

# UNHCR Senegal Multi-Country Office

01 September 2020

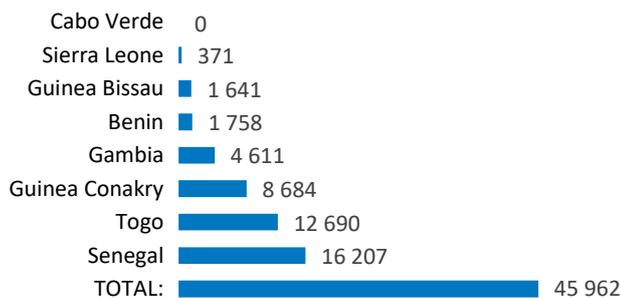
Refugees and other people of concern **have access to the national prevention measures against COVID-19** including health-care assistance and socio-economic actions.

94% of refugees and asylum seekers in MCO countries are in protracted displacement and most viable durable solutions are **local integration or voluntary return**.

MCO Senegal supports Governments to address the Covid-19 situation with particular attention given to **women, girls and persons with specific needs**.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

### MCO Host Countries

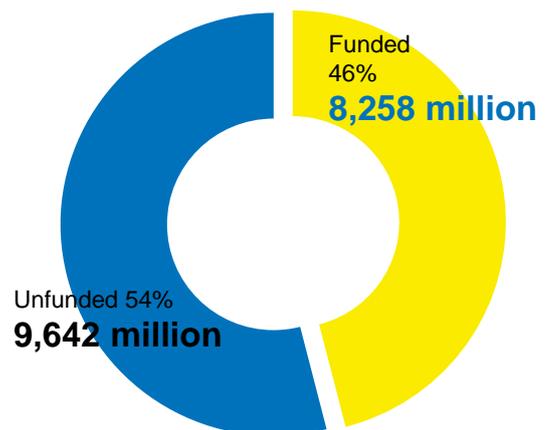


Above-mentioned figures include refugees and asylum-seekers.

## FUNDING (AS OF 29 SEPTEMBER)

# USD 17,9 million

requested for Senegal MCO



## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

- 21 National Staff
- 12 International Staff
- 2 International UNV

### Offices:

- 1 Branch Office in Dakar
- 4 Field Offices in Dakar, Lomé, Bissau and Conakry



Senegal / Distribution of Covid-19 assistance to refugees © UNHCR / WEDO STUDIO

## Benin

### Protection context

- **Working with Partners:** Although UNHCR has no presence in the country, it closely works with the Permanent Secretariat of the National Refugee Commission (SP-CNR) and an NGO, Amnesty National Benin (AIB), both aiming to advocate with the Ministry of Social Affairs for integrating asylum-seekers and refugees into national social services.
- The majority of refugees residing in Benin are from the Central African Republic (more than 70%) and Ivory Coast (some 10%), followed by other nationalities (some 20%).

### Main activities

- Before the COVID-19 crisis, it was intended that with a favourable security situation in Côte d'Ivoire undergoing a process of reconciliation, as well as a peaceful environment in Bangui in the Central African Republic, refugees can be encouraged to return to their places of origin voluntarily in a dignified and safe manner. Despite the suspension of departures during the pandemic, preparatory activities related to voluntary repatriation are still carried out.
- Refugees opting for local integration are assisted by the SP-CNR to obtain residence permits from the host country and improve their livelihoods through income-generating activities as well as by including refugees in national development plans.
- UNHCR aims to strengthen international protection in Benin by supporting the finalization of the amendment of the asylum law as well as by facilitating birth registration in rural areas among migrants, refugees and displaced persons to prevent statelessness.
- Durable solutions in 2020: in early January 2020, 5 Central African refugees were assisted to return to their country of origin.

## Guinea Bissau

### Protection context

- **Working with Partners:** UNHCR works closely with the National Commission for Refugees (CNRD) and an international NGO, Mani Tese. UNCHR also collaborates with the Ministries of Justice and Interior to prevent and respond to statelessness.
- Most refugees fled to Guinea Bissau during the 1990s to escape ongoing violence linked to an armed insurgency in Senegal. As a result of their protracted displacement, the most viable durable solution is local integration through naturalization and land formalization, both of which are advocated for by UNHCR. To enhance the process of local integration and peaceful coexistence, UNHCR, together with its partner CNRD, implement land legalization and awareness-raising activities for the benefit of refugees.
- Some 7,000 refugees were naturalized by a Presidential decree issued in December 2018.

- The Refugee Law n. 6/2008 is currently being revised to be consistent with international standards in refugee protection.
- In 2016, the Government adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (1954) and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (1961). Since then, the country has nominated a government focal point on statelessness. In addition, a National Plan of Action (NAP) for the Eradication of Statelessness was elaborated and approved by the Minister of Justice and Human Rights in November 2018.

### Main activities

- Some 2,500 refugees living in the Cacheu Region are yet to express their interest whether they wish to be naturalized. Due to COVID-19, the process of registration was suspended.
- Together with UNICEF and UNDP, UNHCR carried out a large-scale awareness-raising project between April and July 2020 enabling to sensitize by the Red Cross volunteers more than 75,000 Guinea Bissau citizens, refugees and other categories of people living in more than 95 villages and cities across the country. With the increasing number of COVID-19 cases, the awareness-raising continues over August-October.
- During COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR supported refugees with food, cleaning and hygienic products, medical assistance, cash for rent and basic needs, as well as provided leaflets and posters informing about protection measures.
- Due to the pandemic, certain UNHCR local integration activities have been temporarily suspended, such as capacity building projects and the provision of technical support to the Government and other stakeholders. Aiming to empower the existing national structures in terms of refugee protection, these activities ensure sustainability and create a positive environment for local integration.
- UNHCR continuously advocates for the access of refugees to national services while supporting livelihoods projects to promote refugee's self-reliance.

## Guinea Conakry

### Protection context

- **Working with Partners:** UNHCR collaborates with the Government partners: (i) the National Commission for the Integration and Monitoring of Refugees (CNISR), and (ii) the Organization for Integrated Community Development (ODIC).
- UNHCR also closely works with FAO in agricultural programmes and UNFPA through a periodic distribution of hygiene kits to refugee girls and women, as well as WHO through epidemiological surveillance and modern maternity equipment.
- Close to 1,550 refugees live in the region of Conakry (18%), whereas some 3,700 reside in the camp in the region of Nzérékoré (43%). Almost 80% of refugees originate from the Ivory Coast, and other major nationalities include Senegal, and Liberia.

### Main activities

- Repatriation and local integration are the most viable durable solutions for Ivorians and other refugee nationalities living in Guinea.
- In 2020, 389 Ivorians have declared their intention to return to their country of origin, however due to the Covid-19 pandemic their return has been temporarily put on hold. UNHCR initially planned to assist them in line with the roadmap for the voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees adopted in December 2018, including come-and-tell and go-and-see visits, profiling and intention gathering, documentation, and increasing the cash grant to \$300 (adult and children).
- Departures for voluntary return have been suspended during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, however preparatory activities have been ongoing, such as arranging a humanitarian corridor. On 10 September, 13 families including 60 individuals from the Kouankan 2 camp were assisted to voluntarily return in safety and dignity to Ivory Coast. The departure was organized in collaboration with the UNHCR Guiglo Office in Ivory Coast, including obtaining an approval for the humanitarian corridor, arranging Covid-19 tests at the border, as well as a making arrangements for a convoy.
- Local integration of refugees is facilitated through including all refugees in national state services (education, health, civil registration, documentation, employment, SGBV, child protection, etc.) and by providing income-generating grants to build refugee self-sufficiency.

## Senegal

### Protection context

- **Working with partners:** UNHCR works closely with the National committee in charge of the management of refugees repatriated and internally displaced persons (CNRRPD) and the National eligibility commission (CNE) to coordinate registration and protection activities. To conduct its protection and advocacy activities, UNHCR has partnered with the national NGO, the African Office for Development and Cooperation (OFADEC) and other NGOs.
- In 1989, Senegal recognized nearly 75,000 Mauritanian refugees on prima-facie basis who had fled Mauritania due to a conflict over water resources.
- In 2008-2012, UNHCR facilitated voluntary repatriation of nearly 25,000 refugees to Mauritania. Since 2012, the Government of Mauritania has maintained a position that voluntary repatriation had concluded. As a result, local integration and resettlement have become the most viable durable solutions for refugees in Senegal.
- Continuing to advocate with Mauritanian authorities to reopen voluntary repatriation, UNHCR has been supporting refugees and enabling their local integration in Senegal. UNHCR and its partners also engage in monitoring specific cases of protection, such as SGBV, child protection, health and education.

### Main activities

- Following UNHCR advocacy efforts, authorities are increasingly favourable to the idea of local integration (naturalization and long-term residence permits) and for the

inclusion of locally integrated Mauritanian refugees into the national social service programmes. These are however suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In the context of COVID-19, 48,000 households of refugees, returnees from Casamance and asylum-seekers and other specific groups are included in the national response to the pandemic (distribution of food and hygiene kits; covering of electricity and water bills).
- At the occasion of the World Refugee Day 2020, UNHCR assisted 4,500 families (more than 16,000 people) in Dakar, Thiés, Saint-Louis, Matam, and Tambacounda providing them with hygiene kits. Additionally, 500 most vulnerable families also have received food packages.
- From 2010 to 2015 and further extended to 2017, a vast local integration programme enabled to issue digital refugee identity cards, as well as construct, rehabilitate and equip community infrastructure (school, health posts, latrines, boreholes, wells, etc. ) while strengthening livelihoods by financing agro-pastoral and fishing projects.
- In January 2019, the Government signed with UNHCR a multi-year and multi-partner protection and solutions strategy with key objectives focusing on strengthening the asylum system, enabling access to social services, ensuring durable solutions through naturalization or residence permits, as well as reinforcing coordination, partnerships and advocacy.

## Sierra Leone

### Protection context

- **Working with Partners:** With the closure of the UNHCR office in Sierra Leone, the Government through the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) have assumed full responsibility of refugee protection. Other UNHCR partners include the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children Affairs (MSWGCA), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) /Immigrations, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and other local institutions for the regional delivery of activities.
- The majority of refugees originate from Liberia.

### Main activities

- UNHCR and NaCSA promote local integration and voluntary repatriation as the most viable durable solutions for the residual caseload of 371 refugees.
- NaCSA aims to sensitize refugees to opt for local integration, which can be achieved through education opportunities, livelihood activities, as well as leadership and life skills projects. For those refugees willing to locally integrate, NaCSA advocates for issuing them residence and work permits as well as including refugees into the social security system.
- With the objective to review the 2007 Refugee Protection Act, UNHCR assists Sierra Leone to expedite the amendment of the asylum law in line with international protection principles. In the same vein, UNHCR provides technical and financial support to Sierra Leone to develop a draft law on statelessness determination procedures.

- In 2020 onwards, while UNHCR programme in Sierra Leone is phasing-out and NaCSA is taking ownership of the project, the government is encouraged to assume full responsibility for the funding of the national refugee programmes and structures.
- NaCSA works with the National Registration Authority to complete processing of the expired refugee ID cards through bio-metric registration, which is contingent on funds solicited to process the cards.

## The Gambia

### Protection context

- **Working with Partners:** Although UNHCR has no presence in the country, it collaborates with the Government partners: the Gambia Commission for Refugees (GCR), and an NGO, the Gambia Food and Association Nutrition (GAFNA), who aim to facilitate local integration, while improving livelihoods and peaceful coexistence with the host community.
- Most refugees in The Gambia are from the neighbouring Senegal's Casamance region that remains unstable, which is not conducive for voluntary returns in safety and dignity. Other refugees in The Gambia had fled civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

### Main activities

- Local integration remains the most viable option for Senegalese refugees. During the last verification exercise, the intention survey indicated that 103 refugee households are willing to integrate locally in The Gambia through the long-term residence status and naturalization. However, they face an obstacle of lacking their country of origin documents, such as birth certificates, passports, and ID cards. To tackle that issue, the Governmental partner in The Gambia is open to advocate for issuing attestations 'in lieu'.
- In 2019, UNHCR supported the efforts of the Government to the issue over 1,500 identification cards to refugees and 80 birth certificates to refugee children born in The Gambia.
- In 2020, UNHCR and partners aim to advocate with relevant stakeholders to ensure refugees have equal access to basic services such as education, healthcare, labour markets, civil documentation, long term resident status, naturalisation and permanent ownership of land.
- Aiming to improve the asylum system, UNHCR and partners also engage relevant governmental stakeholders in a comprehensive review of the 2008 Refugee Act with a view to addressing existing gaps and challenges.

## Togo

### Protection context

- **Working with Partners:** UNHCR Togo Field Office implements activities with two partners, namely the National Commission for Assistance to Refugees (CNAR), and an

NGO, the Green Village Foundation focusing on local integration of refugees and promoting their socio-economic inclusion.

- Some 82% of refugees originate from Ghana and 13% from Ivory Coast, among them some 82% live in rural areas and some 18% in urban areas.
- Refugees residing in camps live either in Tandjouaré or Avépozo camp, which are both scheduled to be closed. UNHCR works towards supporting refugees from the Avépozo camp through ensuring their new housing.

### **Main activities**

- Among viable durable solutions for refugees are voluntary repatriation, local integration through naturalization, and resettlement.
- Aiming to help refugees find the most suitable solution, UNHCR facilitated in 2019 obtaining 10-year residence permits for 24 refugees originating from DR Congo and provided them an economic assistance package to ensure their local integration.
- In 2019, 82 refugees were voluntarily repatriated to their countries of origin and 91 refugees were resettled in third countries (Canada and the USA). That same year, 80 refugees were supported with income-generating grants and 21 former beneficiaries received additional IGA reinforcement. 17 refugees were enrolled in vocational training.
- According to UNHCR census, some 1,000 Ghanaian refugees born in Togo (Dankpen) are now eligible to obtain the Togolese nationality. UNHCR advocates with the authorities for ensuring that rural Ghanaian refugees who cannot benefit from nationality by right of soil, nor meet the conditions to acquire residence cards, can be granted citizenship.
- Due to the Covid-19 situation, some local integration activities were temporarily suspended, such as providing legal support for some 575 Ghanaian rural refugees through the acquisition of the Togolese nationality by law of the soil; for 100 urban refugees to obtain privileged residence permits and for some 100 other urban refugees to apply for naturalization. To foster their local integration, UNHCR intended to grant socio-economic packages to legally assisted urban refugees to strengthen the technical capacities of beneficiaries and to help them become self-sustainable. All these activities shall be pursued in 2021.
- To support refugees during the global COVID-19 pandemic, 854 refugee households, with 1984 individuals, received financial assistance via mobile cash transfer for the acquisition of food and protection kits.

## **Cross-cutting multi-country issues:**

- With the objective to reduce the risk of statelessness, UNHCR provides technical and financial support to Benin, the Gambia, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Togo to carry out a census of populations at risk of statelessness. With ongoing legislative reforms in Benin, the Gambia, Guinea, and Togo, UNHCR and

partners advocate for the harmonization of national laws with international standards for the prevention of statelessness.

- The DAFI scholarship program rolled out in 6 out of the 7 MCO countries, and to be launched in Sierra Leone in 2020, has seen a significant success rate of 60% from 69 student in 2018 to 172 students to date. It will unfortunately not be funded by the German Government in 2021 because of lack of funds.

## 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 | USD**

United States of America – USD 1,700,000

UN Covid-19 MPTF – USD 183,967

UN Programme On HIV/AIDS – USD 15,000

Other private donors – 169 - 169

## External / Donor Relations

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