



MALI SITUATION

UNHCR REGIONAL UPDATE

December 2016 – February 2017

KEY FIGURES

141,450

Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger

21,000

Total number of returned refugees in Mali in need of cash assistance

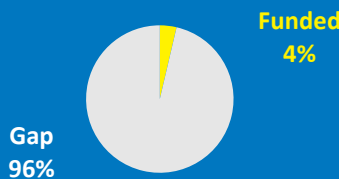
45,766

IDPs in Mali

FUNDING

USD 92.9 million

required by UNHCR for the situation in 2017



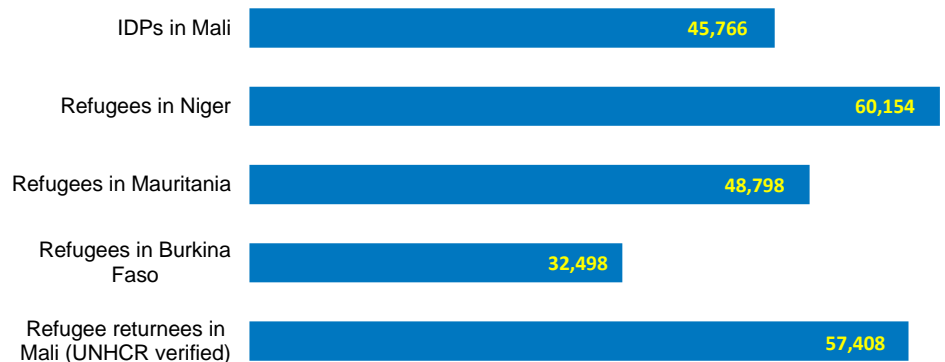
PRIORITIES

- Mali:** Undertake protection monitoring in the north and the centre; support vulnerable returnees with cash grants.
- Burkina Faso:** Support to refugees' self-reliance; reinforce peaceful coexistence; sustain refugees' access to national systems.
- Mauritania:** Provide assistance to new arrivals, support to refugees' self-reliance; promote peaceful coexistence.
- Niger:** Finalize the biometric registration of the entire Malian refugee population.

HIGHLIGHTS

- In **Mali**, UNHCR assisted the voluntary return of 247 refugees in the regions of Gao, Ménaka, Mopti and Timbuktu regions, despite the deterioration of the security situation in northern and central Mali.
- In **Burkina Faso**, in response to a lack of public lighting in both Goudoubo and Mentao refugee camps, UNHCR has installed solar energy to contribute to improving the safety of refugees, especially women and girls.
- In **Mauritania**, while refugees from Mali continued to arrive in Mbera refugee camp, with over 2,300 new arrivals between December 2016 and February 2017, monthly food rations for refugees continued to be cut due to reduced funding.
- In **Niger**, following the closure of the refugee hosting area of Tazalit in November 2016, UNHCR and authorities organized, in January 2017, the voluntary relocation of over 3,600 Malian refugees from Tazalit to the Intikane refugee hosting area.

244,624 persons of concern (as of 28 February, 2017)



Young Malian refugees prepare to depart from Tazalit to Intikane refugee hosting area in the Tahoua region, as part of a voluntary relocation process, January 2017 © UNHCR/Boubacar Sidlo

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Operational Context

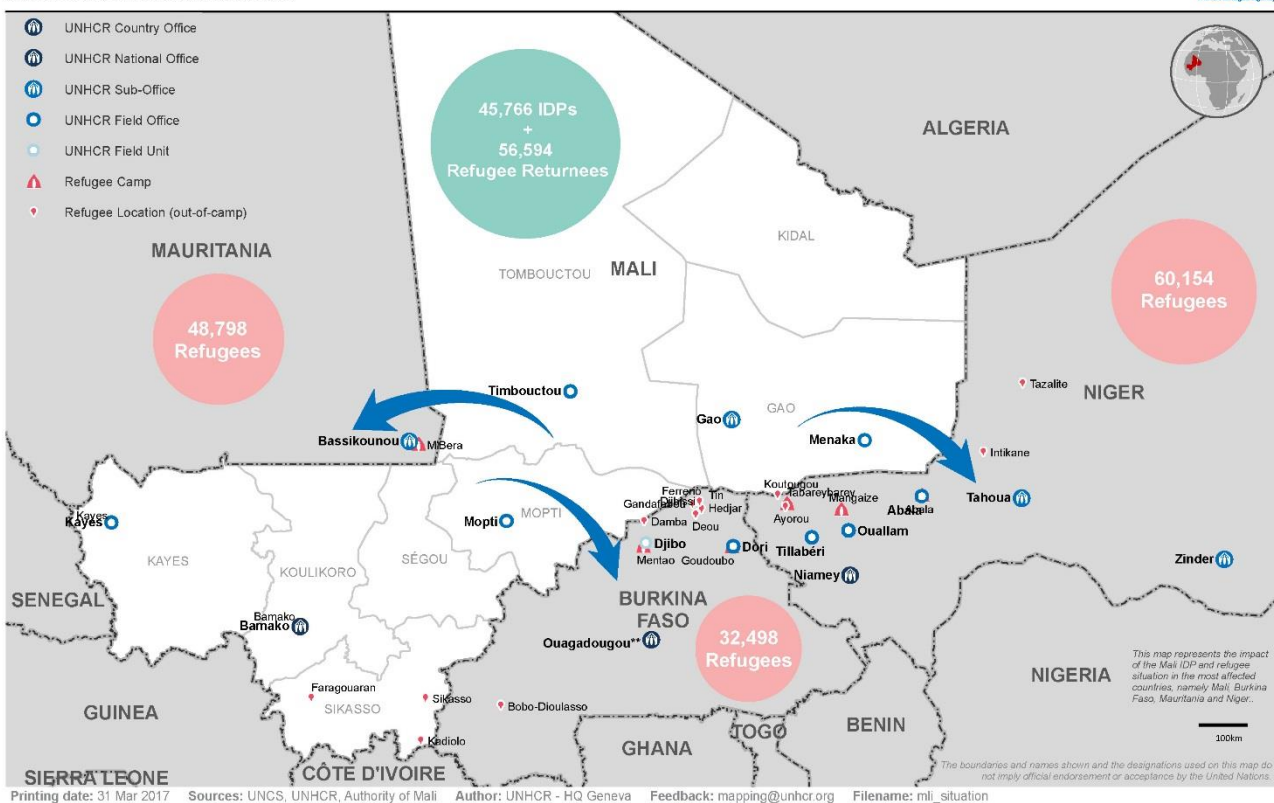
Mali

- In regions of northern and central Mali, UNHCR continues to operate in a persisting security vacuum with the threat of terrorism, criminality and intercommunity violence hindering humanitarian access as well as the reinforcement of a protective environment for civilians. Recent intercommunity violence in Mopti and Ségou regions alongside armed conflicts in Kidal, Ménaka and Mopti regions led to an increase in the number of internally displaced from approximately 36,700 in September to 45,800 in February.
- The implementation of the peace agreement suffered a significant setback when the mixed patrols in Gao were attacked on 18 January; the deadliest since the signing of the peace agreement, claiming 54 lives (including two civilians) and injuring over 100. Malian, French and MINUSMA forces, but also the signatory armed movements, State authorities and suspected informants continue to be the primary targets of this type of asymmetric and terrorist attacks. Equally concerning are the criminal attacks against national and international NGOs. On 28 December, three UNHCR staff members were victims of a carjacking whereby assailants stole a UNHCR armoured vehicle in the town of Timbuktu. The car has not yet been located.
- Due to the volatile security conditions in the north and centre, the conditions remain unfavourable for the large scale repatriation of Malian refugees in security and dignity. Nevertheless, an estimated 16,000 refugee returnees are expected to return in 2017. This would represent an increase from the 13,400 returned refugees that were identified and registered by government authorities in 2016, of which 7,600 were registered as arriving during the course of 2016.

Mali Situation

Refugees, IDPs and Returnees

as of 28 February 2017 (or latest figures available)



Sub-region

- As the number of Malian refugees residing in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger rose from some 136,000 in September to 141,400 in February, the border areas with Burkina Faso and Niger remain increasingly vulnerable to the threat of terrorism with many schools closed and a limited presence of security forces or local authorities. It has been noted an increasing erosion of the asylum space both in Niger and Burkina Faso. Malian refugees are being stigmatized on the grounds that they are in connivance with the terrorist groups. Both the governments in Niger and Burkina Faso insist on the relocation of

refugees from border areas to further inland. These developments pose a major operational challenge in relation to the relocation of cattle as well as the costs.

- In the north of Burkina Faso, where most of the majority of Malian refugees are settled, increased insecurity has been evidenced by several attacks carried out against Burkinabe Defence and Security Forces. The most deadly of these occurred on December 16, 2016, killing 12 Burkinabe soldiers. Refugees, especially those settled outside camps, are increasingly stigmatized and associated with the deteriorating security conditions.
- In Niger, the security situation has continued to deteriorate considerably in the northern band of the Tillabery region and in the Tahoua region, where lethal attacks linked in particular to the Movement for the Unity and Jihad in West Africa regularly target army posts and refugee camps. On 22 February, a serious attack was carried out in the region of Tillabery, resulting in the deaths of 16 military personnel. Following the attack the Government of Niger declared a state of Emergency on 3 March in several Departments in the regions of Tahoua and Tillabery. The Nigerien security and defence forces have withdrawn from refugee hosting areas in Tahoua region as well as camps in the Tillabery region, and are instead carrying out regular patrols. This decreased military presence amid increasing insecurity leaves refugees vulnerable.

Country Updates

MALI

- As part of protection monitoring activities, UNHCR's partner, *Association Malienne pour la Survie du Sahel* (AMSS), identified 77 protection-related incidents between December and February in the regions of Gao, Mopti, Menaka and Timbuktu with extortion representing the majority of incidents. Other incidents were linked to injuries, death threats, looting, and sexual violence. Since the implementation of the protection monitoring programme in June 2016, 700 incidents have been reported and are being shared with Protection Cluster members for further response. In 2017, there are 48 protection monitors deployed throughout the regions of Gao, Mopti, Menaka and Timbuktu.
- To improve hygiene and access to potable water in school environments, UNHCR, through its partner *Croix-Rouge Luxembourgeoise*, installed five boreholes with solar pumps and six hand washing stations in the communes of Timbuktu, Haribomo, Tonka, Douékirié and Kaneye. In addition, sensitization sessions on health and hygiene practices as well as on social cohesion were held in Mopti region, reaching close to 200 persons including refugee returnees and local communities.
- UNHCR is supporting refugee returnees and host community members in the north of Mali with assistance and income-generating activities to promote a smooth reintegration and peaceful coexistence in their host communities. In Timbuktu region, the women's association of returned refugees in Alamanfoua received a CFA 600 000 entrepreneurial grant – equivalent to USD 1,000 – that will be distributed as small micro-loans to several entrepreneurs to boost their income-generating activities. In Menaka region, UNHCR and its partner ACTED selected 20 young refugee returnees primarily returning from Niger to participate in ACTED's pilot project to support their professional training in the areas of auto mechanics, electrical work, tailoring and catering. Upon completion of their three month training, each returnee will receive starter kits valued at approximately USD 400 to pursue their entrepreneurial activities.

Working in partnership

The Protection Cluster in Bamako, Gao, Menaka, Timbuktu and Mopti is actively supporting partners to coordinate and implement protection activities in the areas of protection of civilians, statelessness, anti-land mines, child protection, sexual and gender-based violence, social cohesion and civil-military coordination. On 8 and 9 February, a national workshop on the revision of the protection cluster strategy was held in Bamako. Following the intercommunity violence in the districts of Macina, Tenenkou and Niono in the regions of Ségou and Mopti, the Protection Cluster advocated for a better protection environment and coordination by authorities. Furthermore, cluster members have been actively engaged in providing protection and assistance in terms of non-food items, water, and health care to those affected by the conflicts. Furthermore, UNHCR participated in high-level meetings with a delegation of the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) between 13 to 20 February to discuss ways of improving efficiency in the humanitarian response in Mali. Topics covered included leadership, coordination, access and accountability to affected populations, protection and the humanitarian-development nexus.

BURKINA FASO

- To ensure the protection of refugees amidst the volatile security context in the north of the country, UNHCR strongly advocated to the government for the extension of the validity of refugee attestation, expired in December 2016, until the end of 2017. At the same time, 385 newly arrived individuals were registered in Goudoubo camp.
- Due to constant funding constraints, WFP and UNHCR have started moving towards targeted assistance based on vulnerability. A joint WFP/UNHCR committee has defined the targeting criteria based on the results of the food security assessment and socio-economic survey respectively conducted by WFP and UNHCR. In the meantime, WFP and other

partners have compensated for the missing components of the food basket by distributing the equivalent cash value to refugees.

- Through its partner HELP, UNHCR contracted a local gas distributor to distribute fuel to refugee households with a voucher system. When the project started as a pilot in April 2016, 70 gas bottles were distributed. Following the scale-up phase, 1,300 bottles were distributed (covering 22 per cent of total refugee households) between November and December 2016. While gas significantly reduced the use of firewood by refugees, thus avoiding deforestation in an already arid and desert region, 78 per cent of households' need remain unmet because of funding constraints.
- Malian refugee artisans supported by UNHCR and [Afrika Tiss](#) have gained access to international markets thanks to the quality and the competitive design of their products. UNHCR provided additional training on financial management and pleaded with local financial and savings institutions to accept refugees' attestations as valid identity documentation to open their bank accounts.

MAURITANIA

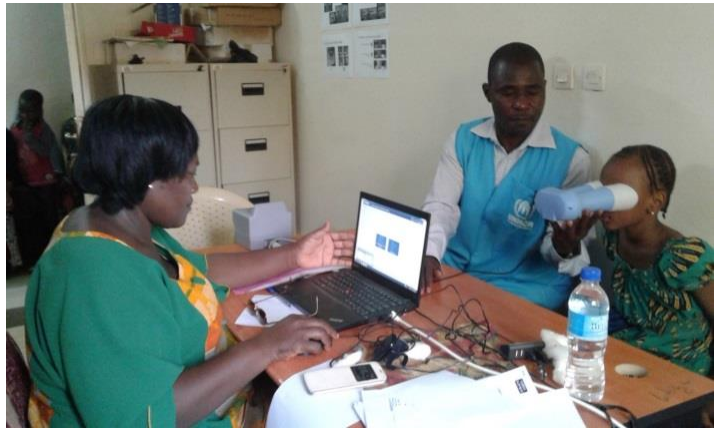
- The wave of new arrivals remains constant with over 2,300 arriving refugees between December and February – a slight decrease from the previous period (September to November) which saw over 3,800 people crossing the Mali-Mauritania border into Mbera camp. The registration of refugees continues, along with provision of emergency assistance, notably food, shelter and basic items. Arriving families are fleeing insecurity, mainly from Timbuktu, Gundam, Mopti and Segou.
- Twelve additional talented refugee students were selected to receive the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund (DAFI) scholarship, to attend university in Nouakchott. These students will join the other five students selected during the last quarter of 2016.
- On 28 February, Mauritania hosted the [second meeting](#) of the Mali-Mauritania-UNHCR Tripartite Commission for the safe repatriation of Malian refugees. The Tripartite Commission serves as a platform for discussion to ensure safe conditions of return for refugees and safe conditions of asylum while in the host country. The meeting was concluded with the adoption of a common action plan for the implementation of the Tripartite Agreement and a joint [press release](#).
- Monthly food rations provided by WFP were affected by funding constraints and consequent food shortages. In December, refugees received food rations representing 66 per cent of the standard nutritional value. In January and February, the cash assistance distributed to refugees in tandem with food assistance was reduced in light of WFP's funding outlook for 2017, which is expected to be significantly restricted, with ration cuts and pipeline breaks. Increased numbers of arrivals have not been met with additional funding and thus food assistance rations have fluctuated between 60 per cent and 90 per cent of the planned ration (2,100 kcal per day). Due to significant gaps in funding, there is very little food or cash resources available for 2017.
- For the cool and dry period that normally spans from December to March, clothes were distributed to all refugees in Mbera camp (over 48,700 people) in December. Each refugee received a set of 6 pieces of clothing donated by the Japanese clothing company UNIQLO. In addition, all refugees in Mbera camp received two bars of soap during a general distribution in February. UNHCR and its partners continued to carry out mass sensitization activities to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases. More than 20,000 people were reached by sensitization activities such as door-to-door informative meetings, community meetings and discussions as well as clean-up campaigns and jerry can cleaning sessions.
- UNHCR's partner *Action Contre la Faim*-Spain (ACF-S) continued the monitoring of the 200 income-generating activities (IGA) launched at the end of 2016. During the period, starter kits were distributed to 212 youth previously involved in technical and professional trainings in the camp. The kits were provided for mechanics, needlework, welding, restaurants, carpentry and electricity. A training in management was also organised for 100 IGA assets managers. Since 2013, UNHCR carries out a self-reliance strengthening programme to reduce refugees' dependency on humanitarian assistance in Mbera camp.
- The Mauritania Football Federation, with the support of the International Football Federation Association (FIFA), held a training session in Mbera camp in January with the support of UNHCR. Hundreds of children from Mbera camp and Bassikounou participated in a professional soccer practice.



The Mali-Mauritania-UNHCR Tripartite Commission on the safe repatriation of Malian refugees meets for the second time in Nouakchott on 28 February 2017 after the conclusion of a tripartite agreement in June 2016 © UNHCR/Helena Pes

NIGER

- The biometric registration was initiated in the hosting area of Intikane in January to verify the identities of refugees and provide them with biometric identity cards, a crucial protection tool aimed at improving the provision of assistance. More than 16,000 refugees will be registered throughout the process, which will be conducted in the refugee camp of Abala in March 2017.
- Some 3,600 Malian refugees have been voluntarily relocated from Tazalit to Intikane in the month of January. While UNHCR insists that any relocation process is voluntary, in adherence with international protection principles, those who choose to remain in Tazalit are no longer assured assistance. Mass sensitization was carried out at both refugee hosting areas to inform the populations about the relocation process, thus allowing them to make fully informed decisions.



Young Malian refugee girl in the Guichet Unique of Niamey during the biometric registration process. © UNHCR/Boubacar Siddo

- As part of the overall UNHCR effort to strengthen the resilience of the Malian refugee population and ensure their self-reliance, 60 youth Malian refugees in the camps of Mangaize, Tabareybarey, and Abala received livelihoods training in animal fattening and breeding techniques. In addition, assistance was provided for the transportation of over 550 small livestock, which are an essential component of the livelihoods capacities of the majority nomadic pastoral refugees in the refugee hosting area. Preparatory measures were put in place in the refugee hosting area of Intikane for the reception of the new refugees, including emergency shelters, showers, and latrines.
- UNHCR carried out a training session for refugees in the camp of Mangaize on the use of gas and the prevention of fires. Distributions of gas by the NGO ACTED in Mangaize camp began in January 2017. Following the gas distributions in Mangaize, all Malian refugees will have access to gas for domestic energy.
- UNHCR and partners finalized the construction of a solar energy system in the village of Eukinawane, close to the refugee hosting area of Intikane. The solar energy being produced through the [solar energy initiative](#) is used for the provision of drinkable water for over 20,000 refugees and host populations in the semi-desert area.



Solar energy system in Eukinawane for the provision of drinking water. The system serves populations in the refugee hosting area of Intikane, as well as the local population. © UNHCR/Boubacar Siddo

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 92.9 million from January to December 2017**. As of 21 February 2017, **the overall funding gap is USD 89.6 million**.

Donors:

IKEA Foundation
Italy
UN Peacebuilding Fund
TOMS Shoes

Funding:

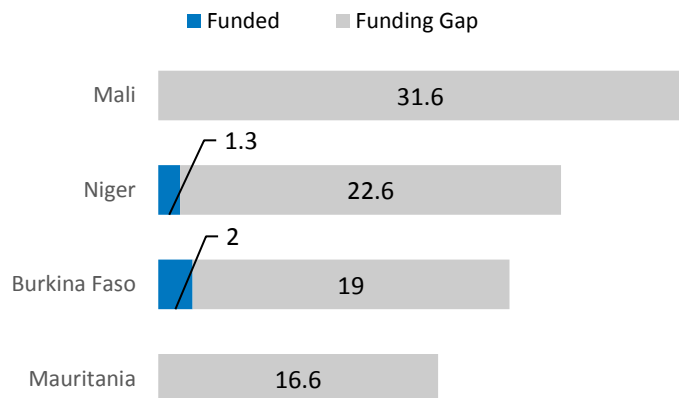
A total of **USD 3.4 million** has been contributed

Consequences of underfunding

As a result of underfunding, the number of protection monitoring agents in *Mali* was reduced from 120 in 2016 to 48 in early 2017. Approximately 68 per cent of refugee returnees have not received cash grant assistance and 80 per cent are not covered by community empowerment and income generating activities. In addition, nearly 85 per cent of shelter needs remain unmet while interventions to support access to potable water remain limited to only several villages in key zones of return.

In *Mauritania*, it is estimated that an additional 4,500 shelters, having passed their three-year lifespan, need to be replaced, while 400 newly arrived families in Mbera camp are in need of shelter. Also, about 50 per cent of latrines in Mbera camp reached their maximum storage capacity in 2016 and harsh climate conditions such as strong winds continue to further deteriorate all facilities in the camp. UNHCR lacks the financial resources to face these challenges. As the situation in northern Mali continues to trigger refugee outflows into Mauritania, additional donor contributions are required to meet unforeseen shelter and sanitation needs.

In the region, food distributions for refugees have been affected by ration cuts. There is growing concern regarding the food security of Malians particularly in Mauritania and Burkina Faso. Food assistance is being cut in contexts where the food security and nutrition situation is often precarious. There are many factors to consider when reviewing the impact of the food cuts and decreasing availability of food at the household level. Protection, food security, livelihoods and nutrition are all impacted with a decrease in available food at the household level. Impact on nutritional status of children is often not visible immediately as households aim to provide food for children at all costs. Changes in behaviour of household members are often the most immediate impact. These changes include notably decreasing amount and quality of food available per meal; skipping meals; the sale of assets; pulling children out of school.



Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds

Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Norway (41 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Australia (19 M) | Switzerland (15 M)

Thanks to other donors of unrestricted and regional funds

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