

MALI SITUATION

UNHCR REGIONAL UPDATE

March – May 2016

KEY FIGURES

134,262

Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger

4,642

New refugee arrivals from Mali in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger (January-May)

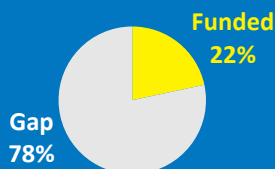
36,762

IDPs in Mali

FUNDING

USD 106.7 million

required by UNHCR for the situation in 2016



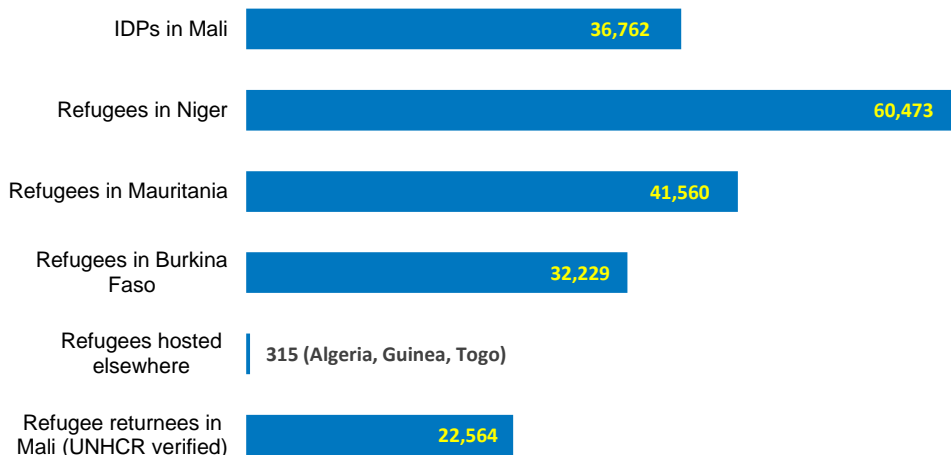
PRIORITIES

- Mali:** undertake protection monitoring in the North and the Centre; monitor and support vulnerable returnees with cash-assistance; advocate for adequate access to education for all returnee children.
- Burkina Faso:** strengthen support to refugees' self-reliance; reinforce peaceful coexistence; sustain refugees' access to national systems.
- Mauritania:** continue support to refugees' self-reliance; promote peaceful; sustain the education response.
- Niger:** promote peaceful coexistence between host communities and refugees; scale up the shelter response as well as livelihoods and self-reliance

HIGHLIGHTS

- UNHCR's access to the central and northern regions in **Mali** continues to be impaired by frequent security incidents, hampering the delivery of assistance to internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees and host and local populations;
- Results of a return intention survey in **Burkina Faso** show that 87 per cent of refugees do not wish to return to Mali under current conditions whilst 75 per cent of them are socio-economically vulnerable according to a UNHCR socioeconomic study undertaken in April and May;
- In **Mauritania**, efforts are being scaled up to strengthen refugees' self-reliance amidst challenges to meet their daily food needs.
- In **Niger**, UNHCR and partners are facilitating refugees' local integration through the 'urbanization' project that is being further expanded to the town of Ayorou to allow both vulnerable refugee families and members of the host community to access land parcels and eventually construct houses.

193,588 persons of concern



Bintou, a Malian refugee, weaves a palm mat and learns to design and make quality products at a workshop in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso © UNHCR / P. Absalon

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Operational Context

UNHCR's access to people of concern is challenged by a fast deteriorating security situation –

- Security incidents and attacks in Mali have increased in intensity and sophistication, continuing to target Malian and international security forces, especially in Kidal, Menaka, Gao, and Timbuktu regions but also in the southern capital Bamako. Attacks have also spread to the centre of the country, particularly in the Mopti region. The multiplicity of armed groups, particularly in the north, as well as their complex and rapidly changing relationships, renders the environment particularly volatile and unpredictable. Criminality, the presence of armed and extremist groups as well as inter- and intra-community clashes remain the major threats for civilian populations and the humanitarian community.
- This evolution is particularly worrisome as these incidents are sporadically forcing the temporary suspension of certain humanitarian activities and are affecting the access of vulnerable people to adequate assistance. Faced with these challenges, UNHCR, along with other humanitarian organisations, are increasing advocacy efforts among the key stakeholders and the populations on the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.
- In the sub-region, insecurity along the Niger/Mali and Niger/Burkina Faso borders persists. The porosity of the borders and coordination challenges between the security forces of Niger and Mali has enabled violent incidents to continue, including armed attacks, mine explosions and banditry. In Niger, escorts are required for all travel in the regions of Tillabery and Tahoua hosting Malian refugees, following increased attacks in the region in recent months, whilst border monitoring missions are limited. In addition, there are concerns regarding security in the camps following an attack against UNHCR's Camp Management partner *Action pour le bien-être* on 23 May.

– whilst the number of IDPs and refugees decreases and new arrivals and spontaneous returns continue to be registered

- The overall number of IDPs and refugees has decreased since the start of the year (41% and 4%, respectively), while more frequent security incidents continue to trigger sporadic forced displacement both inside Mali (800 people were displaced in the region of Mopti between April and May) and into neighbouring countries. Since the start of the year, UNHCR has registered some 4,700 new arrivals in Niger, 75 in Burkina Faso and 67 in Mauritania. Asylum seekers state that they are fleeing violent clashes and inter-ethnic and communal violence in the north of Mali.
- The slow implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation signed in June 2015, and particularly the cantonment and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, and the slow redeployment of government and State officials contribute to maintain an insecure and volatile environment lacking protective safeguards for the safe reintegration of refugee and IDP returnees. Yet, trend analysis shows that whilst the number of IDP returnees have increased by 23 per cent from 394,655 in 2014 to 515,856 in May 2016, refugee returns have been reported at a more low-key pace – 4,267 spontaneous returnees were registered thus far in 2016, an increase of 22 per cent when compared to the 3,500 reported by the end of 2015. The upcoming local elections in Mali are one element behind this trend.

– calling for a strengthening of the role of protection in the Mali crisis response

- Many United Nations (UN) and other international agencies have protection functions, and therefore multiple notions of protection are today accepted as part of the broader humanitarian landscape. According to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the primary mechanism for coordinating humanitarian assistance, protection broadly encompasses activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of all individuals in accordance with international law (international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law) regardless of their age, gender, social ethnic, national, religious, or other background.
- In practice, this definition should entail working with “responsible authorities, mandated agencies and the population in need to reduce the incidence of attacks on civilians by all parties to the conflict, and to reduce the impact of the attacks on health, access to food and economic security by enabling the free movement of the civilian population and access by humanitarian agencies.”¹ Within the Mali context, though a large amount of inter-agency protection strategies have been developed, shared, and approved by key stakeholders, operationalizing these strategies remains a challenge due to complexities on the ground.
- Interventions that respond to the assistance and protection needs of conflict-affected populations require joined and collaborative efforts, including engagement with States and non-State parties to the armed conflict. UNHCR is striving to provide civilian protection to those affected by violence and insecurity in northern and central Mali. Such measures must be accompanied by other forms of protection, including child and social protection, from other UN agencies and civil society organisations. This is expected to better support a comprehensive protection approach for vulnerable populations against the consequences of armed conflict, as well as permit a more efficient humanitarian response. UNHCR is working to uphold its mandate of providing humanitarian protection to displaced civilians, which, at this stage in the crisis, must be complemented with measures to secure access to return roads and areas, protect civilians, and respect by all parties of the peace agreement and its effective implementation.

¹ Bonwick, Andrew; Slim, Hugo, Protection An ALNAP Guide for Humanitarian Agencies 2005, p.98

Protection

MALI

- A verification mission carried out by UNHCR and its partners was able to identify 418 refugee returnees present with verified documentation in the commune of Gargando in the Timbuktu region. In addition, UNHCR's protection team monitored the facilitated return of 79 refugee households and the spontaneous return of two refugee households from camps in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger towards the region of Gao (60 individuals) and the region of Timbuktu (271 individuals). The needs expressed by refugees include support for food, shelter, water and livelihoods. In an effort to eradicate statelessness and strengthen civil registration services in northern Mali, UNHCR donated computer and office equipment to regional government authorities in the regions of Mopti and Gao.

BURKINA FASO

- Results of UNHCR's return intention survey show that 87 per cent of refugees do not intend to return to Mali under current conditions while 16 per cent of them said they wish to settle in Burkina Faso in the long term. Those in favour of returning would like to do as part of an organised process. Refugees reported that the main reasons impeding return are the lack of security in their area of origin, the absence of state administrative and social services and the lack of opportunities to earn a living and restart their lives. Yet, it is worth noting that return movements continue to be witnessed. During the reporting period, UNHCR facilitated the repatriation of some 1,300 Malian refugees hosted in camps.

NIGER

- Between March and May there has been a marked increase in interest in voluntary repatriation amongst the refugee community. During this period, UNHCR assisted 910 people to repatriate, whilst an additional 5,590 people registered their interest in receiving assistance to return to Mali between June and September this year. Information sessions are being held between UNHCR, partners, local authorities and refugees in all of the camps.



Adissa, 20 years old with her young son, who arrived in April to Mangaize refugee camp in Niger having fled inter-ethnic violence in Menaka, Northern Mali © UNHCR / L. Donovan

Education

MALI

- Refugee returnee and IDP children remain vulnerable to the risk of abuse and exploitation due to the lack of educational services in the north and central regions. In the region of Menaka, a joint mission carried out between 1-3 March by UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF found that children continue to lack access to quality education due to the absence of teachers (35 per cent of 312 teachers present in 117 primary schools in the region) and the non-functionality of certain schools (27 out of 117 elementary schools non-functional and four out of seven middle schools non-functional). In the region of Mopti, a joint mission carried out between 14-17 April by UNHCR, OCHA and UNICEF as well as the United Nations' peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA) revealed that many schools in the villages of Tenenkou district remained closed with students and teachers unable to return to classrooms due to the volatile security situation. In particular, children continue to suffer psychologically due to the presence of armed forces and gunfire in the district of Youwarou. In total, the number of schools closed in relation to insecurity in the centre and north of the country has increased from 268 in October 2015 to 296 in early June 2016, signalling an overall deterioration in the access to education for children. In terms of response, UNHCR is providing support to mothers' associations in the town of Menaka to support school canteen programmes in six schools attended by children from refugee returnee, IDP and host communities.

MAURITANIA

- In Mbera camp, where Malian refugees are hosted since the start of the crisis early 2012, awareness campaign targeting parents and children successfully increased boys' and girls' school enrolment rate from 46 per cent for the school year 2014/2015 to more than 50 percent for the school year 2015/2016. To prevent drop outs during the school year, all children continued to receive school meals with specific nutritional supplements provided by the World Food Programme (WFP).



Food Security and Nutrition

BURKINA FASO

- WFP food assistance programme for Malian refugees continued to experience significant funding shortfalls resulting in a reduction of food rations and no cash assistance. This has led to about a quarter of the refugees not having enough food to meet their nutritional needs. Following UNHCR and WFP's [joint press release](#) issued on 24 March – warning donors and partners that without urgent support, 31,000 Malian refugees risked being cut off from life-saving assistance over the next three months – Catholic Relief Services/Caritas undertook a distribution of cash assistance. Each refugee hosted in camps (totaling some 22,000 individuals) received CFA 10,500, equivalent to approximately US\$20, sufficient to cover their basic food needs for one and a half months (mid-May to end of June). The government of Mali also provided support to Malian refugees by making available 374 tons of rice and sugar, covering the needs of refugees hosted in camps during the month of July. UNHCR is coordinating with WFP to review the possibility to supplement the ration with other food items.

MAURITANIA

- WFP continued to face funding shortfalls affecting its general food distribution programme for Malian refugees also in Mauritania. Between March and May 2016, three general food distributions were conducted in Mbera camp through which refugees received a reduced food ration composed of rice and oil, representing 1,348 kilocalories per person per day worth of energy instead of the recommended standard of 2,100 kilocalories. In an effort to minimize the negative impact that gaps in food distributions have on refugees' health and nutrition status, livelihood initiatives and programmes continue to be implemented. For instance, UNHCR ensures animal feeding, and during the reporting period, UNHCR provided feeds for nearly 4,600 farm animals.



Shelter and Non-Food Items

MALI

- UNHCR and its partners – the Luxembourg Red Cross (Timbuktu) and Stop Sahel (Gao and Mopti) – started the identification and registration process of IDP returnees and vulnerable host community households with urgent shelter needs. However, due the pattern of dispersed settlement of the population and their nomadic lifestyles, identifying and mobilizing targeted households remains a challenge. Twelve shelter committees were established in the regions of Gao (2), Menaka (7) and Mopti (3) to support and engage the local community in the restoration of shelters and distribution of kits. Shelter tool kits were also distributed to partners, Stop Sahel and the *Direction régionale du développement social et de l'économie solidaire du district* (DRDSES), who are providing complementary items to IDPs and refugee returnees in the regions of Gao and Mopti. UNHCR continued to lead and coordinate the response with respect to the needs of displaced persons as the cluster lead agency for shelter and non-food items.

NIGER

- As the Mali situation has moved from an emergency to protracted situation, long-term solutions are being prioritized, notably through enhancing the local integration of the Malian refugee population. As part of the 'urbanization' project, nearly 400 refugee families from the camp of Tabareybarey and 50 host families have been identified based on vulnerabilities in the town of Ayorou, in the western region of Tillabéri. Following urban planning and servicing of land parcels, the selected beneficiary families will be granted land titles for the plots, where they will be free to move and build their homes. The project's strategy is to address land issues in a realistic, structural, and sustainable manner. It aims to support the housing and absorption capacities of host communities, while economically supporting the target municipalities, ensuring peaceful cohabitation between displaced and host communities. UNHCR and its partners are providing technical, administrative, legal, and financial support to the target municipalities to enable them to develop new areas for building that are in line with current regulations. Training in urban planning is also provided so as to optimize the use of the land. The aim of the project is to also provide housing to the vulnerable beneficiary families, on the land parcels. This project will transform the land –not only physically, but in its potential to contribute to the economy, – while also providing vital solutions to vulnerable displaced and host populations. The initiative is being piloted in Ayorou town and has already been successfully implemented in the Diffa region, with high satisfaction rates of both the beneficiaries and the local community authorities. Plans are in place to scale up the project to Mangaize and possibly close to Abala camp.

MAURITANIA

- Between March and May 2016, 25 semi-permanent shelters kits were distributed to refugees, mostly targeting recently displaced people following clashes in the Mopti region in Mali. However, 6,000 semi-permanent shelters kits that were distributed in 2013 need to be replaced as they have a two-year lifespan but limited funding hampers UNHCR's ability to procure shelter material.

Water and Sanitation

BURKINA FASO

- Maintaining water supply and sanitation systems has been a challenge in both camps and refugee-hosting areas. During the quarter, UNHCR and its partner African Initiative for Relief and Development (AIRD) repaired 9 manual boreholes and laid underground 829 meters of water supply pipelines to protect potable water from winds and sand. Furthermore, in partnership with International Emergency and Development Aid (IEDA), UNHCR conducted a hygiene & sanitation campaign in both refugee camps of the Sahel region.

MAURITANIA

- UNHCR continued to involve refugees in water and sanitation management. Some 3,000 refugees were reached through door-to-door sensitization sessions to raise awareness on hygiene practices, waste management and proper toilet waste disposal. A hand washing sensitization campaign was also conducted in schools, through the set-up of special hygiene clubs reaching about 88 per cent of school children. Refugees in Mbera camp continued to have access to 30 litres of water per person per day, which is above the minimum humanitarian standard of 20 litres.



Sensitization for jerry can washing practices is key to improve sanitation in Mbera camp, Mauritania ©UNHCR / H. Pes

Self-Reliance and Peaceful Coexistence

MALI

- In an effort to improve the economic livelihood of refugee returnees and host community members, UNHCR has been providing support to income-generating activities in the regions of Timbuktu, Mopti and Gao. Through its partner Mercy Corps, UNHCR has been supporting 23 village-level agricultural groups composed of refugee returnees and host community members for their vegetable gardening and other agricultural activities in the region of Timbuktu. In addition, seven villages in six priority communes in Timbuktu have been identified to receive livestock support. UNHCR also donated gardening equipment to refugee returnee women in the town of Gao to support their vegetable garden activities, while in Mopti, work is being done to strengthen the capacities of village-level savings and credit associations to better assist vulnerable households to gain access to finance.
- Cash-based interventions (CBI) for refugee returnees continued to be implemented in the regions of Mopti, Gao and Timbuktu. Thus far a total of 923 refugee returnees have benefited from cash assistance. Between March and May, nearly 1,700 refugee returnees were identified by UNHCR's partner, Mercy Corps to receive cash assistance, including 1,144 from Gao, 208 from Mopti and 208 from Timbuktu. CBIs are expected to help beneficiaries reintegrate into their communities and gain greater self-reliance, assisting them in covering their basic needs.

BURKINA FASO

- Results of a household's socio-economic study – conducted in April by UNHCR in collaboration with the *Institut de formation et de recherche démographiques*, a research institute – revealed that 75 per cent of Malian refugees are vulnerable to socio-economic shocks, 25 per cent of them being extremely vulnerable. In total, 6,775 refugee households in camps, in refugee-hosting and urban areas participated. The survey was undertaken to assess refugees' vulnerability and identify their possible options to strengthen their resilience.
- Considering the fragile security context in the refugee-hosting Sahel region, UNHCR is stepping up its efforts to enhance the peaceful coexistence between the refugee and host populations. Sensitization broadcasts were released on radio in four different languages and a TV show was broadcast. Traditional leaders in the refugee-hosting area of Djibo were also sensitized on the benefits of inter-cultural dialogue. In addition, UNHCR met with urban refugees in Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso to discuss the issue.

MAURITANIA

- Strengthening refugees' self-reliance in the camp continues to be an operational priority for UNHCR. Some 100 new income-generating activities are to be selected in 2016, in addition to the IGAs started in 2014-2015 that benefitted some 4,000 of the most vulnerable refugees. Some 1,800 women continued to have access to gardening perimeters set up by UNHCR's partner SOS Desert where they can produce fruits and vegetable for their own consumption or that they can put up for direct sale (about 20 per cent of the production).
- During the reporting period, more than 2,700 households (13,500 individuals) participated in an environmental sensitization campaign for a sustainable resource management in the camp. Environmental activities in Mbera are key to maintaining

peaceful coexistence between Malians and Mauritians. To this end, a mixed environmental committee was set up by UNHCR through its partner SoS Desert responsible for creating consensus on common resource management practices between different communities in Mbera and its surroundings.

NIGER

Joint missions between UNHCR and WFP were carried out in the various camps and the refugee-hosting areas (*zone d'accueil des réfugiés – ZARs*) in relation to the implementation of a vulnerability targeting programme for the Malian camps, ZARs and the urban refugees. Focus group discussions are ongoing and vulnerability targeting will be piloted in selected camps and ZARs in the coming months. The aim of the exercise is to enhance aid effectiveness, in particular following major budget reductions, and in line with UNHCR's overall objectives of enhancing self-reliance and integrating refugees.



Craft stand of Malian refugees in Niamey, May 2016 © UNHCR / B. Moreno

During the month of May, 100 young adults in the camp of Mangaize completed vocational trainings in sewing, metalwork and mechanics and were presented with certificates and starter kits by the two implementing partners, ACTED and Plan International. At the beginning of May, 10 Malian artists / craftspeople were invited to participate in a week long craft market set up in Niamey to celebrate International Crafts Day. The refugees displayed and sold their products including leather work, woodwork, silverwork etc.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

UNHCR's total financial requirements for the Mali Situation, involving operations in Mali and neighbouring countries (Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger) amount to **USD 106.7 million from January to December 2016**, including USD 66.7 million for the response in asylum countries. As at the end of May 2016, **the overall funding gap is USD 83.6 million**.

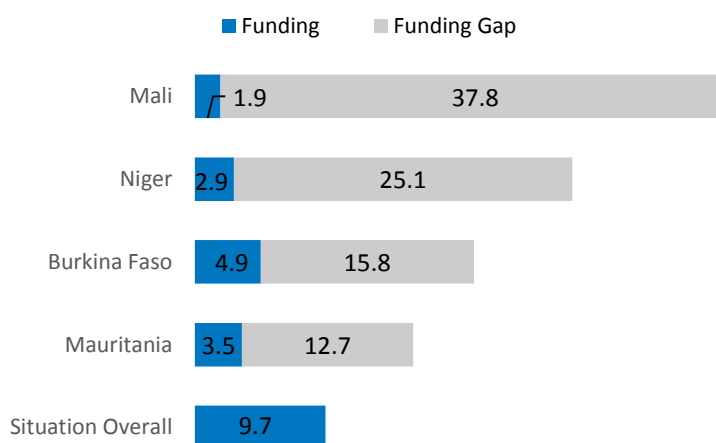
Consequence of underfunding – The lack of funding forces UNHCR and partners to focus on the most essential needs, thus limiting the implementation of programmes to reduce refugees' dependency on humanitarian assistance. In Mauritania, the interest for income-generation activities, literacy classes and farming fall well beyond funding available. Also, lack of funding prevents UNHCR from replacing some 6,000 deteriorated shelters, thus prolonging the refugees' difficult living conditions. In Burkina Faso, livelihood interventions are limited to only two sectors (milk and artisans), as a consequence of limited resources, neglecting other sectors, such as livestock, petty trade, service provision for which refugees are requesting support from UNHCR.

Donors:

CERF
 European Union
 France
 Japan
 Sweden
 United States
 UN Peacebuilding Fund
 Private donors (France, Japan, Netherlands)

Funding:

A total of **USD 23.1 million** has been contributed



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Links: [Mali situation Webportal](#) | [UNHCR Tracks](#) | [UNHCR Kora: Voices of Refugees in West and Central Africa](#)