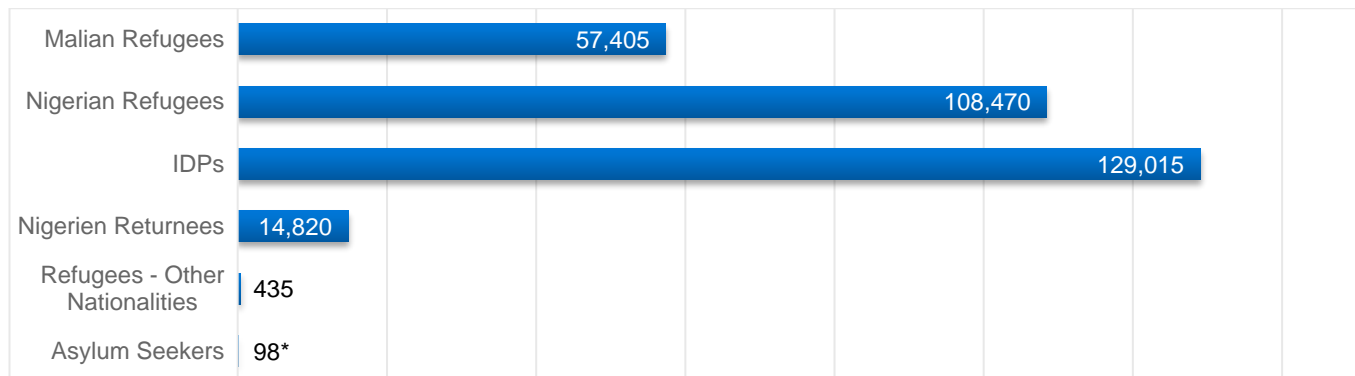


Niger

December 2017

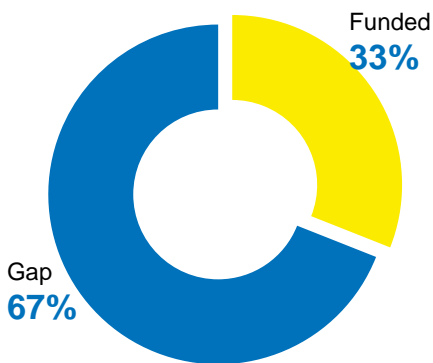
Total of **310,124** Persons of Concern



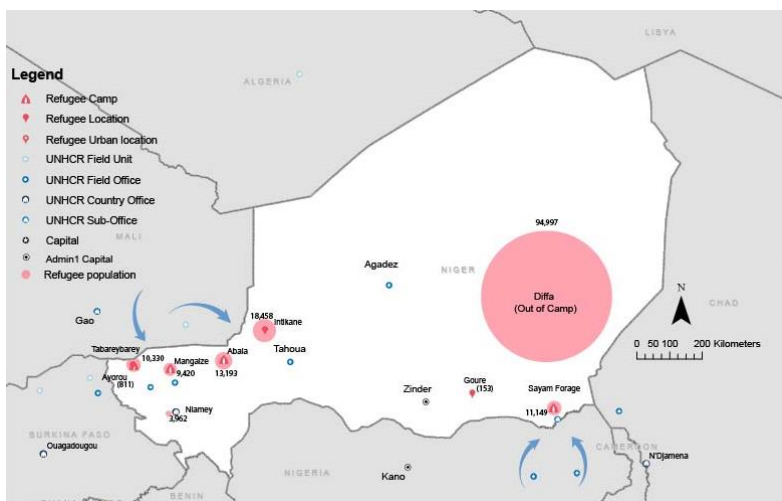
*This is the official figure but does not include additional cases which have been recently referred to the Govt. including up to 1,000 in the Agadez region

FUNDING (as of 31 December 2017)

USD 85.7 M
requested



Refugee locations



UNHCR Presence

Staff: 129 national, 50 international

Offices: 1 Head Office Niamey; 2 Sub-Offices Diffa & Agadez; 4 Field Offices Abala, Tillabery, Ouallam, Tahoua

UNHCR Partners

Govt. of Niger, APBE, Adkoul, ACTED / REACH, Care, CISP, COOPI, DRC, Forum Refugies Cosi, Handicap International, IRC, KARKARA, OXFAM, Qatar Red Crescent, Search For Common Ground, SDO, UNAIDS

Context – Background

UNHCR Niger currently responds to three main situations – the Mali Situation, the Nigeria Situation and the Mixed Migration Situation. Added to that is the situation of IDPs in Niger (who number over 129,000), as well as the newly established Emergency Evacuation Transit Mechanism, evacuating vulnerable refugees trapped in Libya temporarily to Niger, in the search for longer term solutions.

Niger has been welcoming refugees from Mali since the outbreak of conflict in 2012, and continues to welcome new arrivals. They are hosted in 3 camps in the Tillabery region, a refugee hosting area (ZAR) in Tahoua region, and the remainder in the urban areas of Niamey and Ayorou. There are currently 57,405 Malian refugees registered in Niger, however this figure will be updated in 2018 based on the completion of the BIMS biometric registration of the population. The security situation in the regions bordering Mali is deteriorating, with increased terrorist attacks in 2017 and the declaration of a State of Emergency. The zone is becoming more militarized, while the borders remain porous. A protection monitoring system has been set up in the region to analyse, monitor and respond to the protection situation and to risks.

The region of Diffa in the south east of Niger, has been hosting refugees since 2013, when Boko Haram violence intensified in the North Eastern Nigeria. In 2015, the conflict crossed the border into Niger, with the first attacks in Niger in February 2015. There are over 250,000 displaced persons scattered throughout the region, (108,470 refugees, 129,015 IDPs and 14,820 returnees). UNHCR manages one official camp in the region which hosts approximately 12,000 refugees, while the rest choose to remain living in spontaneous sites or amongst the community. Boko Haram violence declined in the second half of 2017, however armed banditry and kidnapping for ransom remain persistent problems, as well as protection related concerns of the displaced populations.

Niger is situated in a geopolitically sensitive area, linking the Sahara desert with the Sahel, and West with Central Africa. The country has developed into a major hub of migratory movements northwards to Algeria, Libya and the shores of the onwards into Europe. With approximately 300,000 people passing through Niger per year (IOM figures 2016), UNHCR estimate that up to 30% of these persons may be asylum seekers in need of international protection. UNHCR Niger is working closely with the Government of Niger to improve RSD procedures in country, as well as in close collaboration with IOM for the referral of cases. UNHCR also works with a group of national NGOs on community outreach, referrals, assistance and advice. The aim is to provide protection and durable solutions to the most vulnerable, and to provide them with an option rather than undertaking the perilous journey towards Libya and the Mediterranean.

Connected to the actions in terms of Mixed Migration, the Emergency Evacuation Transit Mechanism (ETM) became operational in the last quarter of 2017, with the evacuation of a first group of refugees from detention in Libya, to Niger on the 11th of November. By the end of 2017, a total of 228 refugees had been taken from detention temporarily to Niger. With the massive needs in Libya, this figure is set to increase. The aim is to temporarily accommodate these refugees until durable solutions can be found, including resettlement to third countries. A first group of 25 refugees were resettled to France in December. This intervention is possible due to the solidarity of the Niger government, who have signed a MoU with UNHCR on 26th December to guide the intervention.

Security Situation

Nigeria Situation:

- In the Diffa region, the security situation has somewhat improved, relative to previous months. There have been less reported armed attacks and incursions. This may be due to increased efforts on the part of the security and defence forces. However, cases of armed banditry and kidnappings are reportedly increasing. At least 10 cases of kidnapping for ransom were reported in the month of December. The risk of kidnapping of international staff remains high, which has resulted in the restriction of the movement of international UNHCR staff outside of Diffa town. Additionally, 12 girls were arrested on suspicion of supplying food to Boko Haram, while 4 murders were reported in the commune of Gueskerou. Increased tensions and conflict between agriculturalists and pastoralists were reported in the region.

Mali Situation:

- In the region of Tillabery bordering Mali, the military presence has dramatically increased with the operationalization of the G5 Sahel in early December. The number of large-scale terrorist attacks have reduced as a result. However criminality and banditry is rampant in the region. The population remain worried due to the reported increasing numbers of persons within Niger hiding amongst the population, with connections to various terrorist groups in Mali. Maintenance of peaceful coexistence is essential in this context – a new project has been initiated in this sense in December.

Mixed Migration:

- The situation in Niamey remains calm, however vigilance is required. In the region of Agadez, a new international Security Officer has been recruited. As in the Diffa region, the threat of kidnapping is noted in Agadez. Measures are being taken to ensure the security of the staff, which is increasingly significantly.



UNHCR Representative Alessandra Morelli and Deputy Representative Abdouraouf Gnon-Konde at a joint workshop with the Ministry of Interior to launch the MoU on the ETM process from Libya to Niger (B. Siddo, UNHCR Niger)

Key Achievements per sector – December 2017



Nigeria Situation:

- In the month of December, the number of protection incidents and cases reported in the Diffa region increased compared to the previous month. These incidents include kidnappings, threats, fires, and intercommunal conflicts, as well as SGBV incidents. Additionally, large population movement (286 households) was reported from the islands of the Lake Chad following increased military operations in the area.
- In terms of child protection, 2 training sessions were completed in December to strengthen the capacities of the staff of the Regional Directorates of Civil Status and the Protection of Children. Additionally, sensitization on SGBV was carried out with communities in many communes in December, reaching over 650 people. This was in the framework of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign.
- Phase 2 of the BIMS registration project for the displaced population in the Diffa region progressed in December. At the end of the year, over 55,000 displaced had been biometrically registered. It is intended to finalize this project in the first quarter, however insecurity and threats in the region have slowed the process.
- In December, the Protection Working Group in Diffa held a Strategic Workshop to reflect on the challenges and successes of 2017, and to create strategic objectives for 2018. A similar workshop also held in Niamey with Protection Cluster members.

Mali Situation:

- The BIMS biometric registration process has been completed in all of the Malian refugee camps. The data is being prepared and will be shared shortly.
- From the 13th-24th of December a Protection Training workshop was held in the Tillabery region for all actors intervening in the region, as well as local and regional authorities. A joint Protection mission of 5 days was also carried out in the Tillabery region. Following this, a joint Action Plan was established and validated by the Protection Cluster for the Tillabery region. This is particularly important in the current insecure context. One of the key focuses of the action plan is maintaining peaceful coexistence between displaced and host populations. UNHCR has signed agreements with protection partners for the implementation of priority activities including protection monitoring and social cohesion in 2018.

Mixed Migration Situation:

- In the framework of the Emergency Evacuation Transit Mechanism (ETM), much progress was made in December. At the end of December, a MoU was signed between UNHCR and the Government of Niger regarding the ETM process. This is a major milestone and a huge commitment on the part of the Niger government.
- Two more evacuation flights were successfully completed. The first on the 14th of December brought 74 refugees, the second on the 23rd of December brought 128 refugees, bringing the total number evacuated from Libya to Niger by the end of December to 227. This number is set to rise significantly in early 2018.
- The first group (25 refugees) who were evacuated on the 11th of November were all relocated successfully from Niger to France on the 19th of December, following resettlement interviews. UNHCR is desperately appealing for more resettlement places to be made available, to ensure access to durable solutions for these highly vulnerable refugees. An urgent appeal was issued in December for an additional 1,300 spaces to be made available by March 2018.
- In the region of Agadez, UNHCR is expanding operations significantly, with increasing numbers of persons in need of international protection being identified. UNHCR is receiving referrals from various partners, and working to support the DREC-RM to register those who wish to seek asylum. By the end of December, over 200 asylum seekers had been registered by the DREC-RM, while an additional 532 persons were awaiting registration.
- In December, UNHCR transferred the first group of Sudanese refugees from IOM's transit centre to the UNHCR Case de Passage. However it is evident, with the rapidly increasing numbers of asylum seekers, that the accommodation situation will need to be expanded with the identification of additional Case des Passage (2 more have already been identified) or the construction of a centre, while asylum seekers await their RSD decision.

- A communication campaign to sensitize those persons within the mixed migration flows as produced notable results, with increasing numbers of persons approaching UNHCR directly, or calling the UNHCR Toll Free number, seeking additional information on applying for asylum in Niger.

National:

- In December, UNHCR hosted a workshop with the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Conflict Management of the Niger Government regarding on the creation of a national Law on the protection of IDPs, in line with obligations with the AU convention, as well as the Kampala Convention. It was well received, while a working group with nine members has been established to work on drafting a law, while an operational action plan was also completed.



Arrival of second group of refugees evacuated from Libya to Niger through the ETM on 14th December. A total of 227 vulnerable refugees have been evacuated to Niger by the end of 2017 (A. Penso, UNHCR).

EDUCATION

Nigeria Situation:

- In the month of December, a training was held for staff of the Regional Directorate for Secondary Education, as well as tutors working in the Distance Education Centres for Nigerian refugees. The training was facilitated by the National Examination Council (NECO) from Kano, Nigeria, and was entitled “African Initiative for Curriculum Implementation and Knowledge transfer”. The main objective was to improve the capacities of the participants, in the framework of the accreditation of the examinations for junior and senior exams in Diffa for the 2017 – 2018 school year.
- UNHCR signed a MoU with the University of Diffa regarding the inclusion of Nigerian refugee graduates of the Distance Education Centres in the University, to enable them to continue their studies to the tertiary level. The University is prepared to welcome the students into the various faculties following a French language immersion course, to be organised by the University. This also serves as an opportunity for local students to improve their English language skills.

Mali Situation:

- In December, UNHCR celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the DAFI third level education scholarships programme. This was celebrated in collaboration with the University of Tahoua, where several recipients of the scholarship are currently pursuing their third level studies.

**COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE****Mali Situation:**

- UNHCR has begun implementing targeted assistance for the first time in Tabaryebarey refugee camp. The definition of targeting criteria based on capacities and the subsequent classification of the households has been ongoing for several months. Additionally, UNHCR is working closely with WFP on the definition of a strategy for conditional assistance in the regions hosting Malian refugees, to include activities to benefit the local communities.
- In December, UNHCR and partner, in collaboration with the Ministry of Animal Breeding/Elevage carried out a widespread distribution of animals to the refugee and local population in Tabareybarey and Ayorou. Approximately 550 refugee households and 100 local households received 4 goats (3 female and 1 male). These animals, through UNHCR were all vaccinated by the Regional Directorate.
- In the framework of the animal distributions to support the livelihoods capacities of the population, a Training of Trainers was carried out with 100 refugees focusing on animal breeding techniques, business management, as well as peaceful coexistence.

**WATER AND SANITATION****Mali Situation:**

- Following the closure of Tazalite Refugee Hosting Area (ZAR) in the region of Tahoua, and the subsequent relocation of the population (almost 3,000 people) to the second ZAR of Intikane, there has been difficulty in providing access to water for the population. Work has been underway for several months for the construction of a second water tower in Intikane. This was finally completed in December.

Nigeria Situation:

- The results of a WASH CAP survey completed in November in Sayam Forage refugee camp were released in December. They showed very positive progress including: access to 28.7 l/p/d within the camp, 94% of households using a latrine or toilet for defecation, 90% of the persons with adequate access to a shower. Some challenges noted include the fact that despite access to latrines, over 80% of people still continue to defecate in the open air, while only 43% of the population have the capacity to store clean water in the household.

**SHELTER AND NFI****Nigeria Situation:**

- In the Diffa region, in the framework of the Urbanization project, the division of land parcels in the two communes of Toumour and Diffa has been completed. 3,000 beneficiary households have received their land ownership titles. The construction of durable houses is ongoing in the commune of Maine Soroa.

Key Challenges

Mali Situation:

The key challenge as regards to the Mali situation is in terms of the security situation. With the operationalization of the G5 Sahel in early December, the military presence in the region of Tillabery has significantly increased, with a recent widespread search operation in the region. Despite this presence, local population and refugees report that terrorist elements have infiltrated the local communities to await the opportunity to carry out attacks within Niger. This causes heightened anxiety amongst the population and increases the risk of intercommunal conflict. The insecurity also affects staff present in the field. Several areas have been declared 'No Go Zones' (in the northern part of the region). However staff maintain humanitarian access, moving in convoy.

To achieve the goal of the closure of the camps and socioeconomic integration of the Malian refugees, additional funding is required for structural and longer-term investments to ensure the sustainability of actions to improve self-reliance and to ensure access to basic service and infrastructure at the same level as the host population.

Nigeria Situation:

The continuing insecurity, and more particularly the heightened threat of kidnapping of international staff in the Diffa region is putting pressure on the operation. International staff were confined to Diffa town, while national staff maintain access to the field. However this is not sustainable, and is a stressful situation for the international staff present.

The insecurity and banditry in the region are also delaying activities, including the completion of the BIMS biometric registration of the out-of-camp displaced population in the Diffa region.

Mixed Migration:

In the framework of the ETM, UNHCR continues to evacuate vulnerable refugees from detention in Libya temporarily to Niger. However for this to continue, additional resettlement pledges are essential. 1,300 places have been requested by the High Commissioner on an urgent basis, by the end of March 2018. UNHCR continues to increase the hosting capacities in Niamey, to ensure that all evacuated have access to adequate accommodation, protection and assistance. This requires additional staff, guesthouses and international support.

In Agadez, with the increasing number of asylum seekers approaching UNHCR, increased presence and capacity is required. If the numbers are to continue to increase, as is expected, additional accommodation facilities and human resources will be required to house the refugees, as well as to support the government with the completion of refugee status determination procedures.

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