

# Sharp increase in the number of IDPs and refugees in Maradi

April 2020

## Background

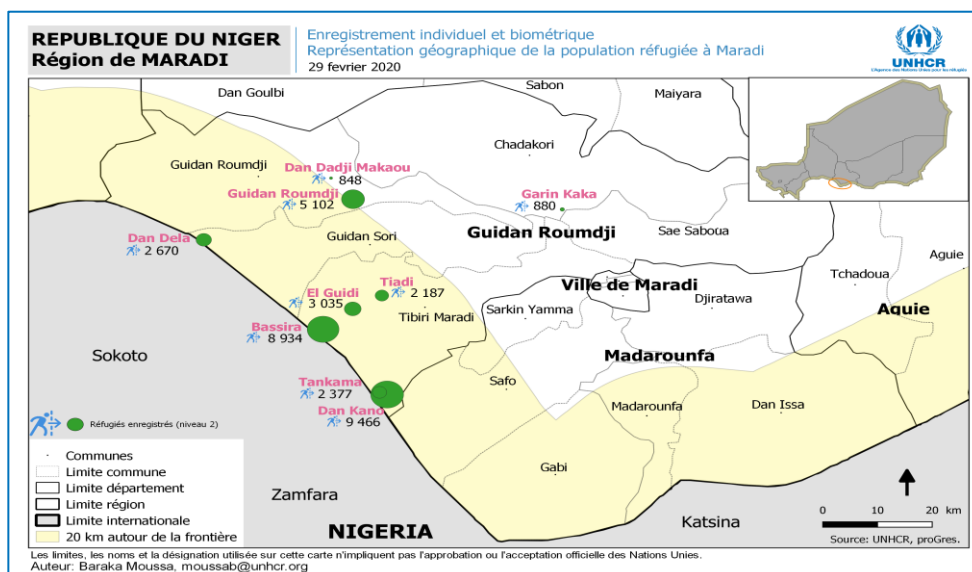
Since May 2019, the Maradi region has been receiving an influx of refugees from north-western Nigeria. They are fleeing killings, abductions and looting by Nigerian non-state armed groups. These groups have stepped up attacks on both sides of the border in recent weeks, displacing some 18,000 people to and within the region. The threat of Covid-19 has added to this situation: the city of Maradi recorded its first two cases on April 1st.

At the onset of the crisis, UNHCR quickly deployed an emergency team. A sub-office was opened in Maradi in September 2019 to coordinate registration, protection, education, health, housing and access to WASH services. Another key feature of the UNHCR response is the relocation of refugees to ‘villages of opportunity’ away from the border to ensure their safety and ease the pressure on the host populations. This program contributes to the development of rural areas which lack basic infrastructure and services, in line with the humanitarian-development nexus.

## Population Statistics

By 31 March, UNHCR and the Government (National Eligibility Commission, CNE) had carried out individual and biometric registration of **36,183 refugees** (9,902 households), 67% of whom were minors, 23% women and 10% men. This figure represents only a slight increase (1.92%) over the previous month, but registration procedures were interrupted on 13 March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since then, **more than 13,000 new asylum seekers have been reported in Guidam Roudji department**. Discussions with the regional authorities are under way in order to resume registration activities.

At the beginning of April, a first estimate by humanitarian actors puts **the number of IDPs at 18,545, which is an increase of over 13,000 persons**. These people have left border villages in Guidam Roudji and Madarounfa departments to get out of reach of non-state armed groups’ incursions. Some also claim to have moved on the orders of security forces conducting military operations.












## Progress and Achievements

- **The humanitarian situation of IDPs is critical**, as humanitarian actors have little presence in host villages. The Ministry of Humanitarian Action has activated the 'shelter and non-food items' cluster. Following the joint mission of the protection cluster to the Maradi region from 2 to 6 March, a protection working group dedicated to IDPs was set up. Registration procedures and the deployment of monitoring tools by the NGO partners CIAUD and ANTD are underway.
- **The attack on the village of Gangara in Nigeria**, which left 20 people dead on April 1st, has led to the displacement of thousands of asylum-seekers to villages of the commune of Guidan Roundji in Niger. A joint mission by the regional authorities and UNHCR was deployed to the field on April 10 and 11, including the host villages of Garin Yahaya and Barago Serkin Aski. The new comers have received no assistance other than that of the host communities and are in dire need of water, food, health care, shelter and clothing. The mission recommends the relocation of these people to UNHCR villages of opportunity. It also recommends the rapid implementation of the extension works at the Garim Kaka and Dan Dadji Makaou sites and the operationalization of the Chadakori site.
- **The government and UNHCR have identified 10 villages of opportunity** to relocate refugees at least 20km (12.5 miles) away from the border to ensure their protection. These relocations are always carried on a voluntary basis. They started in October 2019, via the Guidan Roundji transit site. The setup of the villages of Dan Dadji Makaou and Garin Kaka was finalized in December 2019, while other sites are being prepared, including the village of Chadakori. The future accommodation capacity of these three villages should reach 7,152 refugees: 1,626 in Chadakori, 2,700 in Garin Kaka and 2,826 in Dan Dadji Makaou.
- As of today, **2,818 refugees are part of the voluntary relocation process**: 1,315 live in Dan Dadji Makaou, 1,048 in Garin Kakan, plus 455 in the transit center of Guidan Roundji. The relocation process has been suspended for the time being because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Discussions with the regional authorities are under way in order to resume this activity.
- On April 1st, **two cases of Covid-19 were confirmed in Maradi** and 60 people were placed in self-isolation. UN agencies participate in the Covid-19 Pandemic Control Regional Committee, chaired by the Governor. In addition, an Inter-Agency Coordination Committee (UNHCR, OCHA, WHO, UNDP, UNICEF, FAO) meets every Thursday. Needs for ventilators, drugs, tests, protective equipment and training for health care workers have been identified. Awareness campaigns on local and national radio and television have been launched.
- **UNHCR is an engaged actors in the COVID-19 response in the region** and participates to all committees. **The organization has provided 30 Refugee Housing Units (RHU)** to the regional authorities to accommodate Covid-19 patients in isolation. UNHCR and NGO partner APBE delivered a large amount of hygiene, disinfection, protection (masks and gloves) and diagnostic (laser thermometers) equipment to the Covid-19 Pandemic Control Regional Committee.
- In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Maradi's refugee hosting areas, **21 door-to-door awareness sessions** on the Covid-19 pandemic were conducted in the villages of opportunity, reaching 2,302 people: 1,327 refugees and 975 members of host communities. Two refugees housing units were set up in Garin Kaka and two more in Dan Dadji Makaou for isolation and management of potential Covid-19 patients. The health centers in the two villages, which receive about 50 patients a day, serve as permanent awareness raising sites. UNHCR and the NGOs World Vision and APBE conducted a joint mission to set up practical arrangements at the various sites.
- Protective equipment and awareness-raising tools were distributed for **the border checkpoints** of Dan Issa, Guidan Kané, Bossoua and Souloulou. Covid-19 "case definition" trainings have been made available to the authorities.

## Main Challenges

- The security situation remains volatile:** Attacks by non-state armed groups are relentless, as the attack on the village of Gangara in Nigeria on 1 April further demonstrated. Preparation for population displacements is made more difficult by the lack of information on the humanitarian situation and dynamics across the border. In addition, increasing incursions armed groups into Niger have also led to significant population movements.
- The Covid-19 pandemic affects critical activities:** Registration and relocation procedures have been suspended due to the pandemic. Discussions are ongoing with regional authorities in order to resume as soon as possible in compliance with protection measures.
- Financial resources remain insufficient:** In 2020, UNHCR and the other actors responding to the Maradi situation require 33,6 million USD. Concurrent needs in other Nigerien areas struggling with insecurity as well as the needs in order to tackle the spread of COVID-19, further strain humanitarian actors' financial resources and hence their capacity to respond.

### Operational presence of humanitarian actors in Maradi: April 2020

	Area	Partners
	Shelter & Infrastructures	NRC, APBE
	Livelihood	APBE
	Pacific coexistence	DRC
	WASH	WORLD VISION
	Formal education	NRC
	Environment	APBE
	Health and mental health	APBE
	Community mobilization	APBE
	Protection (Overall & Children)	CIAUD, ANTD, DRC, SAVE THE CHILDREN, NRC

## External / Donors Relations

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