households) were registered as refugees in Niger. This is the highest number of Malian refugees in Niger recorded since 2012. Despite the signature of a peace agreement in 2015, recurrent confrontations between armed groups and government forces and between various ethnic groups in Northern Mali cause a constant influx of refugees into the Tillabery and Tahoua regions, with 5,449 new arrivals between January and end of July.

Population trend for Malian refugees in Niger

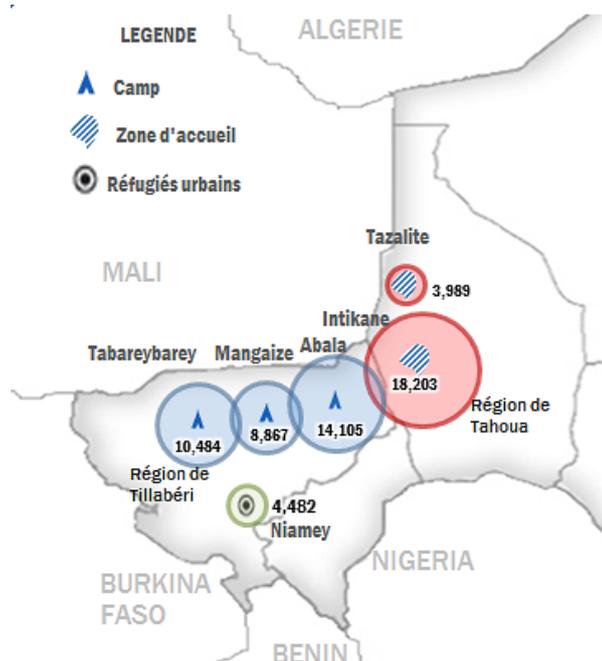


In 2016, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary return of 1,558 persons to-date. A tripartite agreement between UNHCR and the Governments of Niger and Mali, signed in 2014 provides a legal framework for voluntary returns in respect of the related international standards. The parties consider that the conditions in parts of northern Mali are not yet conducive to returns in safety and dignity. As a result, voluntary repatriation is currently not promoted. Persons that wish nevertheless to return to Mali are counseled on the prevailing situation and sign a Voluntary Repatriation Form. They receive one-time cash assistance to pay for their transport.

UNHCR ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION

In the context of prolonged displacement, the assistance and protection strategy for Malian refugees focusses on medium and long term solutions that will promote refugees' autonomy and their integration into national service systems. To this end, UNHCR supports and builds capacity within the Government of Niger and other local actors. Several milestones can be highlighted:

- The refugee hosting zones established in Tahoua region as an alternative to camps allow refugees to maintain their nomadic lifestyle. Socio-economic studies show a higher living conditions and increased levels of resilience than in camp-settings.
- The urbanization project will soon provide 400 refugee households of Tabareybarey camp with the opportunity to settle permanently in the town of Ayourou.
- The refugees of Tabareybarey and Mangaize camp are already integrated in the national health care system. After UNHCR facilitated repairs of local infrastructure, Tabareybarey camp was



connected to Ayourou’s urban water system. UNHCR continue to support national actors to improve access to basic services, particularly health, water and education, and to integrate refugees.

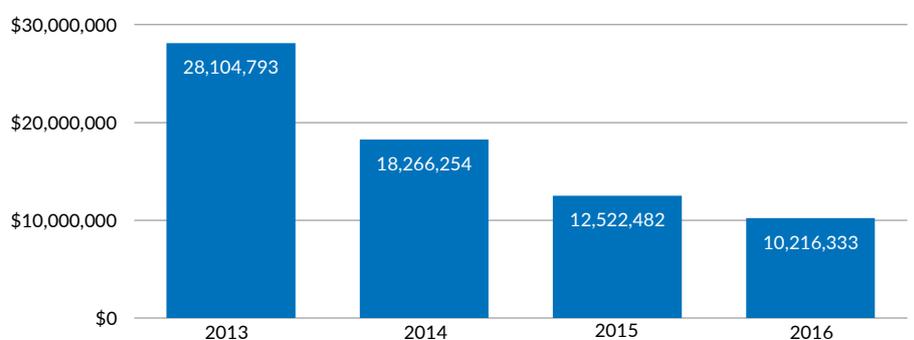
- Gas projects in Abala, Tahoua and Tabareybarey reduce refugees’ fire wood consumption considerably limiting environmental damage, and increasing purchasing power and school frequentation. Women also have a lower risk of SGBV related incidents associated with fire wood collection.
- Vouchers to purchase food items and cash for NFI have increased the dignity of refugees in Mangaize camp., Both types of assistance allow refugees to satisfy their household’s individual needs, giving them choice in selecting items favored by the household and flexibility when to purchase them. Cash for NFIs allows refugees to renew/repair their shelters and NFI as individually needed
- Also in Mangaize, UNHCR piloted a contract approach to support refugees in generating income and to boost livelihood activities. Refugees accept to receive a monthly cash-grant of 10.000 FCFA over 18 month aims before a definitive cessation of assistance at the end of the project phase. A 2016 CaLP study showed positive impacts on beneficiaries’ economic situation and the local economy.
- In Niamey, one-off food, shelter and NFI assistance is targeted towards the most vulnerable households by using a vulnerability score card. In the camps and refugee hosting zones, UNHCR and WFP will introduce targeted food and cash assistance in the second half of 2016 to identify those that can sustain themselves and those that cannot yet cater for themselves. Targeting criteria include socio-economic and protection indicators.

KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2016 AND BEYOND

- Urbanization initiatives for Mangaize and Abala.
- Continued rehabilitation of key basic community infrastructures through support to the national responsible authorities, to facilitate the integration of refugees into the local community.
- Extension of Multipurpose Cash Grants (MCG) to the other camps and refugee hosting areas.
- Expansion of livelihood activities and collaboration with development actors to promote refugees’ autonomy and self-sufficiency.
- Extension of the gas projects to Mangaize and Niamey.
- Filling the gap in the education sector (following the exit of UNICEF from the support to Malian refugees) through the inclusion of refugees in the national education system.
- Maintaining an emergency response capacity for newly arriving Malian refugees.

MAIN CHALLENGES

- Increasing instability in areas close to the border.
- Deteriorating infrastructure in the sites.
- Funding shortfalls as partners shift focus and resources towards the Nigeria situation.
- Decreasing budget for the Malian situation (see graphic)



Contacts

Mr. Benoit Moreno, External Relations Officer, morenob@unhcr.org Tel: + 227 92 19 24 17

Ms. Louise Donovan, Associate External Relations Officer, Donovan@unhcr.org, Tel: +227 92183473