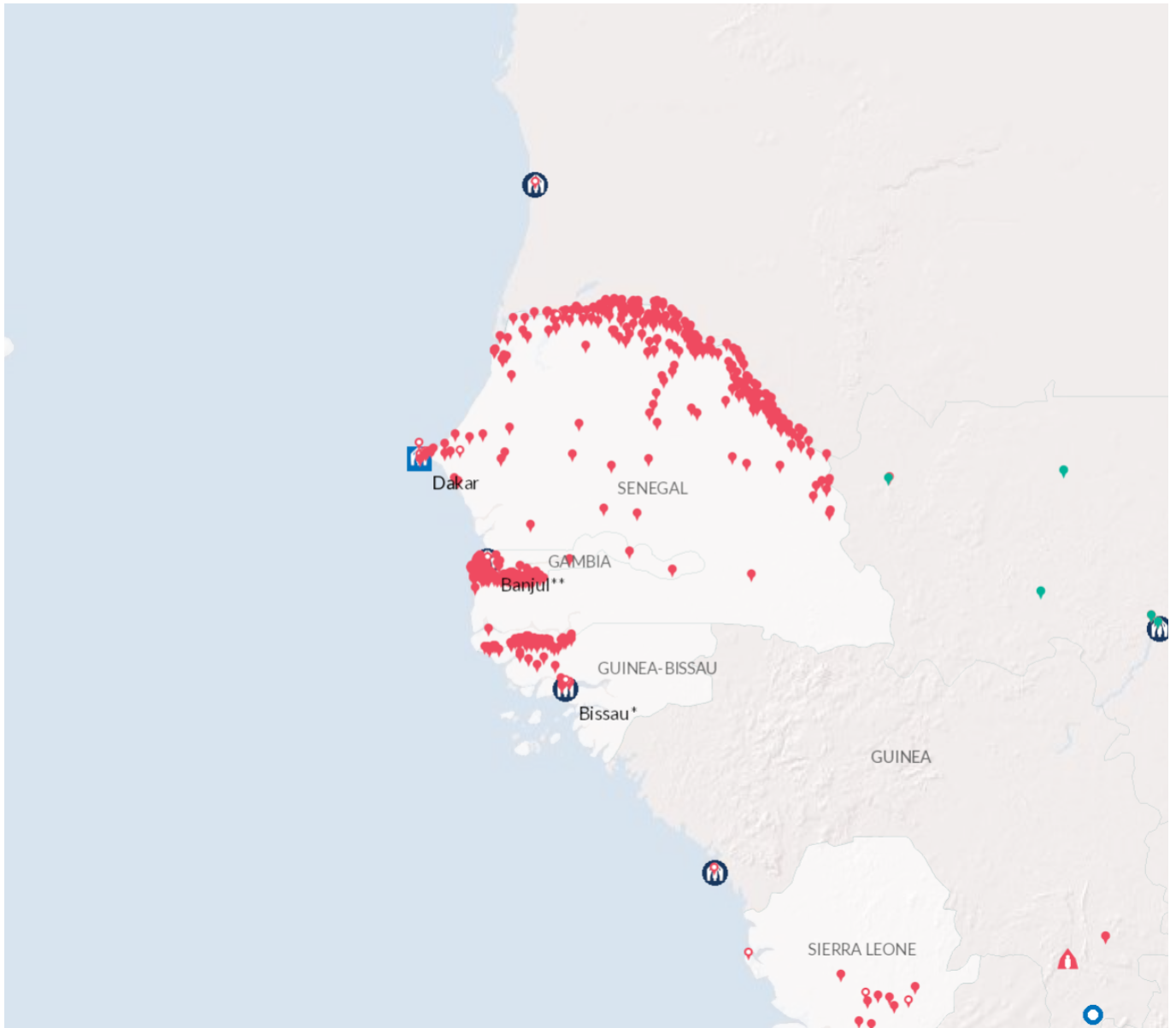




Operation: Senegal Multi-Country Office

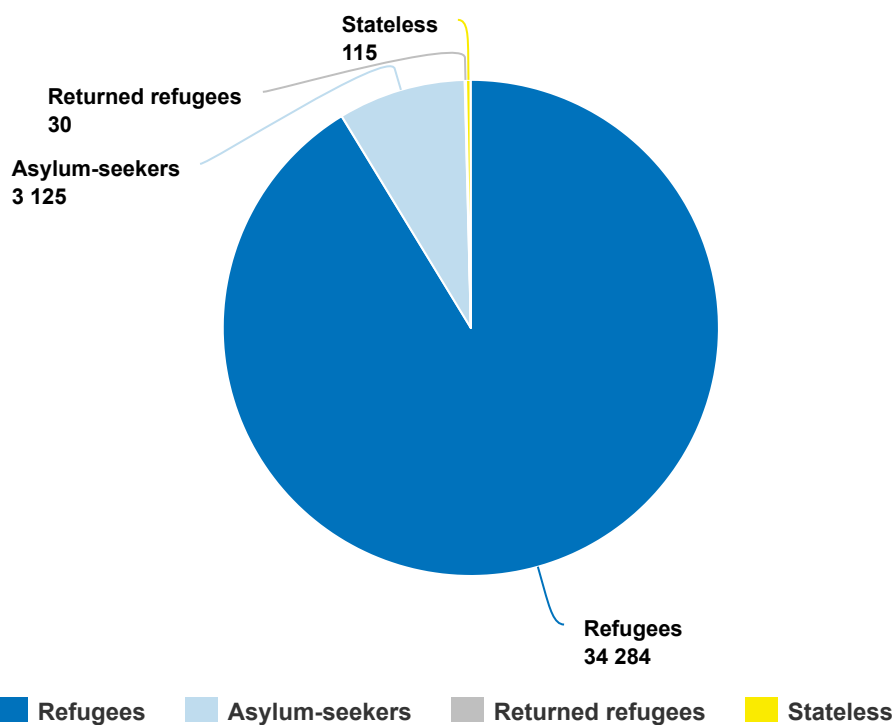


The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

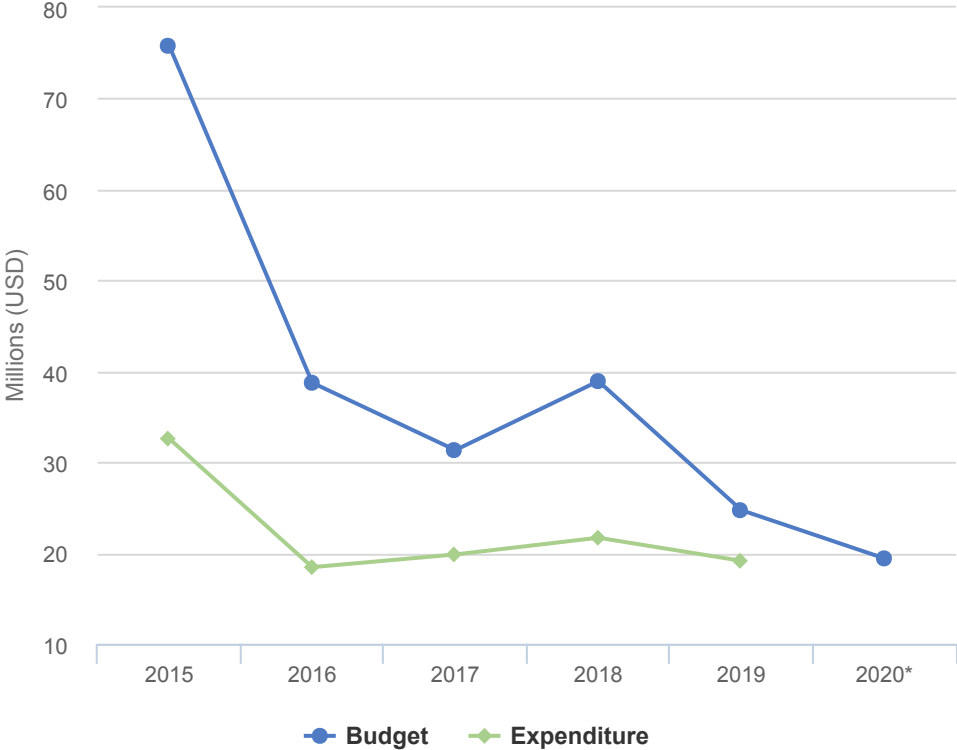
People of Concern

DECREASE IN
7% 2019

2019	37,554
2018	40,565
2017	52,639



Budgets and Expenditure for Senegal Multi-Country Office



Operational context

Situations of insecurity and violence within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) area continued to affect countries across the region, especially those with weaker economies, which in 2019 raised concerns relating to their capacity to respond in case of large-scale refugee arrivals. With some countries preparing for elections in 2019, political uncertainties persisted. In Togo, constitutional changes allowing the President to seek re-election and potentially stay in office until 2030 resulted in large protests throughout the country. Likewise, in Guinea Conakry, during the last months of 2019, 100 to 130 victims were recorded from post-election violence, in reaction to a bid by the President to amend the constitution to permit him to run for a third term.

The fragile political environment hindered access to asylum, with security and border controls tightened across the region. Asylum-seekers had limited access to information about refugee status determination (RSD) procedures, and legal counselling and psychosocial assistance was only available in a few countries, such as Benin and the Gambia. The reception capacity of national institutions remained limited and even countries with very few arrivals did not have systems in place to meet minimum standards.

During 2019, UNHCR's regional approach focused on comprehensive durable solutions strategies across the seven countries, with strategies developed for the main caseloads. While all durable solutions were pursued, local integration remained the preferred solution for the vast majority of the protracted caseloads. National protection frameworks for refugees were generally favourable in operations under the responsibility of the multi-country office, however individual determination procedures remained in need of strengthening. Enhancing refugee self-reliance, an asylum framework was adopted in Senegal; while a concept note defining the steps of the reform of the asylum framework in Niger was drafted by UNHCR jointly with the authorities and technical organs – this would ensure that refugees have a access to legal employment, national education systems, health services, legal assistance and other related services. Ghana will facilitate local integration of 13,000 refugees and asylum-seekers (in the entire caseload in the country). Negotiations were underway for a memorandum of understanding between the Government of Ghana and UNHCR to operationalize the issuance of the “Ghana Card” to refugees and asylum-seekers.

Population trends

In the West Africa region, more than 39,200 individuals were granted refugee status (99% through prima facie recognition) in 2019, and less than 200 applications were rejected.

By the end of 2019, assistance was provided to a total of 44,400 people of concern including some 39,200 refugees and 5,100 asylum-seekers (Benin: 1,600; the Gambia: 4,500; Guinea: 7,000; Guinea Bissau: 1,900; Senegal: 16,300; Sierra Leone: 400 and Togo: 12,700).

More than 4,000 people of concern across the region were assisted to return to their countries of origin.

In the majority of countries in the region, refugees and asylum-seekers lived together with host communities in urban and rural areas, with the exception of Guinea and Togo where they were settled in camps. During the period under review, 1,930 cases (4,130 people) were submitted for resettlement or complementary pathways

Achievements

- Progress was made in refugee status determination in countries such as the Gambia, Ghana, and Togo, with a total of 2,800 Ivoirians and 150 asylum-seekers of other nationalities (mostly from the Central African Republic (CAR)) being granted refugee status.
- UNHCR supported access to education in Senegal, including more than 200 children in primary school, nearly 100 in secondary school, 60 in vocational training, 7 in higher education institutions, and 19 who

became DAFI scholars.

- UNHCR supported the efforts of the Government to issue over 1,500 identification cards to refugees and 80 birth certificates to refugee children born in the Gambia.
- Pledges with strong links to Global Compact on Refugees objectives (e.g. support for local integration, refugee status determination, and enhancing refugee self-reliance) were made by governments in the region.

Unmet needs

The dependence on external funding for RSD systems in many countries in the region (the financing of RSD systems was generally not included in national budgets) led to limited capacity of national institutions responsible for individual RSD procedures.

Other challenges included limited expertise of first and second instance bodies, as well as frequent turnover of government staff, hindering capacity-building efforts and creating important gaps at all stages of the asylum process. Procedural bottlenecks, weaknesses in institutional set-up and case-management that was not in accordance with standard operating procedures, as well as lengthy and overloaded procedures, led to backlogs. UNHCR encouraged the establishment of independent committees, especially in Senegal where there was no appeal committee, as well as in Togo, Sierra Leone and the Gambia where second instance committees were not yet functional.

With the operation funded at 49% by the end of 2019, budgetary constraints limited the capacity to undertake certain planned activities, for example:

- In the Gambia, only three schools out of ten that requested support were assisted. Lack of funding also limited the participation of large numbers of refugees, school authorities and hosts in sensitization activities.
 - In Guinea, the lack of funding impacted the amount of income-generating activities implemented, one of the primary protection mechanisms for vulnerable refugees.
 - In Guinea Bissau, some 1,800 naturalized refugees were not issued identification cards due to limited funding to support the documentation process.
 - In Senegal, limited support to the national commission of eligibility resulted in an increase in the backlog of asylum cases.
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