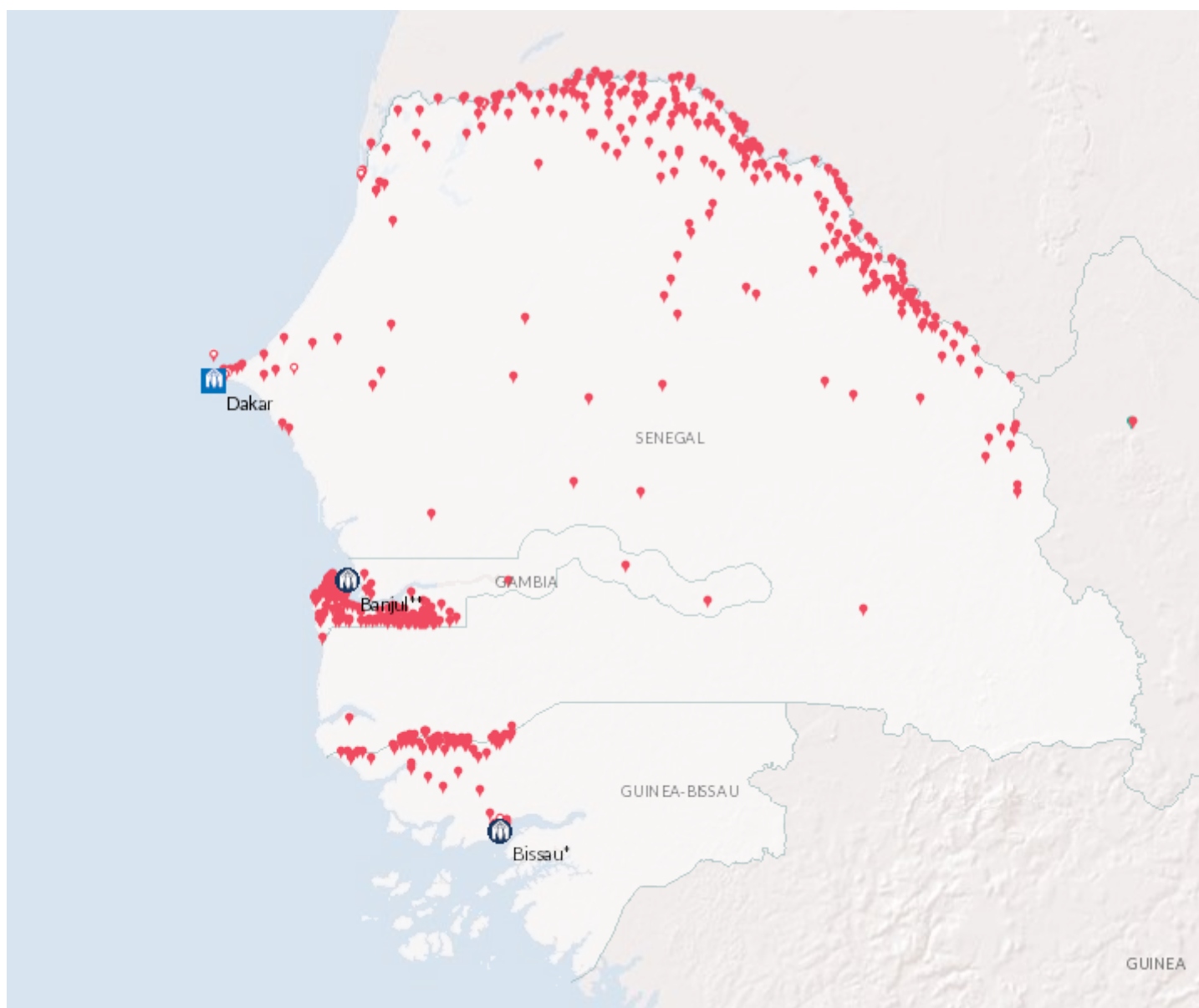


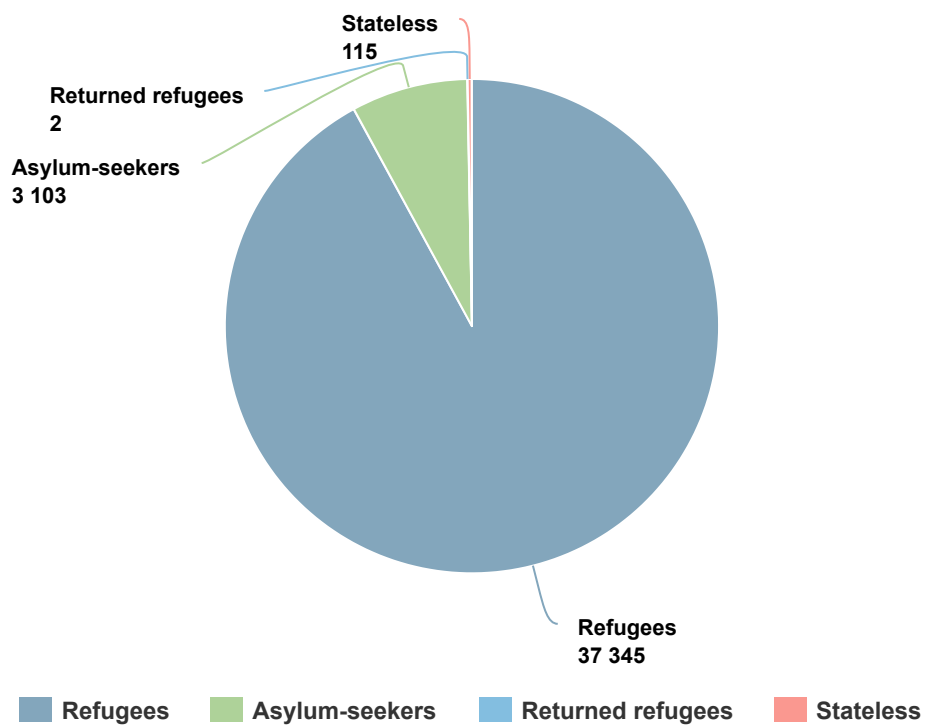
Operation: Senegal Regional Office



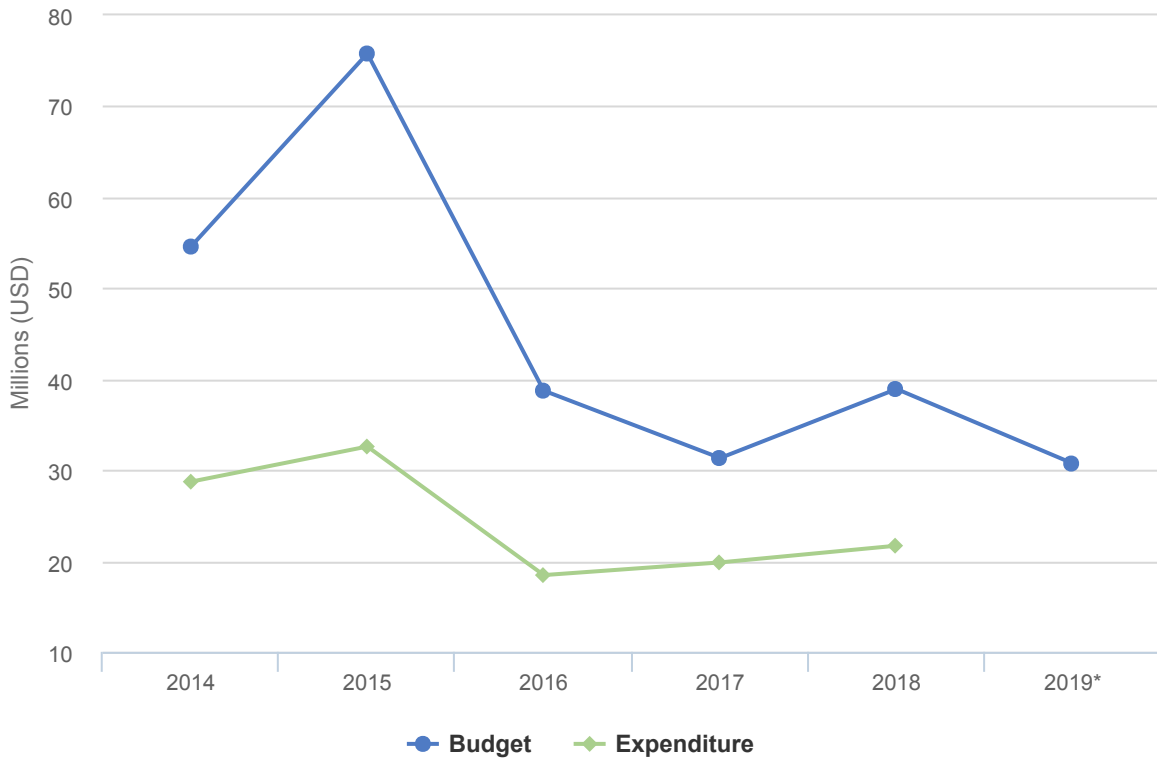
People of Concern

23% DECREASE IN
2018

2018	40,565
2017	52,639
2016	50,160



Budgets and Expenditure for Senegal Regional Office



The Regional Office in Senegal covers UNHCR's operations in Benin, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo, with no permanent presence in Benin and Sierra Leone.

Operational context

Overall, insecurity and terrorism within the countries in the Economic Community of West African States pose a serious threat to the seven countries. The spill-over effects of the ongoing terrorism in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria have ripple effects on the smaller states, which also have weaker economies.

With the exception of Senegal, political uncertainties persisted in the other countries throughout 2018. The uncertainty has been prompted more by the worrisome political developments as some of the countries were preparing for elections.

In Guinea, the opposition rejected the results of the February election.

In Togo, multiple large-scale protest calling for electoral and political reforms led to a deterioration in the overall security level, particularly in urban areas where violence between the security forces and members of the opposition, that called for an end to the 50-year rule by the Gnassingbé family and his ruling party, broke out. In December 2018, Togo held legislative elections, in which Gnassingbé's party won a majority of the seats.

In Guinea-Bissau, the national assembly elections held in November were relatively successful. However, in the run-up to elections, thousands of people demonstrated against what they described as lack of transparency in the electoral census.

In Sierra Leone, elections were carried out in a peaceful manner, with the opposition claiming victory in a run-off contest at the end of March 2018.

In 2018, across the seven countries, UNHCR focused on the search for durable solutions for protracted refugees with local integration and resettlement as the most preferred options. Local integration was pursued through advocacy with the Governments on alternative legal status, mainly indefinite/long-term residence permits or naturalization. The Government of Guinea Bissau committed to naturalizing some 7,000 refugees, while the Government of Sierra Leone committed to extending the duration of residence and work permits from one to five years, with fees waived.

Population trends

In 2018, more than 41,800 people were granted refugee status (2,340 through individual refugee status determination procedures and 39,480 individuals through prima facie recognition), while some 290 people were rejected.

By the end of 2018, the people of concern in countries within the Regional Office in Dakar were as follows: Benin: 1,490 people, Gambia: 4,380; Guinea: 5,880; Guinea Bissau: 4,880; Senegal: 16,070; Sierra Leone: 590; and Togo: 13,030.

The scope, magnitude and complexity of mixed movements within West Africa or onwards towards Europe continued to be of concern to UNHCR. West African countries were among the countries of origin of most asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants arriving in Europe through the Central and the Western Mediterranean Route.

Key achievements

In relation to mixed movements across West Africa, UNHCR:

- Conducted a workshop with 30 law practitioners and academics from the region on statelessness and the right to a nationality according to the interlinkage between statelessness and mixed movements;
- Ensured access to information and referral for people in need of international protection among the mixed movements by setting up information kiosks in three transit areas in Senegal;
- Carried out capacity-building for first-contact officials, including border authorities, on the various profiles and rights of people found within mixed movements.

In **Benin**, UNHCR advocated with national and international organisations for refugee inclusion in development programmes, and to raise awareness of the rights and obligations of refugees.¹⁵ 15 refugees finished their apprenticeships, while 4 out of the 11 refugees were hired at the end of their internships.

In **the Gambia**, UNHCR and partners conducted a secondary movement survey of refugees in September 2018. Findings of the survey indicated that 63% of the respondents, including refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons, have expressed interest to migrate to Europe and elsewhere in Africa. The survey results will guide UNHCR and partners in 2019 and beyond to implement activities that may offer alternatives to refugees and asylum seekers wishing to join mixed-migratory flows.

In **Guinea-Bissau**, a naturalization decree as a last stage of the naturalization process of protracted refugees was signed in December 2018, ensuring a definite solution to the refugees in protracted situation.

As part of developing a durable solutions strategy in relation to the situation of refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees in **Senegal**, UNHCR:

- Organised three regional multi-year, multi-partner (MYMP) protection solutions strategy workshops in September 2018 to ensure the participation of the population, as well as local and administrative authorities in remote locations. Approximately 150 people took part in the group discussions;
- Organised another joint MYMP strategy workshop involving relevant Government staff, implementing partners, refugees and UNHCR in May 2018. These participatory events marked an important step to ensure the ownership of the MYMP strategy by the Government of Senegal and therefore the sustainability and effectiveness of the foreseen programmes;
- Supported mixed community groups, including refugee and host community members, with projects leading to economic empowerment, self-sufficiency and local development. 10 investment projects in different sectors including agricultural and small and medium size enterprises were initiated, bringing together refugees and the host community with an active participation of local authorities.
- Carried out advocacy activities in relation to the issuance of identification documents to refugees: seven Rwandan refugees and one Ivorian refugee were given birth notification certificates, which will enable them to present their files for the possibilities of naturalization. Five Liberian refugees received passports from their home country ensuring their local integration, while 580 urban refugees received ID cards.

UNHCR carried out a three-day capacity-building training for National Commission for Social Action, the Government entity responsible for refugee registration, staff in **Sierra Leone** on the use of the new registration system. The aim of the training was to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers' data are well managed and secured, taking into consideration confidentiality of sensitive information in accordance with data sharing agreement signed between National Commission for Social Action and UNHCR.

Unmet needs

Little progress was made to address the backlog in refugee status determination, especially in the Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali and Togo, where the appeal committees are still not functional. The capacity of national institutions remains limited and even countries with very limited numbers of new arrivals, such as Liberia or Sierra Leone, lacked proper systems to cope with the demand.

The main obstacle with regards to the voluntary return to Mauritania for all those who opted for this durable solution

option continues to be the lack of cooperation by the authorities in the country of origin. There are also 433 Mauritians who opted for none of the durable solutions.

In Guinea Bissau, refugees living in rural area do not have access to health services, potable water and education, due to lack of public infrastructure and services. UNHCR does not support these sectors either, as the strategy has been to advocate for the inclusion of refugees in the programmes of other organisations and in the national services, also considering the limited resources available to the operation. There is little presence of the international community in the Cacheu region which, combined with the absence of public infrastructure, leaves refugees in extreme vulnerability. Some schools rehabilitated by UNHCR remain without furniture.
