

Niger

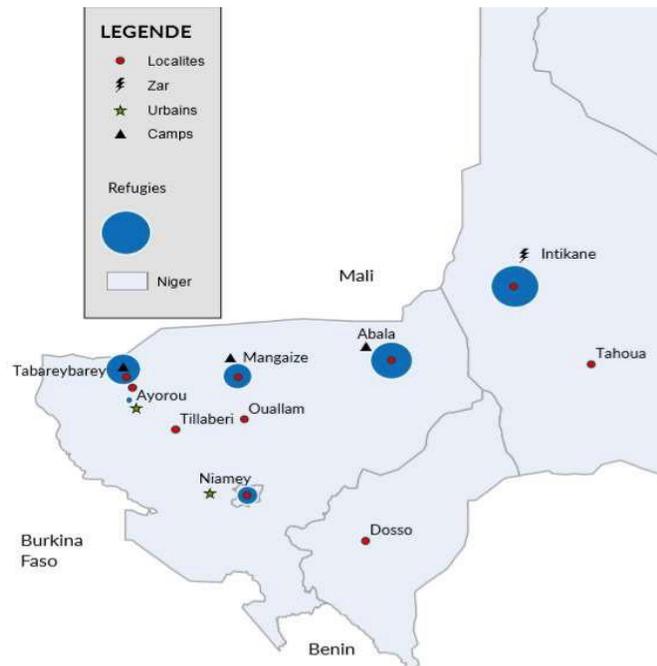
Acceleration of socio-economic integration of Malian refugees

December 2019

Since the outbreak of the crisis in Northern Mali in 2012, Niger is hosting Malian refugees.

As of the end of December 2019, UNHCR Niger has biometrically registered **58,051 Malian refugees**. They are living in 3 areas in the Tillabery region, as well as in a refugee hosting area for nomadic refugees in Intikane in the Tahoua region, and in urban areas such as Niamey.

Malian refugees are recognized on a *prima facie* basis and enjoy a favourable protection environment with the right to settle where they wish, to access basic social services and the formal and informal job market.



UNHCR has 2 field offices in Tillabery and Tahoua and 2 field units in Ayerou and Abala

Security situation

The regions of Tahoua and Tillabery have seen the growth of local non-state armed groups in tandem with or as part of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), exploiting underlying social tensions and structural poverty. Movements of suspected extremists near the borders with Mali and Burkina Faso have been reported. The Government has declared a state of emergency in all Nigerien villages along the border while national and international military operations, including airborne operations, are ongoing.

The groups have not demonstrated a willingness to directly interfere in the implementation of humanitarian activities. Nevertheless, they structurally steal all 4-wheel drive vehicles travelling in the area leaving the passengers unharmed. There is a high risk of kidnapping of unprotected westerners in the areas.

These threats, as well as the ongoing military operations in these areas, have required the implementation of precautionary measures including the mandatory use of armed escort.

Operational strategy and main developments

In the context of prolonged displacement, the assistance and protection strategy for Malian refugees focuses on medium- and long-term solutions that will promote autonomy, self-reliance, and integration into national service systems.

UNHCR and the Government of Niger are accelerating the **out-of-camp policy**. The Malian refugee camps are being closed. UNHCR is currently relocating Malian refugees from the camps of Mangaize and Tabareybarey to the villages of Ouallam and Ayorou. With the support of GIZ, UNHCR and the Government provide legal access to land and social housing for the most vulnerable among the refugee and host population. Moreover, with the support of the EU Trust Fund, UNHCR has set up a positive collaboration and partnerships with the Regional Directorates of Health, Education and Hydraulics, to ensure the inclusion of the refugees in national mechanisms. Finally, an extensive tripartite collaboration has been developed between the World Bank, the Government of Niger and UNHCR to render refugees more resilient.

A **tripartite agreement** between UNHCR and the Governments of Niger and Mali provides a legal framework for voluntary returns. However, the parties consider that security conditions in parts of Northern Mali are not yet conducive to facilitated returns in safety and dignity. Therefore, UNHCR assists those who wish to return voluntarily with a cash grant.

Main challenges

- **Increasing instability** in these areas, measures imposed as part of the State of Emergency and ongoing military operations impact on self-reliance and food security of populations living in insecure areas. Moreover, this has led to an irregular humanitarian access to refugee housing areas, notably to those living out of the camps or urbanized sites nearby the border. Insecurity also cause new cross-border displacement, especially in the areas bordering Mali and Burkina Faso
- The operation is looking for **the support of development partners** to complete its urbanization program and to reinforce infrastructure in the urbanized areas.

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