UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

NIGER QUARTERLY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

JANUARY TO MARCH 2026

A Malian refugee woman in Tahoua, member of a mixed women's empowerment group composed of refugees, internally displaced persons, and host communities, participating in the regional fair of Nigerien products organized in Tahoua.

Operational context

During the first quarter of 2026 (Q1), UNHCR Niger operated in a highly complex environment marked by security incidents, shifting situational dynamics, sustained mixed movements, and significant resource constraints. These factors continued to drive displacement, increase humanitarian needs, and challenge operational delivery.

The **security situation** remained volatile, particularly in **Tillabéri and Diffa regions**, where attacks by non-state armed groups (NSAGs) targeted civilians and security forces. In central regions, insecurity increasingly took the form of criminality and banditry. These dynamics restricted humanitarian access, increased protection risks, and contributed to continued displacement.

As of 31 March, Niger hosted **over 1 million forcibly displaced persons**, including more than **436,000 refugees and asylum-seekers.** Population movements remained fluid, with ongoing internal displacement, cross-border arrivals—particularly from Burkina Faso and Nigeria—and secondary movements in border areas.

Niger strengthened cooperation with **Algeria**. Engagement with partners such as the **United States and Italy** reflected a diversification of diplomatic relations. Furthermore, key institutional reforms progressed, including advancement of the **asylum law reform;** launch of **civil registry and biometric identity systems;** and validation of the **National Action Plan on Statelessness (2026–2030).**

At the same time, **tightened regulatory oversight of NGOs** affected operational space, requiring continued engagement to sustain humanitarian access.

Niger's economy showed resilience, supported by **IMF and World Bank financing**. However, structural vulnerabilities—including insecurity, climate shocks, and declining external aid—continue to exacerbate humanitarian needs and strain host communities. Social cohesion remains fragile in high-displacement areas.

UNHCR faced **increasing access constraints, rising operational costs, and funding gaps**, limiting the scale of response. Mixed movements toward **Libya, Algeria and Mali** persisted, exposing populations to trafficking, exploitation and violence.

Despite these challenges, UNHCR sustained its response by delivering life-saving protection and assistance including scaling up the Route-Based Approach; strengthening national asylum and documentation systems; and expanding community-based protection and localization. Overall, Q1 2026 was defined by heightened protection risks and operational complexity, requiring sustained international support and adaptive programming to maintain protection space and respond effectively to growing needs.

Assistant High-Commissioner for Protection, Ms. Ruvendrini Menikdiwela, conducted a senior level mission to Niger from 11–13 March, as part of a joint visit with the Regional Director and senior Bureau colleagues. Engagements with government counterparts, donors, partners, and forcibly displaced communities reaffirmed Niger's strong political commitment to open border and out of camp-policies, refugee inclusion, and solutions-oriented responses despite a complex political, security, and funding environment. The field visit to **Agadez** highlighted Niger's central role along mixed movement routes and the operationalization of a route-based approach through humanitarian hubs, in close coordination with local authorities. The mission emphasized localization, the need to further strengthen national and local capacities, and the importance of scaling up predictable financing—particularly from IFIs—to support protection, self-reliance, social cohesion, and durable solutions, including refugee naturalization initiatives.

Protection Cluster

During the first quarter, the Protection Cluster remained actively engaged in key coordination and capacity-building platforms to strengthen protection outcomes. The Cluster contributed to the Humanitarian Access Working Group, supporting discussions aimed at improving humanitarian access, with a particular focus on advancing the roadmap for alternatives to armed escorts. In parallel, the Cluster participated in the strategic Civil–Military Coordination forum, using this platform to advocate consistently for the protection of civilians and respect for humanitarian principles. At field level, the Cluster supported capacity building of protection partners in the Tahoua region, delivering training on the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) and on reporting achievements through the 5W framework, with the objective of strengthening the quality and consistency of protection reporting.

In response to the tightening funding environment, the Cluster also established a Protection Monitoring Task Force to collectively assess the impact of funding cuts on protection data collection and to identify options for maintaining minimum monitoring and evidence-based advocacy capacities.

Agadez Region

Agadez remains a strategic hub for mixed movements along the Central Mediterranean route, with sustained flows along the Dirkou–Libya and Arlit–Assamaka–Algeria axes. The region continued to face high mobility driven by expulsions from Algeria, returns from Libya, and onward movements, placing pressure on reception capacities in the Centre Humanitaire (CHA) and urban areas.

During Q1 2026, UNHCR border monitoring recorded 48,945 individuals (from Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Mali, Guinea-Conakry and Senegal) in mixed movements crossing Niger's borders in the Agadez region, towards Libya (15,052), Algeria (12,512) and Mali (3,086). Libya remained the primary destination, consistent with 2025 trends. Of these movements, 18,295 individuals entered Niger, while 30,650 exited the country. In parallel, 11,752 individuals were expelled from Algeria to Assamaka during the reporting period.

Furthermore, a total of 13,457 people in need of international protection (refugees and asylum-seekers) were identified across Niger within mixed movements. The main nationalities include Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Chad, Mali, Sudan, Guinea-Conakry, and Sierra Leone.

UNHCR strengthened evidence-based planning through a joint **multisectoral needs assessment** covering Agadez, Arlit, Dirkou and Assamaka. Validated in February 2026 under the leadership of the Governor, the assessment provides a shared operational framework across sectors, including protection, health, WASH and shelter.

Protection monitoring remained continuous across the CHA, urban refugees and asylum-seekers and informal settlements. A highly vulnerable group of 22 refugees (17 households) was monitored around the National Eligibility Commission (DREC/MR) premises, including six households with severe vulnerabilities, ensuring targeted follow-up and referrals.

Coordination with IOM continued for 13 asylum-seekers awaiting referral.Targeted food assistance was maintained through cash-based interventions, with 327–385 households supported per distribution cycle, following regular verification and prioritisation of the most vulnerable.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) interventions focused on sustaining minimum standards within the CHA, complemented by community-led sensitisation to prevent infrastructure damage and improve hygiene practices. Rapid response mechanisms were activated following fire incidents, reinforcing preparedness and risk mitigation.

Progress continued on the construction of **Guichets Uniques (one-stop-shop)** and **Maisons de Protection** in Agadez and Dirkou, key pillars of the Route-Based Approach (RBA), aimed at strengthening protection services along the route. Technical supervision ensured quality and alignment with national systems.

UNHCR also reinforced **institutional capacity** through the provision of equipment, including office furniture, computers, printers and stationery for the multipurpose hall constructed for the Regional Service of Territorial Surveillance. This contributed to enhancing operational readiness for asylum processing and protection delivery by regional authorities.

Community Engagement Activities reached CHA residents and urban populations through awareness sessions on asylum procedures, rights and peaceful coexistence, contributing to de-escalation of tensions.

A pilot **livelihoods** initiative supported 20 refugees and asylum-seekers to access driving licences, enhancing employability and self-reliance in an urban context.

Diffa Region

Diffa remained one of the most volatile operational environments, with persistent attacks by non-state armed groups driving displacement, protection incidents and repeated secondary movements. UNHCR and partners reached an estimated 55,000–60,000 people, delivering life-saving assistance and stabilising newly displaced populations, despite severe access constraints and funding gaps.

Emergency Response: UNHCR and partners responded to multiple displacement shocks

- 7,500 people (1,325 households) were assisted following forced evictions in Ngagam with essential items and food items, thanks to El Bourak Charity, a local NGO and UNICEF.
- 3,600 people (600 households) newly displaced in Djori Kolo were also assisted with food items by El Bourak Charity.

Protection activities reached over 10,000 individuals, including refugees, IDPs and host communities. 1,600 children accessed child-friendly spaces. 120 gender-based violence (GBV) survivors received comprehensive support. 350 persons with specific needs were identified and assisted with essential items, including clothing.

Over 41,000 people received **food assistance** through WFP and partners. The Sayam Forage **water** system provided safe water access for 32,423 people. **Hygiene** promotion reached ~5,000 individuals. 6,000 children accessed **education** in camp settings. 45 DAFI students continued higher education support. A new MoU with **health** authorities improved access to primary healthcare services.

Maradi Region

In Maradi, refugees are hosted in *villages d'accueil and villages d'opportunité*. Villages d'accueil are border communities hosting around 75,000 refugees, where assistance focuses on emergency needs. Villages d'opportunités—Garin Kaka, Chadakori, and Dandadji Makaou—host about 10,500 refugees and support longer-term integration through basic services, livelihoods, and social inclusion.

Maradi continued to face cross-border insecurity and criminality along the Nigeria border, with a fragile but slightly improved security context toward the end of March. UNHCR reached over 42,000 people through protection, well-being, and livelihoods interventions, reinforcing resilience and community-based protection mechanisms in a fragile border environment.

Protection interventions reached over 8,000 individuals, strengthening community-based protection, **GBV** prevention and social cohesion. 1,200 children accessed **child-friendly spaces**. 55 GBV survivors received assistance (psychosocial support, dignity kits, income-generating activities). 160 persons with specific needs were supported. 28,000–30,000 people (4,700 households) received **food assistance**. 1,800 people (300 households) received **essential items**. 850 individuals, primarily women, engaged in **income-generating activities**. 450 beneficiaries were supported through hydroponic **agriculture** initiatives. 1,200 people reached through civil documentation awareness. 60 individuals identified for statelessness interventions.

Tahoua Region

Tahoua remained a major convergence zone for mixed movements, hosting large numbers of refugees, IDPs and returnees amid persistent insecurity and climatic stress. The region hosts 80,475 refugees, 65,892 IDPs, 10,597 returnees, 52,805 asylum-seekers awaiting registration.

UNHCR and its partners provided protection services to 36,200 individuals through **protection monitoring**. 4,900 individuals were reached through **GBV** prevention and response. 13,500 **children** and caregivers were supported through child protection interventions. 8,700 individuals reached through **statelessness** prevention activities.

Madaoua (Tahoua Region)

Madaoua experienced continued cross-border movements from Nigeria alongside chronic vulnerabilities among displaced and host populations. UNHCR sustained a protection presence in a sensitive border area, strengthened local systems, and supported early recovery and resilience among newly arrived and host populations.

UNHCR and its partners registered 443 new asylum-seekers (85 households) following attacks in Sokoto State, Nigeria. UNHCR prioritized community-based protection, strengthening **local organizations** and referral pathways. **Community engagement** activities reached several hundred individuals, reinforcing **peaceful coexistence** and **early warning** mechanisms.

Livelihood interventions supported dozens of women and youth, including vocational training and income-generating activities in partnership with GIZ and NGOs, enhancing economic resilience at the household level.

Tillabéri Region

Tillabéri experienced a significant deterioration in security, with widespread attacks, mass displacement and severe protection risks, particularly in border areas. Over 92,900 forcibly displaced persons were recorded in key departments, including over 9,000 asylum-seekers from Burkina Faso pre-registered. UNHCR maintained **protection monitoring** and response across priority areas, addressing acute risks including massacres, abductions, **GBV** and **child protection** concerns.

Large-scale **distributions** of essential items reached 3,000 households in Téra. Child protection services reached thousands of children through child-friendly spaces. GBV responses supported dozens of survivors with integrated services. **Health** services delivered tens of thousands of consultations. **Livelihood** and **social cohesion** initiatives contributed to stabilisation and reduced tensions between displaced and host communities.

Sector	Key Achievements (Nationwide – All Regions)
Protection & Asylum	Over **54,000 individuals** reached through protection monitoring and activities (Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua), with additional monitoring in Agadez and Tillabéri. **13,457 refugees and asylum-seekers** identified within mixed movements nationwide. **48,945 individuals** recorded in mixed movements in Agadez. **11,752 expulsions** from Algeria recorded at Assamaka. **443 new asylum-seekers (85 households)** registered in Madaoua. **9,000+ asylum-seekers** from Burkina Faso pre-registered in Tillabéri.
Child Protection	**22,300+ children and caregivers** supported through child protection services (Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua), with **thousands more** reached through child-friendly spaces in Tillabéri.
Gender-Based Violence (GBV)	**175+ GBV survivors** received comprehensive support (Diffa, Maradi), with **dozens more** assisted in Tillabéri. **4,900 individuals** reached through GBV prevention and response activities in Tahoua, alongside ongoing community-based prevention nationwide.
Food Security / Basic Needs	**69,000–71,000 people** received food assistance (Diffa and Maradi), complemented by **cash-based assistance to 327–385 households per cycle** in Agadez.
Non-Food Items (NFIs)	Emergency essential items provided to **3,000 households** in Tillabéri and **300 households (1,800 people)** in Maradi, with additional emergency support during displacement shocks in Diffa.
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)	**32,423 people** accessed safe water through the Sayam Forage system in Diffa. Hygiene promotion reached **~5,000 individuals**, while WASH services were maintained in Agadez reception facilities.
Health	**32,857 people** consulted in UNHCR-supported healthcare services, including 1,056 for mental health services. 7,778 children vaccinated across different regions. Access to primary healthcare in Diffa improved through a new MoU with the health authorities.

Education	**6,000 children** accessed education in camp settings in Diffa. **45 DAFI students** continued higher education support nationwide.
Livelihoods & Self-Reliance	**1,305 people** were supported through livelihoods and self-reliance interventions, including income-generating activities, hydroponic agriculture, vocational training, and access to driving licences. Activities contributed to social cohesion and stabilisation in Maradi, Madaoua, Agadez and Tillabéri.
Statelessness & Civil Documentation	**8,700 individuals** reached through statelessness prevention activities in Tahoua; **60 individuals** identified for statelessness interventions in Maradi; **1,200 people** reached through civil documentation awareness activities.
Route-Based Approach (RBA) & Infrastructure	Construction of **Guichets Uniques and Maisons de Protection** advanced in Agadez and Dirkou, strengthening protection and access to services along key mixed movement routes.
Institutional & Community Capacity	Equipment provided to regional authorities; strengthened referral pathways, community engagement, and coordination with partners and local organizations across all operational regions.

Story from the field

(1) *Widowed and a mother of seven, Rabi Sani is a 60-year-old Nigerian refugee who has turned UNHCR cash assistance into a pathway toward sustainable self-reliance in Diffa. Through groundnut oil production and the rearing of six sheep, she now supports her family with dignity, showing that resilience has no age.*

(2) *Peanut sorting in a workshop by a group of youth from refugee and host communities in Chadakori, who have been trained in agro-processing. © UNHCR*

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CONTACTS
Tony Aseh, Senior External Relations Officer, aseh@unhcr.org, Tel: +227 800 681 82.
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