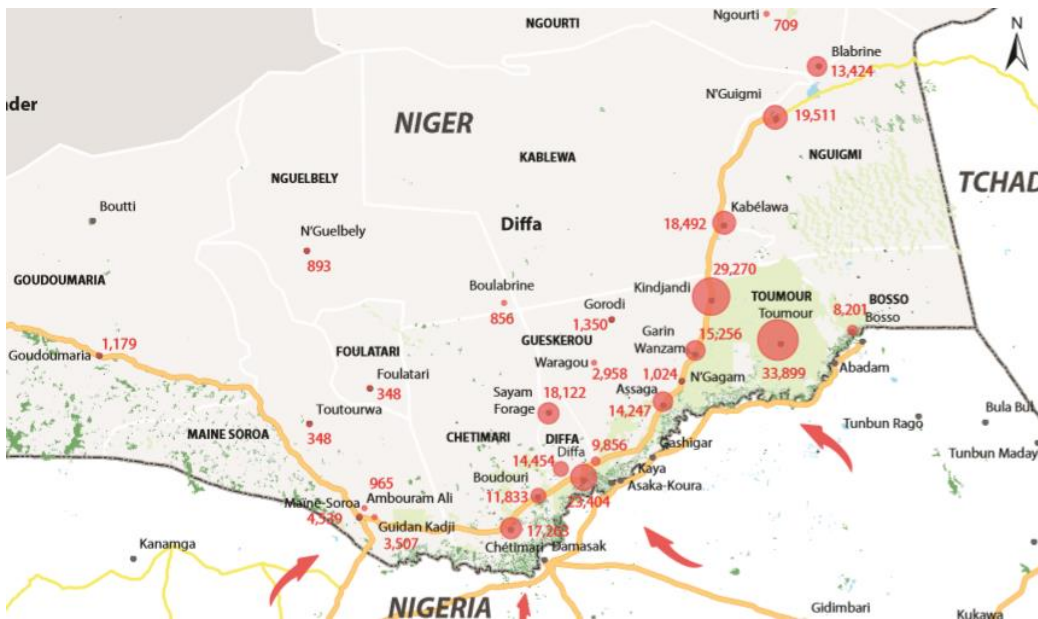


LOOKING BEYOND THE EMERGENCY TOWARD DEVELOPMENT

Background

The Diffa region has been hosting Nigerian refugees fleeing terrorist violence in the northern states of Nigeria since 2013. With the first attacks on Niger territory early 2015 the situation has deteriorated dramatically. In May 2015, the authorities decided to evacuate the population of the Niger region of the Lake Chad Islands.

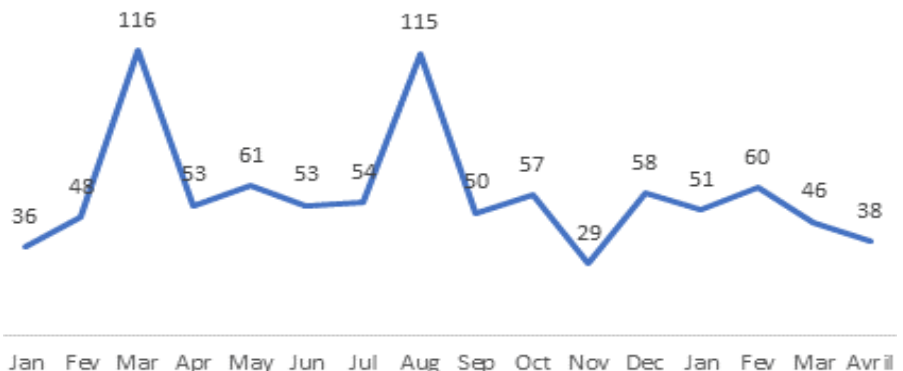


Following the first attacks in the Diffa region, the population on the move has become increasingly mixed. The majority of the displaced are settled in more than **140 spontaneous sites, villages and towns** along the one main road in the region, the **Route Nationale 1**. At the request of the authorities, UNHCR has established two camps: the refugee camp of Sayam Forage and the IDP camp of Kablewa. The latter was closed by the Government in June 2017 after a suicide bomb attack.

The security situation has serious negative effects on the economy of the region, reducing the absorption capacity of the host population and the capacity of the displaced population to support itself. The population of the fertile areas (Lake Chad, Komadougou river) have been displaced, the pastoral routes have been destroyed, and cross-border exchange and trade (seasonal migration, trade of goods) are deeply affected. Despite a significant increase in humanitarian interventions, the needs are still high. Already weak before the crisis, basic services and infrastructure (water, health, and education) are increasingly under pressure and highly dependent on humanitarian actors. The border with Nigeria has been closed in August 2019 which increase the price of essential goods for population. Since April 2019, movements are restricted on the Gueskerou, Toumour, Bosso axis following the discovery of explosive devices, successive attacks and kidnappings. In 2020, attacks against the population with multiple kidnappings, the trademark of Boko Haram, continue as threats towards humanitarian workers.

Evolution of Protection incidents in the Diffa region from Jan 2019 to April 2020

In April 2020, reported protection incidents decreased following the four weeks interruption of telephone lines in Bosso and N'Guigmi departments during the Chadian army's operation, "The Wrath of Bahoma".



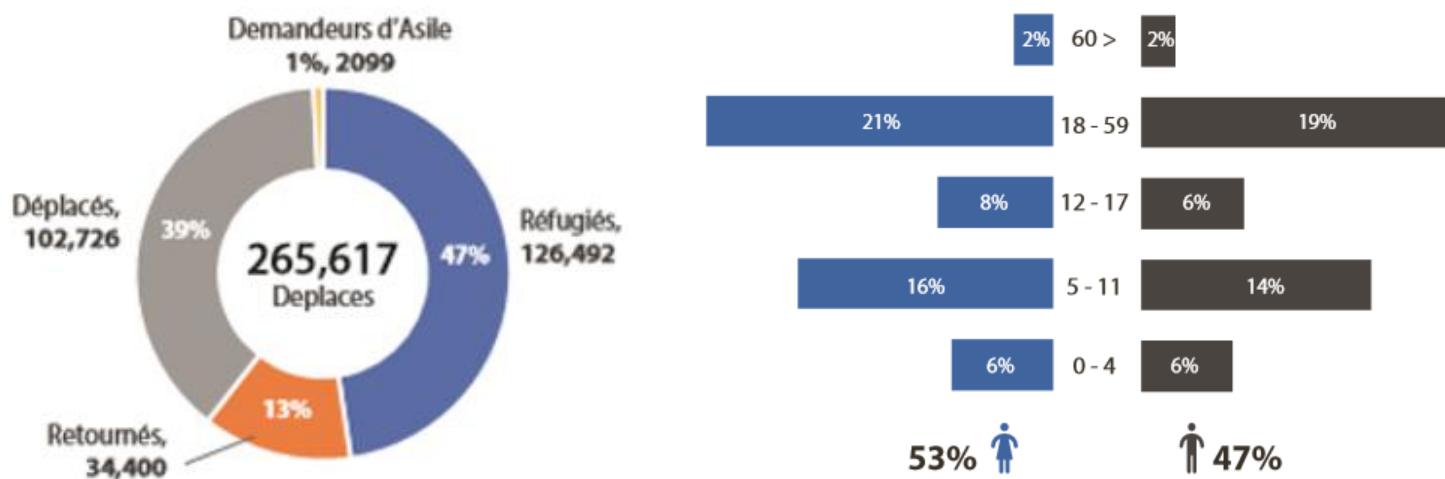
Population Statistics

As of **May 2020**, UNHCR registered biometrically 224,524 displaced people in the region (66,854 household), including 125,849 Nigerian refugees, 65,769 IDPs, 30,807 returnees (Niger nationals who had migrated but returned to Niger) and 2,099 asylum seekers. The population of the Sayam Forage camp is 18,122 individuals.

In March 2020, UNHCR carried out BIMS registration for the unregistered displaced population, including refugees, IDPs and returnees in N'Guigmi commune. The exercise had to stop at the end of the month because of the security and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The latest figures published by the government in May 2020 estimate **265,617** displaced persons.

Government figures as of 4th May 2020



Operation Strategy

The key pillars of the UNHCR strategy for the Diffa region are:

- **Ensure institutional resilience** through capacity development and support to the authorities (locally elected and administrative authorities) in the framework of the Niger decentralisation process;
- **Strengthen the out of camp policy** around the urbanisation program through sustainable interventions and dynamic partnerships including with the World Bank;
- Ensure a coordinated and high-quality **protection response** and maintain an **emergency response** capacity.

Main Milestones

- **Protection response:** Protection actors have improved their coordination and the quality of the response, through better involvement of the community and creation of a more effective referral mechanism. Since January 2020, more than 3,600 refugees from Chad and Nigeria have crossed the Lake Chad island and have found safety in Kindjandi, where UNHCR provides emergency response. The city of Diffa currently hosts more than 23,000 displaced persons.

- **Capacity development and support to the government:** UNHCR engages with substantial efforts to strengthen the capacity of the authorities, not only in the management of the crisis but also for recovery/development interventions.
- **Prevention and response to the COVID-19 pandemic:** In partnership with the NGO APBE and “Bien-être de la Femme Rurale”, 60 women have been trained and equipped to produce and commercialize soap since 2017. As part of the national response, refugees scaled up the production and soap are distributed within the Sayam Forage camp. UNHCR carried out mass awareness raising campaigns, set-up hand washing facilities in all refugee hosting areas and donated medical supplies and equipment to the local authorities. To isolate and treat COVID-19 patients of the whole region, UNHCR rehabilitated a building identified by health authorities.
- **Urbanisation program:** 7 districts with a high population density are benefitting from an urbanisation program, providing legal access to land, water, social housing and job opportunity. In 2017, UNHCR, with the support of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), scaled up the intervention. The aim is to provide 6,000 land parcels, and to construct 4,000 “social houses” for the most vulnerable. To date, 1,647 sustainable houses for the most vulnerable families have already been built, 3,033 persons jobs were created, 2,331 persons were trained in the construction and more than 36,900 persons got a better access to water in 3 districts (Diffa, Assaga and Chetimari).
- **Distance Education Centres:** UNHCR established a Distance Education Programme for Nigerian secondary school students in 2015 allowing young refugees to follow the official Nigeria curriculum while they are in Niger and complete their official Nigerian secondary school exams.
- **Livelihood Activities:** With the University of Diffa, UNHCR follows-up market gardening and fish farming activities inside the Sayam Forage refugee camp. Refugees and local populations also take part in protection environment, fixing sand dunes.

Main Challenges

- The hosting areas are generally poorly equipped. Structural but costly infrastructural investments in irrigation, water supply and electricity are required to enable the population to develop income generating activities;
- The Niger public services are highly dependent on humanitarian actors, which creates a risk of a sharp deterioration in living conditions for the population in case of a funding shortfall;
- Irregular access for humanitarian actors due to the security situation and military operation;
- A worsening security situation generates new major displacements and secondary movements; possible movements of Nigerian refugees back towards Nigeria might also occur.

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LINKS

Regional portal - UNHCR operation page - Twitter