

Sahel situation

October 2020

The Sahel regions have been hosting **Malian refugees** since 2012. They live in 3 sites in the Tillabery region and a refugee hosting area in the Tahoua region.

The rapidly deteriorating security context has caused increasing **internal displacement flows in the same regions** with rising numbers every month.

The presence of armed groups across the border has caused the internal displacement of a few thousand **citizens from Burkina Faso** into Niger.

KEY INDICATORS

40,000*

Number of refugees in Niger who will have access to land according to the Government's pledge during the Global Refugee Forum

+50%*

Increase of the number of internally displaced persons since March 2019 to date.

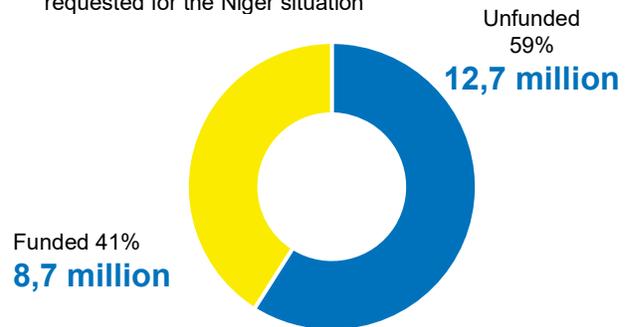
42

Durable hydraform houses built in the Tillabery region

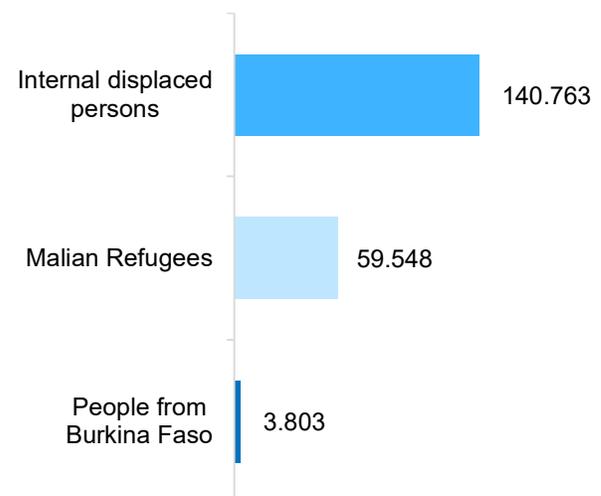
FUNDING (AS OF 7 OCTOBER)

USD 21,4 million

requested for the Niger situation



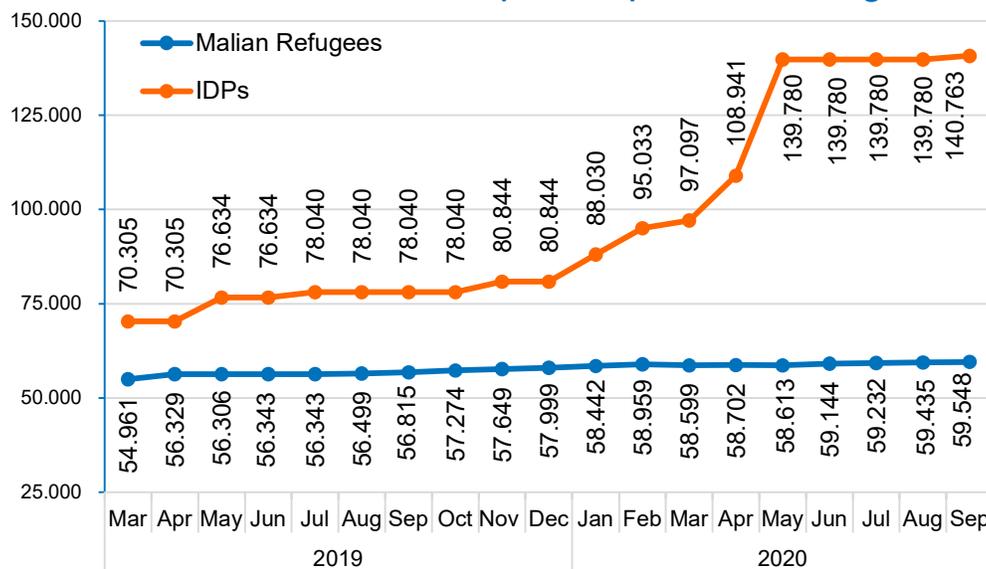
POPULATION OF CONCERN IN NIGER



Update on Achievements

Operational Context

Evolution of Displaced persons in Niger



Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso are all struggling to cope with numerous militant groups moving between the three countries. The security situation in the tri-border region of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali and hence the situation in the Nigerien regions of Tillabery and Tahoua has sharply deteriorated in recent years. This threat is forcing people to flee their homes, and further deprives vulnerable communities of critical basic services as armed groups directly target schools, health centers and other infrastructure. The civilian population is victim of extortion, targeted killings, cattle theft and shop looting and threatened to leave their villages. The national government of Niger has recently extended a state of emergency in the Tillabery region which was first introduced in 2017.

Moreover, the global sanitary crisis has heavily impacted on the operational context, including due to measures taken by the Government of Niger to limit the propagation of the virus. These measures had important consequences for humanitarian actors in the field.

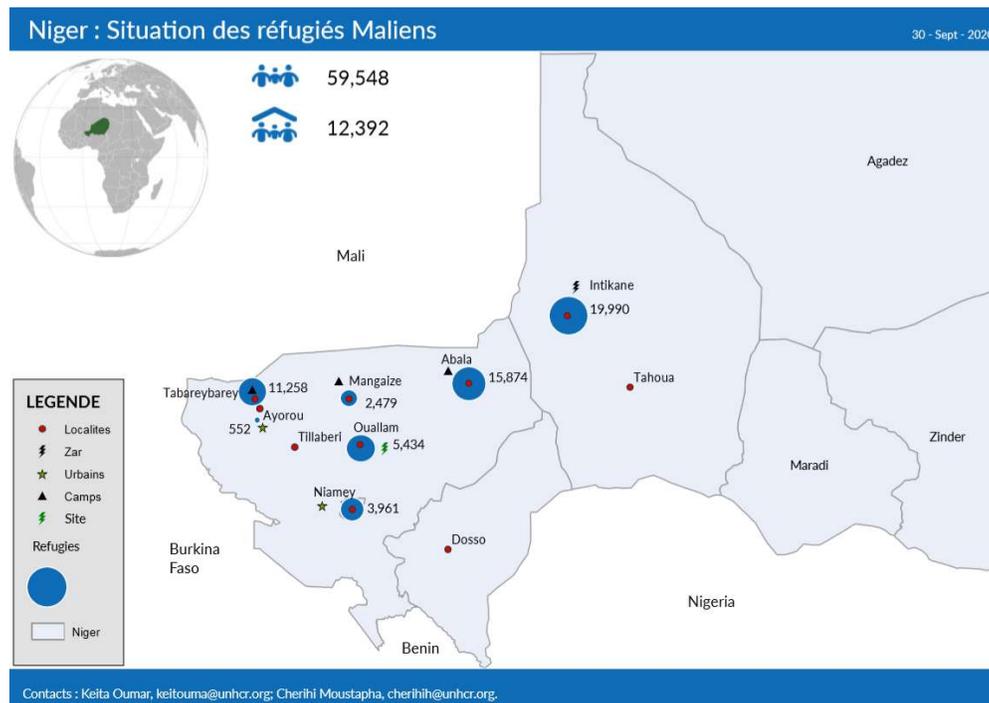
During the month of September, the **security situation** remained volatile and unpredictable in the areas bordering Mali and Burkina Faso. A security incident end of August has caused the displacement of some 6,500 Malian refugees from the site of Ayerou to the city of Ayerou. We are currently working to reinforce the security environment

of the site and are sensitizing the refugees to return once the security conditions will be in place.

Heavy floods have impacted on refugee and local populations, as well as their cattle and fields. Niger is by far the most affected country in West Africa. The Tillabery and Tahoua regions, including the sites of Ayerou, Ouallam, Abala and Intikane, as well as villages hosting IDPs and people from Burkina Faso, have been affected. 112 brick houses on the refugee site in Abala have been destroyed and some 700 emergency shelters in both regions are damaged. The floods have caused important delays regarding food distribution, shelter distribution and sanitary evacuations.

In the light of the above, UNHCR has issued an Emergency Declaration and declared a Level 2 Emergency in Niger in February 2020, which was extended for another 6 months in September 2020.

Operational Strategy



The interventions in the Tillabery and Tahoua regions are aligned to **UNHCR's Sahel strategy**, a scaled-up response to the unprecedented violence and displacement crisis in the Sahel. Activities planned pre-COVID 19 will be implemented in line with public health measures imposed as a result of the pandemic. Key priorities include addressing shelter needs in overcrowded settlements, supporting distance education, providing effective response to SGBV incidents aggravated by confinement measures, and continuing other protection activities such as registration, documentation and facilitating access to asylum

With the support of CERF and ECHO, the Sahel crisis is monitored by a broad community-based network and analysis is shared with the humanitarian community. Capacity building and coordinated efforts with humanitarian actors are ongoing to ensure an adequate response to the situation. UNHCR has the lead over the national protection cluster. Legislation for assistance and protection to IDPs based on the Kampala Convention is in place.

After almost 8 years of presence in Niger, UNHCR and the Government of Niger give priority to **medium- and long-term solutions for Malian refugees** with a view to promote social cohesion, self-reliance and a durable integration into national services and systems. All Malian refugee camps have been closed in 2020 in line with the joint vision of the Government and UNHCR and given the deterioration of the protection and security context. They are now settled in sites in the villages of Ayerou, Ouallam and Abala. Supported by major donors such as GIZ and EUTF, UNHCR gives Malian refugees access to land and housing, creates jobs and includes them into national systems.

A strong **tripartite collaboration** has been developed amongst the **World Bank, the Government of Niger, and UNHCR** to improve access to basic public services and further support for economic opportunities. With the support of **ILO and Spain**, Malian refugees benefit from livelihood interventions.

Achievements

Protection Cluster

- The Protection Cluster led by UNHCR and co-led by the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs produces a monthly report on the Tillabery and Tahoua regions which can be consulted here:

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/op%C3%A9rations/niger>

- On the 7th September, all refugees and IDPs who have looked for refuge in Telemces following the deadly attacks on the Intikane refugee area end of May, have been transferred back to the Intikane area. Negotiations are ongoing to better secure the refugee hosting area in Intikane so that UNHCR staff can go on mission to the area and assist refugees.
- In Tillabery to date, 30,706 individuals have been biometrically registered as internally displaced persons (IDPs).
- In the Tillabery region, 3,337 Malian refugees have notified their attention to benefit from a cash grant for voluntary return to Mali. Given the global pandemic and the closure of borders, voluntary return activities are currently suspended. At the same time, 392 persons who have previously benefited from a voluntary return to Mali have come back to Niger (the overall majority is settled in Ayerou) as the security conditions in Mali are still not met.



Araba Yobi is a Malian refugee living in the refugee hosting area of Intikane, Tahoua region since armed gunmen have attacked his village in Mali in 2016. He is on the list for voluntary return to Mali and will be assisted with a cash grant thanks to support from the EU. "I would like to return back to my hometown although the security situation is not improving. I will take the risk to return back to Mali because that's where my heart is".

- In Intikane, 28 children at risk of statelessness have been identified and documented. In the framework of child protection activities, the parents of the identified children have been sensitized about the importance of identity documents and birth registration.
- UNHCR and its partners have given land plots to 172 refugees in Ayerou and 598 refugees in Ouallam. 310 constructions of social houses are ongoing / finalized in the Tillabery region. To date, 42 houses have been built of which 5 in Ouallam, 35 in Ayerou and 2 in Abala. During the third quarter of 2020, the project employs 886 refugees and 515 members of the host community, both in brick production and in construction of social houses.
- During the month of September 2150 emergency shelter kits have been distributed to Malian refugees and IDPs in Intikane, Ouallam and Abala. In October, another 350 will be given to refugees in Ayerou and 300 to IDPs in the Tillabery region. This activity was carried out with the generous support of the people of Japan.



- As September is the start of a new school year, UNHCR and its partners carry out campaigns to sensitize parents to send their children to school. In Intikane, partner ADES goes from door to door to sensitize parents.
- Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR and partners have constructed 4 emergency classrooms in Ayerou and rehabilitated 21 classes in Telemces and Ouallam. Moreover, 3 classrooms in durable material are under construction in Intikane, as well as latrine blocs for children.

- UNHCR has set up two mobile clinics to help victims of sexual and gender-based violence and providing reproductive health services and will reinforce assistance offered through mobile clinics by the end of the year.
- To lessen the environmental impact of displacement, UNHCR and partners have distributed 2600 gas kits but additional funds are needed to foresee sustainable energy for refugee and IDP households to ease the environmental burden.
- As the global pandemic persists, partner organisation APBE continues to sensitize people under UNHCR's mandate on preventive measures, including on malaria. A mass awareness session in Intikane has reached 455 refugees and 495 IDPs.
- The NGOs World Vision, ADRA and the Spanish Red Cross are UNHCR's partners in the construction of latrines in the refugee sites in the Tilabery region. UNHCR is seeking additional funds or partners to construct more latrines in the Tillabery region.

Working in partnership

- For UNHCR forced displacement requires a **comprehensive approach to development** and should be considered a development, poverty reduction and climate issue. Including forcibly displaced and their hosts in development interventions is key for the transition out of poverty of the country and to boosting resilience. UNHCR interventions target not only refugees and IDPs, but also host communities who live in same conditions of high vulnerability -- with a view to move towards economic integration and social inclusion. This approach of inclusion and development is fully endorsed by the Government of Niger and aligned with the Global Compact for Refugee and the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. This approach is at the core of UNHCR's OUT OF CAMP strategy and is operationalized through ongoing collaborations with the World Bank Group, the German development agency (GIZ) and the European Union (EUTF) and the ILO. With the idea of deepening its role of convener, UNHCR is also looking into strengthening relationship with private sector actors as they are a crucial partner for boosting economic growth and job creation.
- In order to lend support to **protection clusters** at national level in terms of advocacy, facilitate coordination between countries and regional IASC, providing visibility through data driven analysis, and serving as a platform for information sharing and best practices, the Regional Bureau in Dakar has initiated bilateral and multilateral consultations with key stakeholders including donors to revitalize the Regional Protection Working Group (RPWG). A task force composed of UNICEF,

UNFPA, OCHA, UNWOMEN, IOM, OHCHR, UNHCR and SOS has been established to draft the strategy as well as the TORs which are being commented on and will be further adopted. Through the Regional Protection Working Group, appropriate support will be provided to the protection crisis in the Sahel.

Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS

CERF | European Union | France | Germany | Japan | Spain | United States of America | Refugee Zakat Fund

External / Donor Relations

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LINKS

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