

MALI SITUATION

UNHCR REGIONAL UPDATE

September – November 2016

KEY FIGURES

135,975

Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger

15,149

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

36,690

IDPs in Mali

FUNDING

USD 106.7 million

required by UNHCR for the situation in 2016



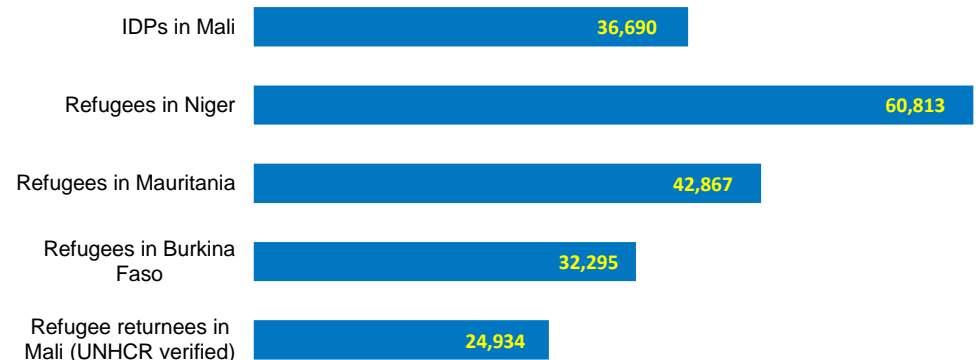
PRIORITIES

- **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 coexistence; maintain 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

- In **Mali**, whilst security incidents in the north and center continue expand, limiting the number of refugee returns from neighboring countries, Tripartite meetings are taking place with government counterparts to ensure the voluntariness of those who repatriate;
- In **Mauritania**, Mbera refugee camp witnessed a significant increase of new arrivals with over 3,800 people crossing the Mali-Mauritanian border between September and November compared to less than 150 registered new arrivals during the first quarter;
- In both refugee camps in **Burkina Faso**, UNHCR is improving the health centres to meet the national health regulations as a way to facilitate the integration of these facilities into the national health systems;
- In **Niger**, the Government announced on 28 November the closure of the 'refugee hosting area' of Tazalit, officially for security reasons, and its intention of relocating the 3,800 residing there to another location.

197,869 persons of concern (as of end of September, 2016)



A UNHCR staff member assists a group of Fula women and their children in Mbera camp, Mauritania, after they fled inter-ethnic clashes in the region of Mopti, northern Mali © UNHCR/H. Pes

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Operational Context

Mali

- UNHCR continues to operate in a volatile security environment with threat of terrorism, criminality and intercommunity violence hampering humanitarian access in northern and central Mali. This has triggered more forced displacement into Mauritania (3,8000 during the reporting period) and is destabilizing local communities, jeopardizing the protection of civilians, and preventing forcibly displaced persons from returning to their homes, while further threatening their access to already limited basic social services.
- The international and Malian defence and security forces continue to be targeted in attacks, including a number of high-profile and well-coordinated attacks carried out along the Mali-Niger border, and they are increasingly hampered in their capability to respond. At the same time, contamination by explosive hazards, including improvised explosive devices and mines, in the northern and central regions continues to restrict humanitarian and civilian access, including for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, access to livelihoods, freedom of movement and economic recovery.
- The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has agreed to rehabilitate Kidal town airstrip which was destroyed by protesters in April 2016, should it receive the necessary security guarantees from local communities. The reopening of the airstrip would increase humanitarian access to that region and facilitate the deployment of humanitarian staff and the prepositioning of relief items.

Sub-region

- In Niger, the security situation in the western regions of Tahoua and Tillabery hosting Malian refugees has significantly deteriorated, with a dramatic increase in the number of attacks and security incidents reported between September and November. On 10 September, the military security point at Tabarybarey refugee camp in the Tillabery region was attacked. Two refugees, an 18 year old woman and a five year-old boy, were killed in the cross-fire. On 6 October, the security post of the 'refugee hosting area' of Tazalit was attacked in which 22 Nigerien military personnel were killed, five others injured, while no refugees were injured in the attack. The assailants stole supplies from the health centre and burned a UNHCR ambulance. Following these incidents and in particular the deadly attack on Nigerien military personnel providing security at Tazalit in October, the Government of Niger withdrew military personnel from permanent security positions at all of the refugee camps and 'refugee hosting areas,' for fear of repeated targeting, and replaced the security points with patrols.
- On 28 November, UNHCR received an official letter from Niger's Ministry of Interior declaring the decision of the Government to close the 'refugee hosting area' of Tazalit by 9 December. In its response, the UNHCR country office offered its collaboration but highlighted to the Government that the envisaged date for relocation might be premature, in view of the preparatory activities necessary for this undertaking. The relocation process has not yet started. The objective of the Government is to carry out a rapid verification process with all of the refugees in Tazalit, to confirm their status as refugees before engaging in a relocation process to the second 'refugee hosting area' of Intikane.

Protection

MALI

- As part of protection monitoring activities, UNHCR's partner, *Association Malienne pour la Survie du Sahel* (AMSS), identified 199 protection-related incidents between September and November 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, 583 incidents have been reported and referenced to partners for urgent response and incidents are being shared with Protection Cluster members for further response.
- In September and October, UNHCR and its partner AMSS, carried out 16 sensitization campaigns to prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and forced marriages in the Gao and Menaka regions. These sessions reached 363 people helping them better understand the causes, consequences and means to prevent SGBV. Also, three SGBV prevention and awareness-raising sessions were organized by UNHCR's partner AMSS in Timbuktu reaching 71 participants, including returned refugees and host community members.

BURKINA FASO

- In order to increase security forces' awareness on refugee issues, UNHCR conducted various training sessions for 36 police officers on refugee rights, including on gender-based violence, child protection and the importance of the individual documentation. In addition, between September and November, 73 newly-arrived Malians were registered as refugees, most of them coming from Gossi and Boni areas in Mali.

MAURITANIA

- During the reporting period, Mbera refugee camp witnessed a significant increase of new arrivals with over 3,800 people crossing the Mali-Mauritanian border. In October alone, UNHCR registered over 1,000 people. Registration for the remaining new arrivals continues, along with provision of emergency assistance notably food, shelter and basic items. Families are mainly from the region of Timbuktu, Gundam, Mopti and Segou and said they fled insecurity and armed groups.

NIGER

- In response to the attack in Tazalit 'refugee hosting area' on 6 October, UNHCR has been closely engaged in discussion with the Government, local authorities, local leaders and refugees regarding the proposed closure of the Tazalit 'refugee hosting area.' UNHCR sent a response letter to the Ministry of Interior on 5 December, proposing the creation of a Joint Committee (Government, UN) chaired by the Government to develop an Action Plan, a schedule, and to oversee the process.
- UNHCR and partners are in the process of identifying sites to host the newly arriving refugees in at the 'refugee hosting area' of Intikane. Planning and division of tasks and responsibilities is ongoing with partners regarding essential emergency basic services, including latrines and showers, shelters, etc. UNHCR maintains close communication with the Government regarding the relocation exercise.
- A process of biometric registration for all urban refugees and asylum seekers started in November and is due to be completed by mid-December. UNHCR has introduced the BIMS technology for this registration. Prior to the launch of the registration process, training on BIMS was provided to the national authorities responsible for registration, UNHCR field staff and NGO partners. The new improved system will provide additional information on beneficiaries and, ultimately, improve the delivery of protection and assistance. All refugees over the age of 14 will receive an individual ID card, valid for three years. It is planned to roll out this technology and verification in the camps and 'refugee hosting areas' in the regions of Tillabery and Tahoua in early 2017.

Education

MAURITANIA

- The new school-year resumed in October in Mbera camp and about 5,000 school-children are attending classes in six primary schools. All children receive daily meals at school canteens as well as nutritional supplements; this helps to improve attendance in primary schools.
- In September, five talented refugee youth were selected to receive the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund (DAFI) scholarship, to attend university in Nouakchott, Mauritania's capital.

NIGER

- Of 11 refugee students selected for the DAFI scholarship in the West Africa region, four were selected from Niger; this includes two Malian refugees living in Tabarybarey and Abala camps, one Central African refugee living in Niamey, and one Nigerian refugee living in Diffa. All of the students will be supported to undertake studies in the University of Tahoua, with whom UNHCR Niger recently signed an agreement, to support tertiary education for refugees in Niger.
- In the Tahoua 'refugee hosting area,' close to 1,200 refugee school children and some 192 children from the host community will receive daily meals for the school year 2016-2017, thanks to a contribution from the German Aktion Deutschland Hilft (ADH) fund. Feeding children helps to secure attendance in schools. The canteen will also be equipped with cooking gas, in order to reduce the use of wood in this desert area: the saving of wood for the school year is estimated at 100m³.



School activities started in October after summer break in Mbera camp © UNHCR/H. Pes

Food Security and Nutrition

MAURITANIA

- In October, the monthly food distribution distributed by WFP was composed of 65 per cent cash and 35 per cent of rice, oil, salt and pulses and nutritional supplement. Emergency food assistance was distributed in September and November to new arrivals to Mbera camps; once registered with UNHCR, newly arrived families receive the regular assistance.

NIGER

- WFP and UNHCR finalized the roll out of targeted cash assistance, to replace in-kind assistance in two of the five Malian refugee camps and hosting areas in Niger as of January 2017. The two organizations carried out surveys and held 17 focus group discussions with refugee representatives to involve refugees in the decision-making process. Several sensitization and community outreach sessions were also held to explain the transition from in-kind to cash to the refugee community. The study 'Cash and Learning Partnership' (CaLP), carried out in Mangaize camp in mid-2016, revealed that cash assistance was having a positive impact on the local economy and that refugees have a preference for cash over in-kind assistance. Transition from in-kind to cash assistance will save overhead costs, such as transport, storage or distribution cost and will give refugees the opportunity to decide how to best spend their assistance. UNHCR is currently finalizing the identification of a mobile money provider to reach out to refugees leaving in isolated areas.



Shelter and Non-Food Items

MALI

- Six classrooms of Alfa Daoua School in the region of Timbuktu were rebuilt by UNHCR's partner, Luxembourg Red Cross, allowing 1,046 children (522 boys and 524 girls) to return to primary school on 3 October. In the district of Goundam, three classrooms of Alassane Alamir School were also restored allowing 166 children (77 boys and 89 girls) to return back to primary school. There are unmet critical needs in terms of rebuilding more classrooms and constructing schools in the Timbuktu region as classes remain overcrowded with an insufficient number of teachers, desks and benches.
- UNHCR, through its partner Stop Sahel, carried out a distribution of NFI (558 soap cartons, 300 tarpaulins, 558 clothes and 558 jerry cans) to support 3,000 persons affected by floods in the commune of Bara, district of Ansongo, in the Gao region. In addition, 4,566 individuals (982 households) including IDPs, IDP returnees, returnees and vulnerable host community members received NFI assistance in the region of Mopti, including from the Association of Displaced Women in Sévaré and the Association of Displaced Persons in Fatoma.
- UNHCR, through its partners Luxembourg Red Cross in Timbuktu and Stop Sahel in Gao and Mopti, completed 100 per cent of planned traditional shelters and 97 per cent of planned mud shelters to support IDPs, returned refugees, IDP returnees and vulnerable host community members in northern Mali. Shelter assistance is vital to restoring personal security, self-sufficiency and dignity of persons forced to flee or left vulnerable due to the conflict.

BURKINA FASO

- As some shelters of the Malian refugees living in camps were deteriorated by the Sahel region's harsh climate conditions, UNHCR, together with its partner the Norwegian Refugee Council, provided refugee households with cash to rehabilitate their dwellings. Moreover, 80 emergency shelter kits were distributed in each of the two camps to provide additional support to the most vulnerable.



Water and Sanitation and Health

MALI

- In October, UNHCR's field office in Mopti organized six sensitization sessions around the restoration of water points and the importance of handwashing as a regular habit. These activities reached 91 people including 30 women and eight children. In Gao, UNHCR provided 60 cartons of soap to the *Direction Régionale de la Santé* de Gao to celebrate the occasion.
- In November, UNHCR, through its partners Luxembourg Red Cross in Timbuktu and Stop Sahel in Gao and Mopti, constructed and restored 14 water points with 12 in Timbuktu and 2 in Mopti this month. Each completed water point was accompanied by social cohesion and hygiene sensitization sessions around water points for local populations including returned refugees, IDPs and host community members, as well as the implementation and training of a water management committee. Currently, there are 6 water points being restored in Gao. The project, which currently stands at 80 per cent execution rate, aims to serve some 25,000 persons of concern in priority communes in the north and centre to improve access to water and reduce diseases related to water and hygiene.

BURKINA FASO

- Maintaining robust and sufficient water supply and sanitation systems has been challenging in the main refugee hosting area in the north-west, exposed to harsh climate conditions. Because of the dry season, the available quantities of potable water are now as low as between 13 and 17 litres per person per day, instead of the 20 litres required to meet UNHCR standards. UNHCR field teams are increasing the monitoring process.
- UNHCR is improving the health centres in both refugee camps in an effort to meet the national health regulations to integrate these facilities into the national health systems, so they are gradually managed by the Ministry of Health. The health centres will be available to both refugees and host communities.

MAURITANIA

- Works continued for the construction and rehabilitation of latrines in Mbera camp. Between September and October, 49 new latrines were constructed and some 2,100 latrines rehabilitated. Furthermore, UNHCR and its partners continue to carry out mass sensitization activities to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases. During the reporting period, thousands of people were reached by sensitization activities, such as door-to-door informative meetings and jerry can cleaning sessions.

NIGER

- In October, a dramatic reduction in malaria amongst children under five years old was reported in the refugee camp of Abala for Malian refugees. This is following the launch of a new malaria prevention programme in August, which involves the use of anti-malarial pills for five days every month.
- The Regional Directorate of Hydraulics, UNHCR and several partners launched in October the work on the solar powered water pump station in the nearby village of Eknewane in the 'refugee hosting area' of Intikane. The pump will supply the 'refugee hosting area' with sufficient potable water for the population, as well as local host population.
- The results of the Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) survey on nutrition carried out nationwide during the reporting period are in the final phase of completion, while a final report and recommendations to be shared soon.



Self-Reliance and Peaceful Coexistence

MALI

- In September, 19 sensitization campaigns on social cohesion and peaceful coexistence organized by UNHCR's partner, AMSS, reached 450 returnees and host community members in the regions of Gao and Timbuktu. In addition, four information sessions on the prevention of malaria and peaceful coexistence were held around water points in the region of Mopti. The sessions reached 146 people, including 90 females, to help reinforce links between different communities and promote conflict prevention.
- On 25 and 26 October, UNHCR, through its partner Stop Sahel, organized a two-day training session on the sustainability of water structures for 22 members of the water management committees for the regions of Mopti and Douentza. These activities support greater understanding and cooperation between different communities (returned refugees, displaced, host community members) to work together to sustain newly restored and built water points.

BURKINA FASO

- In addition to regular firewood distribution, UNHCR and its NGO partner Help handed over 90 solar cookers, including 30 to members of the host population of Goudoubo refugee camp, and 60 to Malian refugees in the camp. In Mentao camp and three hosting villages, 110 solar cookers were distributed to refugee and Burkinabé households.
- In the capital Ouagadougou, Malian refugee artisans had the chance to expose and sell their products in various fairs: the Ouagadougou International Crafts Show (SIAO) and three Christmas fairs in international schools and cultural centres. Also, the National Employment Agency now includes 65 refugee youth who take part in weaving, mechanics and sewing, for a three-month period.

MAURITANIA

- In October, a cattle vaccination campaign was held to sensitize refugees about the importance of livestock's wellbeing. Veterinary services are available both to refugees and the host community thanks to the rehabilitation of a vaccination centre in Bassikounou, supported by UNHCR.
- To strengthen social cohesion between refugees and the host community in Bassikounou region, UNHCR and its partner SOS Desert continue to carry out projects improving living conditions in the villages surrounding the camp as well as sensitising communities about the importance of peaceful coexistence. Between September and November, 500 people from nine villages participated in two awareness-raising events about protection of the environment and bush fire prevention. A forum about peaceful coexistence involved 25 village committees in the area of Bassikounou.



Durable Solutions

MALI

- On 30 September, the Malian Government hosted in Bamako the inaugural Tripartite Commission between Mali- Mauritania-UNHCR on the voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees living in Mauritania. In October, UNHCR participated in two Tripartite Commission meetings including the 7th Mali-Niger-UNHCR meeting on 13 October in Bamako, and the 4th Mali-Burkina Faso-UNHCR meeting on 27 October in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. As the Tripartite Commission offers a platform for discussion to ensure safe conditions of return for refugees and safe conditions of asylum while in the host country, the meetings provided the opportunity for the respective governments and UNHCR to discuss the latest protection situation of

Malian refugees, the conditions needed to create a more favourable environment for a voluntary return and options for durable solutions.

- 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 *Gao region*, UNHCR provided the first instalment of grants to 96 women to support their income-generating activities.
 - In *Menaka region*, 32 returned refugee women received seed kits to support agricultural activities; three women's associations also received seed kits and field equipment to support the revitalization of local communities. Vouchers have been distributed to support 14 women's associations in order to support access to agricultural equipment and seeds for vegetable gardens.
 - In *Mopti region*, seed and equipment vouchers were distributed to 481 returned refugees, returned IDPs, IDPs, and host community members to support agricultural activities in the communes of Douentza, Haire and Hombori. Eight persons received goat vouchers to support pastoral farming activities and training was also provided to 596 women to increase organizational capacities to run village-level savings and credit associations. Additionally, UNHCR's partner Mercy Corps provided the first instalment of grants to 55 women to support income-generating activities.
 - In *Timbuktu region*, 16 vulnerable women affiliated with a savings and credit association received 16 goats and two billy goats to support livelihood activities. Since the beginning of the project, 96 women have benefited from 96 goats and 12 billy goats. In addition, 15 agricultural groups benefitted from agricultural inputs and materials to support their farming activities. Since January 2016, a total of 6,707 Malian refugees from Burkina Faso, Niger and Mauritania have benefitted from UNHCR's facilitation assistance for their voluntary return to Mali.

BURKINA FASO

- During the reporting period, 63 Malian individuals benefitted from facilitated repatriation process. They received a cash grant of around 70 USD per person to cover their transport fees enabling them to return home. The main return areas in Mali included Inadiatafane, Timbuktu, Gossi and Hairé.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

- In Mali, The Protection Cluster in Bamako, Gao, Timbuktu and Mopti are 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 October, the protection cluster advocated to MINUSMA for a stronger response to protection needs identified in the protection cluster matrix, including the reinforcement of security along major highways and zones of elevated insecurity in order to improve the protection of civilians and facilitate humanitarian access. In November, the Shelter/NFI cluster presented results achieved by humanitarian actors in Timbuktu noting that 18,472 vulnerable persons had been assisted over the course of the year. This achievement, which represents 40.5% of the actual needs in Timbuktu, limited funding and the insufficient number of actors to implement shelter and NFI activities in the region being the main obstacles.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

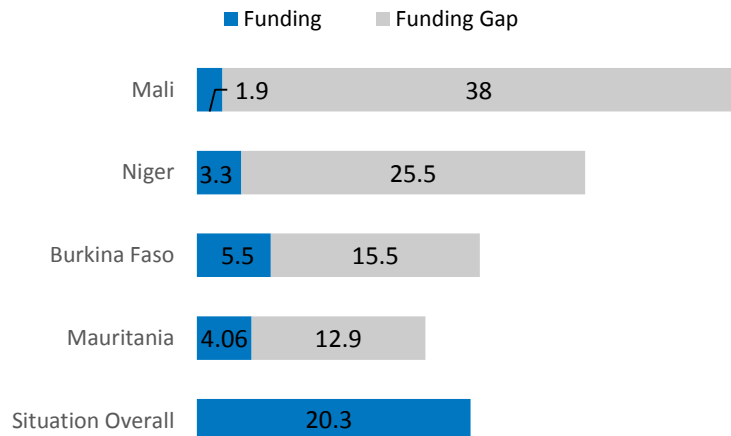
UNHCR's total financial requirements for the Mali Situation, involving operations in Mali and neighbouring countries (Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger) amount to **USD 106.7 million from January to December 2016**, including USD 66.7 million for the response in asylum countries. As at 8 December 2016, **the overall funding gap is USD 71.5 million**.

Donors:

CERF
European Union
Finland
France
Germany
Japan
Spain
Sweden
United States
UN Peacebuilding Fund
UN Foundation
Private individual donors (Australia, France)
IKEA Foundation
Fast Retailing (UNIQLO)

Funding:

A total of **USD 35.2 million** has been contributed



Consequences of underfunding

In *Burkina Faso*, the lack of funding to purchase additional transitional shelters for refugees hosted in camps may negatively impact households' health status with increasing cases of respiratory diseases in a desert and dusty area. Health infrastructures within the camps need to be rebuilt as a result of harsh climate conditions in the Sahel region, but funding gaps in UNHCR's response force the organisation to further prioritise its interventions, limiting the number of beneficiaries.

In *Niger*, in terms of support for livelihoods activities, UNHCR was able to provide cash assistance combined with training to a certain number of refugees (Mangaize camp). However the possibility of scaling up this initiative to other refugee camps and hosting areas is not possible due to limited funding available for livelihoods activities. Similarly, funds for professional training, in particular for refugee youth has been repeatedly expressed as a priority, both within the camps and also amongst the urban refugees. However sufficient funds have not been secured to provide this assistance. As regards to education, significant investment in infrastructure is required to enable the national schools to absorb the refugee population. This includes additional classrooms, school canteens, toilets, offices, school fencing amongst others.

In *Mauritania*, 100 students having successfully completed secondary school would like to pursue their studies at university level, but UNHCR lacks the required resources to fund their scholarship programme and expand their studying opportunities. In addition, while efforts are being made to replace and construct new toilet facilities in Mbera refugee camp, UNHCR does not have sufficient funds to complete the works for all latrines that need to be replaced. Overstretched latrines can cause the spread of epidemics in the camp, raising health concerns among the refugee population. Moreover, as the situation in northern Mali continues to trigger refugee outflows into Mauritania, additional donor contributions are required to meet unforeseen shelter needs.

Contacts:

Alan Mouton, Associate External Relations Officer, Regional Bureau for Africa, mouton@unhcr.org, +41 (0)22 739 8830
Julia Gouyou Beauchamps, Reporting Officer, Regional Bureau for Middle East and North Africa, gouyou@unhcr.org, +41 (0)22 739 8892

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