

Mali Situation

March-May 2017

Mounting security challenges in Mali continue to create immense difficulties for sustaining a strong protection environment. The possibilities of large-scale voluntary repatriation remain low despite the refugee return movements that have been occurring in smaller numbers. Nevertheless, there have been significant efforts in improving the conditions of refugee in neighboring countries. With dwindling resources and the potential for prolonged exile, UNHCR aims to ensure a comprehensive response to Malian refugees that fosters greater inclusion in communities and local basic services, while enhancing refugees' self-reliance and improving opportunities for long-term solutions for displaced families.

KEY INDICATORS

139,597

Malian refugees in the sub-region (as of 30 June 2017)

58,315

Refugee returnees to Mali (as of 30 April 2017) – source:

Government of Mali

51,961

IDPs in Mali (as of 31 May 2017) – source: *Commission*

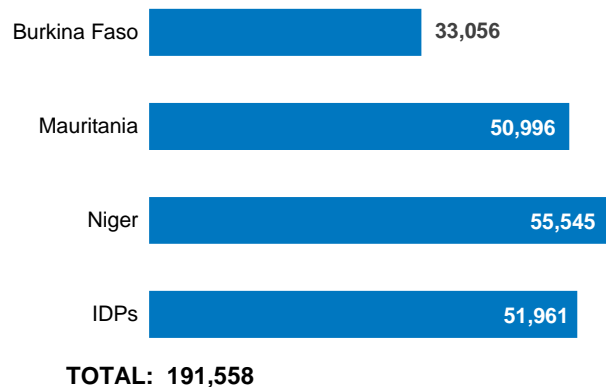
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HIGHLIGHTS

- Between March and May, over 1,100 Malian refugees were supported to voluntary return to Mali. 369 returnees also received cash grants to assist in reintegration.
- Financial training for Malians was carried out in Burkina Faso to strengthen ties between refugee and local communities. The Government authorized refugees to be integrated into public health centers, though additional investments are required for this transition.
- 76 refugee families living in Mauritania were repatriated back to Mali. UNHCR's sensitization campaigns improved health and sanitation practices in Mbera camp.
- Biometric identity cards have been issued for Malians in Niger. These cards are a critical protection tool. There was much progress on the creation of sustainable housing and children's vaccination.

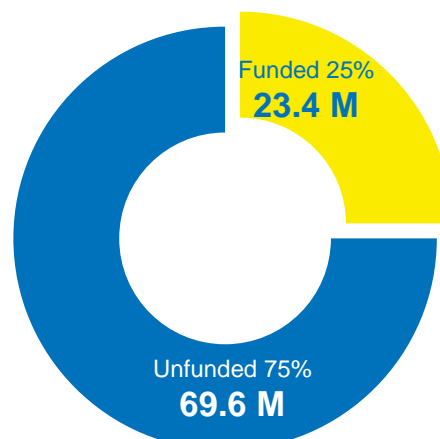
POPULATION OF CONCERN

Countries



FUNDING

USD 93.0 M requested for the Mali Situation



Operational Context

- UNHCR operates in a **highly complex and constantly evolving security and political environment in Mali**. The security vacuum and absence of State authorities have fuelled a rise in criminality and intercommunity tensions in northern and central Mali, hindering humanitarian access. In addition, despite of notable progress observed in the implementation of the peace agreement (mixed patrols created in Gao, interim authorities installed in some regions, *Conference d'Entente Nationale* held between 27 March to 2 April¹), the proliferation of extremist groups has **significantly jeopardized the protection environment for civilians**. The creation of a the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (JNIM), an alliance of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI) in the Sahel, Al Mourabitoune, Macina Liberation Front and Ansar Dine, poses a serious challenge to the peace process.
- **Criminal attacks against UNHCR and humanitarian organisations** remain a major concern. Two UNHCR light vehicles assigned to an Implementing Partner were stolen on 28 April 2017 in Niger, close to the border with Burkina Faso. UNHCR has lost a total of four cars in the region following the theft of two UNHCR vehicles earlier in April in Mali. This raises concerns about armed elements in the region specifically targeting UNHCR and NGO vehicles for carjacking.
- The **worsening security situation in Mali has had a severe impact on regional stability**. In the north of **Burkina Faso**, where the majority of Malian refugees are settled, the security situation remains highly volatile. In the last months, several cases of kidnapping and assassination of civilians as well as hijacking of vehicles have taken place. In **Niger**, the Government declared a State of Emergency in March 2017 in several departments in the regions of Tillabery and Tahoua, two regions bordering Mali and hosting over 55,000 Malian refugees. Security measures include restrictions on the use of motorbikes, trade, and the closure of several important markets. Refugees, especially those settled outside camps, are increasingly stigmatized and associated with the deteriorating security conditions. To date, these have not affected humanitarian access to the refugee population. However, military escorts are required for all missions.
- This context has contributed to an **increasing erosion of the asylum space in Niger and Burkina Faso** and raises new protection concerns, including challenges to the civilian character of refugee hosting areas. Malian refugees are being increasingly stigmatized and associated with the deteriorating security conditions. Military operations are expected to increase in the coming period, and there is a need to ensure that security measures do not undermine access to asylum and respect for the fundamental rights of refugees.
- **Conditions remain unfavourable for the large-scale voluntary repatriation** of Malian refugees in security and dignity. Nevertheless, an estimated 16,000 refugees 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. A total of 3,311 refugee returnees have been registered between January and April 2017.
- In May, UNHCR **organised a regional coordination meeting in Niamey** in order to re-define the Regional Strategy for the Mali Situation, with the participation of the UNHCR offices in Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, as well as the Geneva-based Regional Bureau and Dakar Regional Office.

¹ The Operational Mechanisms for Coordination (MOC) consisting of mixed patrols in Gao remains operational and interim authorities have been installed in five regions including Gao, Kidal, Menaka, Timbuktu and Taodenni. A key milestone was marked with the Conference d'Entente Nationale held between 27 March to 2 April with 300 representatives from the region and diaspora. The outcomes of this meeting will serve as the base for a future charter on national reconciliation

Country Updates

Mali

- The 5th meeting of the Tripartite Commission between the Government of Mali, Government of Burkina Faso, and UNHCR was held on 13 April in Bamako on coordination and efforts in favour of the voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees living in Burkina Faso. UNHCR continues to harmonize statistics, raise awareness about registration points and conditions for civil registration to candidates in Mali. During the reporting period, 1,130 Malian refugees received facilitation assistance for their voluntary repatriation to Mali. Some 832 Malian refugees arrived from the Abala Camp in Niger and returned primarily to the communes of Menaka and Anderamboukane while 298 Malian refugees arrived from Mauritania and returned primarily to the communes of Timbuktu and Ber.
- As part of protection monitoring activities, UNHCR's partner, *Association Malienne pour la Survie du Sahel* (AMSS), identified 233 protection-related incidents between March and May in the regions of Gao, Kidal, Mopti, Menaka, and Timbuktu. The majority of incidents were linked to the extortion, early and forced marriage, injuries, robberies and death threats. Since the implementation of the protection monitoring programme in June 2016, 933 incidents were reported and are being shared with Protection Cluster members for further response. There are currently 48 protection monitors deployed throughout the regions of Gao, Kidal, Mopti, Menaka and Timbuktu.
- To strengthen the protection environment for persons of concern, UNHCR, through its partner *Association Malienne pour la Survie du Sahel* (AMSS), carried out 87 sensitization sessions on the prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the regions of Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu. The sessions reached over 2,074 persons, including refugee returnees and local communities. In addition, some 52 sensitization sessions on social cohesion were carried out in the regions of Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu, reaching an estimated 1,561 persons including refugee returnees and local communities. These sessions aim to strengthen tolerance and peaceful coexistence between different communities in the zones of return.

Working in partnership

The Protection Cluster in Bamako, Gao, Menaka, Timbuktu, and Mopti has been 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. In March, a new strategy for the Protection Cluster in Mali was finalized with five key objectives: 1) ensuring adequate analysis of the protection situation of affected populations and strengthening the capacities of protection actors; 2) strengthening the prevention and responses to persons affected by the crisis in Mali; 3) strengthening the prevention and response to SGBV survivors through adequate implementation of a strategy for referrals; 4) strengthening the prevention and response in favour of children that are victims of the conflict and have suffered human rights violations; and 5) strengthening the understanding and implementation of protection mainstreaming by all actors in humanitarian interventions.

In April, representatives from the Protection Cluster, authorities from the Malian government and civil society groups participated in a Train the Trainer workshop organized by UNHCR and the *Organisation Internationale de Droit du Développement (IDLO)* to familiarize future trainers on relevant tools and information to support the elaboration of laws and policies related to internal displacement.

As lead of the Shelter Cluster, UNHCR continues to coordinate with partners to provide shelter and NFI assistance to vulnerable households affected by the crisis in Northern Mali. Following a joint evaluation mission by Shelter cluster members in the region of Timbuktu, 914 households in the commune of Haribomo received NFI kits to support urgent needs in March.

- UNHCR, through its partner Mercy Corps, distributed cash grants to 369 refugee returnees (145 adults and 224 children) in the regions of Gao, Menaka, Mopti, and Timbuktu to support their basic needs to reintegrate smoothly in their local communities.

Burkina Faso

- Due to the degradation of the security situation in central Mali, new arrivals were registered in March 2017 in Mentao Camp located in northern Burkina Faso. Furthermore, several Malian families who arrived unexpectedly in Dibissi and Tin Hidjar were relocated to Goudoubo Camp. With support from NGO partner African Initiatives for Relief and Development (AIRD), emergency shelters were provided to 80 families in Goudoubo and 37 families in Mentao refugee camps.
- The volatile security situation in northern Burkina Faso, where more than 90 per cent of Malian refugees in Burkina Faso reside, has jeopardized ongoing protection and assistance activities. Schools in Mentao Camp were closed after the assassination of a school teacher in Djibo. Though they reopened a few weeks later, some 5,000 Burkinabe children in the region did not resume educational activities. In addition, protection risks with regards to the refugee population have become increasingly apparent. To ensure the protection of refugees hosted in and out of camps, UNHCR has maintained an open dialogue with the government and its governmental counterpart, CONAREF. Informational and awareness raising meetings have been held with refugees with regards to the security measures announced by authorities, such as the implementation of curfews in certain areas and the prohibition of commuting between Mali and Burkina Faso. Trainings have been organized for the security and defence forces in several localities in the Oudalan and Soum Provinces, focusing on international refugee protection and respect for the civilian and humanitarian character of the refugee camps. Messages of peace and tolerance were also disseminated by traditional and religious leaders in Djibo during the month of May.
- UNHCR provided additional training on financial management, reaching a total number of 165 beneficiary families. This project, involving both refugee and local populations, has contributed to strengthening socio-economic ties between them. Milk distribution is now taking place three times a week in all school canteens in both camps, to the benefit of 1,083 vulnerable children under five years of age. These sessions are combined with weekly awareness trainings on nutrition for infants and small children.
- Burkina Faso's Minister of Health authorized the transition of health centres established in camps, so that refugees can be taken care in public health centres managed by health authorities. An evaluation mission was conducted in March 2017, aiming to identify the gaps for that transition. This mission noted that additional investments are needed for the improvement of existing buildings, and the construction of new infrastructure.
- Preparations are ongoing to launch the Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) Operation. A first awareness campaign was launched in Mentao Camp on 30 May by partner organization Tin-Hanane.

Mauritania

- The steam of new arrivals from Mali has remained constant, with over 1,600 refugee arrivals between March and May – a slight decrease from the previous period (December 2016 – February 2017) which saw over 2,300 people crossing the Mali-Mauritania border into Mbera camp. Registration of refugees continues, along with the provision of emergency assistance. A total of 478 shelter kits were distributed to newly arrived families in the current period. Families arriving are fleeing insecurity, mainly from Timbuktu, Gundam, Tenenkou, Niono, Mopti, and Segou.

- In a joint press release issued in May, UNHCR, WFP and IOM highlighted the critical funding situation of humanitarian programmes targeting vulnerable populations in Mauritania. The UN agencies stressed the needs to protect Malian refugees and to support vulnerable local communities in the country's semi-arid south-eastern region of Hodh ech Chargui. Due to funding shortfalls to WFP budget, refugees in Mbera camp received a reduced food baskets during the reporting period.
- Between March and May 2017, UNHCR assisted 76 Malian families to repatriate to Timbuktu. These departures are the first requests of voluntary repatriation facilitated in 2017.



Hand washing sensitization is key to preventing the spread of water-borne diseases in Mbera camp, Mauritania © ACF-E/ Mamoudou Lamine Kane

- As part of peaceful coexistence activities targeting host populations, UNHCR provided \$28,000 worth medications to the health center in Bassikounou located close to Mbera Camp in April 2017. UNHCR and its partners continued to sensitize both refugee communities and their host populations in the surroundings of Mbera Camp regarding sustainable use of shared natural resources and conflict prevention. In particular, a mass-sensitisation campaign on peaceful coexistence was organized in April 2017 to sensitize families in Mbera Camp and in surrounding host communities about the use of water points for livestock.
- UNHCR with its partner *Acción Contra el Hambre – España* (ACF-E) continued to ensure that all refugees in the camp have access to clean water and sanitation facilities. In April and May 2017, 297 new latrines were constructed in Mbera Camp. Despite efforts to replace and construct new toilet facilities, UNHCR lacks sufficient resources to build permanent latrines. Harsh climate conditions, such as strong winds, contribute to the fast deterioration of facilities in the camp. Sensitisation campaigns in hygiene and sanitation to prevent the spread waterborne diseases in Mbera camp reached some 15,000 beneficiaries.



Azara and Galiou – Two Malian handicraft workers in Niger who travelled on a cross-border mission to Burkina Faso with UNHCR to share lessons learned on production and sale of products, with fellow Malian refugees in Burkina Faso © UNHCR / Boubacar Sidde

Niger

- At the end of April, UNHCR Niger undertook a cross border mission from Niger to Burkina Faso. The mission, which included UNHCR staff as well as a group of nine Malian artisan refugees living in the camps and refugee hosting area. The aim of the mission was for Malian refugees to engage in knowledge sharing pertaining to the production and sale of artisanal products with their fellow refugees in Burkina Faso. UNHCR is using the lessons learned as a basis to plan for livelihood support activities in Niger. Following the cross border mission, Niamey's annual Artisanal Market was held in the city in May 2017. The same refugees, plus several others, were invited to participate and showcase their goods.
- A joint training workshop was held in May 2017 with the Regional Directorate for Civil Status, Migration and Refugees in Abala, aiming to improve peaceful coexistence between host and refugee populations and reduce security risks. Refugees, host community, religious and traditional leaders, and security and defence forces all participated in the training. The focus was primarily on the rights and responsibilities of refugees, the civilian character of asylum, camp rules and regulations, and the rights and responsibilities of the various actors.
- UNHCR held a workshop on urbanization for Malian refugees and host population in Ayorou. The urbanization project, launched in 2016, provided 450 houses to refugees and vulnerable host families in Ayorou and for the population of the Tabareybarey refugee camp. The overall aim of the project is to transform the camps into sustainable settlements and provide adequate sustainable housing. The National and Regional authorities expressed full support for the project and for the closure of the camps and integration of the Malian refugee population.
- From February to April 2017, UNHCR completed a Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) registration and verification process in the refugee hosting area of Intikane, as well as the refugee camp of Abala. As this exercise was also completed for Malian urban refugees in Niamey in November 2016, over 35,200 Malian refugees have now been biometrically registered through the system, including 3,793 in Niamey, 18,270 in Intikane and 13,188 in Abala. All verified refugees over the age of 14 are issued with biometric identity cards – a critical protection tool – which are valid for three years.

- A partnership between UNHCR and the *Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi* (ANPE) is under discussion in the scope of helping support refugees seek job opportunities and training programs in professional skills. On the 24 March 2017, the Director of ANPE visited the 'One Stop Shop' (*Guichet Unique*) for urban refugees in Niamey to engage with refugee graduates, the President of the urban refugees, and UNHCR staff.
- 43 youth refugees in Mangaize refugee camp received financial assistance to boost their income generating activities, having completed practical training in the establishment of various small businesses between 2015 and 2016. This is part of an overall strategy to enhance livelihoods of Malian refugees, focusing on ensuring their self-reliance capacities and enabling them to integrate into the local communities.
- The research institute IFORD completed a broad socioeconomic survey with the Malian refugee population in the camps and refugee hosting areas. A baseline survey was completed in 2013 and similarly repeated in 2015. Key findings of the survey included lower rates of intercommunal conflict, higher rates of persons declaring and registering births, but also lower rates of children attending primary school and higher rates of persons using wood as a principle source of energy.
- Strengthening local service systems – in particular health, water provision and education – is a key component of UNHCR's strategy of integration of the Malian refugee population. For example, new solar panels were installed in May in the local health centre in Managize, where both the local population as well as refugees are cared for. Also, nearly 3,000 Malian refugee children living in the refugee hosting area of Intikane were vaccinated against polio as part of a national campaign conducted in April 2017.



A Malian family living in Mauritania is assisted with documentation in preparation of return to northern Mali ©UNHCR / Henri-Sylvain Yakara 18 April 2017

Financial Information

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 **Niger**, due to lack of funding and the urgency to prioritize the displaced population in the Diffa region (Nigerian refugees), populations living in Mangaize and Tabareybarey refugee camps have not been registration through the biometric system.

In northern **Burkina Faso**, as a result of a fire in Goudobou Camp burned down the local market, refugees lost their materials and sole source of revenue. Also, only 50 per cent of transitional shelters needs are covered. Furthermore, schools in camps were closed for several months due to underfunding.

In **Mauritania**, monthly food rations provided by WFP in Mbera camp were affected by funding constraints and consequent food shortages. Between March and May, refugees received food rations representing 50 percent of the standard nutritional value.

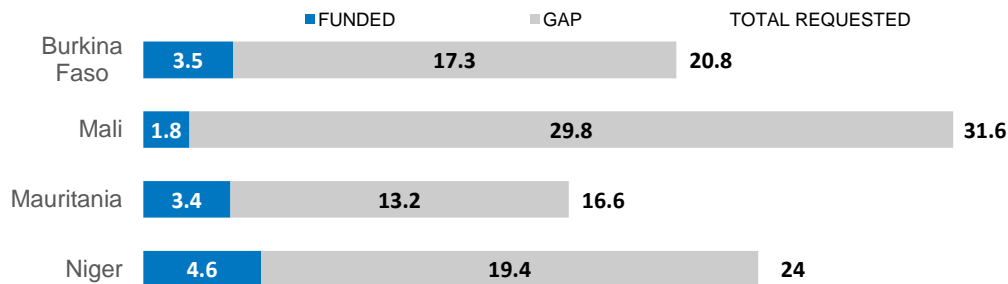
UNHCR is very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to their activities with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed directly to the operation.

Donors who have contributed to the operation:

- United States of America
- Japan
- Italy
- IKEA Foundation
- Germany
- Denmark
- France
- Priv Donors Australia
- CERF
- Spain
- UN Peacebuilding Fund
- TOMS Shoes

Funding (in million USD)

A total of **\$23.4 million** has been funded



Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2017

United States of America (95 M) | Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Norway (41 M) | Priv Donors Spain (29 M) | Japan (25 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Australia (19 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | France (14 M) | Germany (12 M) | Priv Donors Republic of Korea (12 M) | Italy (10 M)

Thanks to other donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2017

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LINKS

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Mali Situation

Refugees, IDPs and Returnees

as of 30 June 2017 or latest figures available

