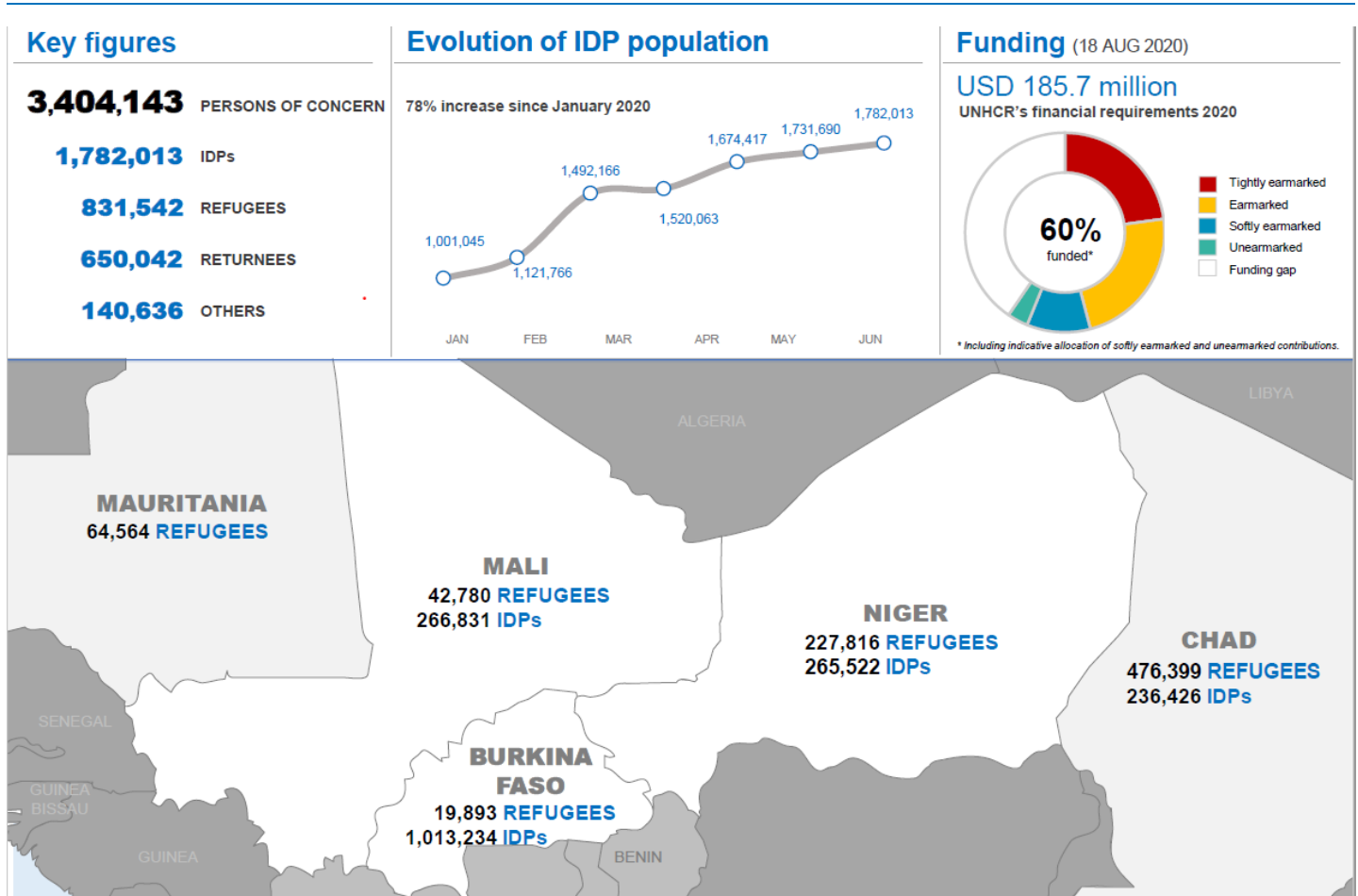


UNHCR Sahel Crisis Response

1-31 July 2020

In the **Sahel**, the **conflict continues to escalate** whilst social and political tensions are rising, forcing more people to flee across the region. As of the end of July 2020, close to **1,000,000 people are displaced within Burkina Faso** representing more than half of all IDPs in the region.

UNHCR entered into a partnership with the **African Development Bank** and the **G5 Sahel** to support the COVID-19 response across the Sahel region. The **USD 20 million project** will allow **Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania** and **Niger** to strengthen their response to the pandemic and mitigate its socio-economic impact.



OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Political and security developments

- In the **Sahel**, the conflict continues to escalate whilst social and political tensions are rising, forcing more people to flee across the region. The persistence and spread of violence, even against sophisticated and well-resourced international military forces, illustrates the need for responses that address the social, economic and political grievances that are being manifested as violent extremism.
- In **Burkina Faso**, the security situation continues to deteriorate in the Sahel, East, North and the Centre North regions as armed groups perpetrate attacks against authorities and civilian populations. In Centre North, on 8 July, the mayor of Pensa was attacked, reported missing before being found dead a few hours later. Fights between different factions are becoming more frequent with severe consequences for civilians. As a result, populations from several villages in the provinces of Soum and Oudalan, in the Sahel region, have left for Gorom-Gorom in search of safety. In addition, challenges linked to humanitarian access persist, where Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) are used on the road linking Djibo to Mentao. The search for a solution regarding lack of access continues within the Working Group on Access and the Civil/Military Coordination actors.

Following parliamentarians' proposal to postpone the legislative elections to next year, a meeting was held on 10 July between the majority and opposition political parties. They confirmed that the legislative elections will be held as initially planned, i.e. at the same time as the presidential elections on 22 November 2020.

- In **Mali**, thousands of people took to the streets in recent weeks, sparking clashes with police. In addition, the security constraints, along with the recent rainfalls and floods in high-risk areas where displaced populations are living (in Kayes, Gao, Koulikoro, Mopti and Timbuktu), further limit access to remote areas where many Persons of Concern (PoC) are located. In this tensed political context, the Operation Takuba conducted by combined European and Sahelian forces has started in **Mali**, in support of the French forces of the Operation Barkhane.
- In **Mauritania**, the overall political and security situation continues to be stable, though continued instability in Mali and its potential impact on Mauritania remain of major concern. The government of Mauritania has included refugees in its national health response to COVID 19 in line with its pledges during the Global Refugee Forum.
- In **Niger**, while much focus of the humanitarian and development community is now on COVID-19, conflict dynamics continued to cause forced movements of the population in the Sahel. Since the beginning of the year, the security situation has been extremely volatile and worrisome with successive lethal attacks against military positions in Inates, Sinegodar and Agando. Several military positions have been abandoned by the defense and security forces and a resurgence of massive attacks targeting the civilian population has been noted. These attacks have triggered several waves of forced displacement of populations to more secure areas. Following the attack on the Intikane Refugee Hosting Area, 26% of the total population of Intikane has moved to the site of Telemces, where UNHCR continues to assist them.
- In **Côte d'Ivoire**, the Council of Ministers adopted on 13 July a decree creating a "Northern Operational Zone" following persistent insecurity at its border with Mali and Burkina Faso. The creation of this zone, following the attack on the Ivorian army post in Kafolo on 11 June 2020, will reinforce military presence to prevent the infiltration of armed groups into the country and address the growing insecurity on its northern borders. In this context, UNHCR and its partners are supporting **Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin** in their contingency planning for a potential influx in the coming months from the conflict in the **Sahel**.

Growing numbers of fatalities due to landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices

The **Sahel** is also seeing growing numbers of fatal incidents due to landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices. While it appears that the intended targets of numerous anti-government and non-state armed groups are the security forces, an increasing number of civilians are indiscriminately killed and maimed. Often living in the most conflict-affected areas, refugees and IDPs are particularly exposed to this risk. In the most recent incident in a refugee camp in eastern **Chad**, on June 24, four refugee children aged from 9 to 12 were killed and three others seriously injured when they picked up an unexploded device and tried to open it. In **Burkina Faso**, on 6 June, a vehicle carrying two refugees hit an IED near Mentao refugee camp. Both were evacuated to Djibo, where they received treatment for their injuries. In **Niger**, five incidents have killed at least five refugees and displaced people while injuring many others since the start of the year. In **Mali**, the civilian population accounts for almost half of the victims of landmines and improvised device explosions in the entire country. At least 42 civilians were killed in 82 incidents between January and May this year, mainly in the Mopti, Gao and Kidal regions. In addition to the high death toll, injuries and their after-effects, including psychological damage, the presence of explosive devices hinders access to pastures, fields, farms, firewood as well as community infrastructure. They also affect the delivery of humanitarian aid and development activities. Mines also pose an additional hazard for refugees and IDPs fleeing violence and persecution and hinders their right to return to their homes. While continuing to support the injured and the families of the victims, UNHCR calls for stronger efforts to mitigate the risks posed by landmines in the **Sahel** region and stresses the importance of broad and comprehensive assistance for all victims, in line with the UN Policy on Mine Victim Assistance.

Population Movements

- Despite official border closures to limit the spread of COVID-19, violence continues to fuel forced displacement within and across the borders of the **Sahel** countries.
- In **Burkina Faso**, many people continue to flee in search of safety. As of 31 July, Burkina Faso hosted 19,893 refugees, 98 per cent of which from Mali. According to CONASUR, there are 978,744 IDPs in the country as of 9 July, a 6.22 per cent increase in comparison to the previous report, which dates back to 7 June. The East region, which has seen an increase in insecurity, is now home to 6.7 per cent of IDPs in the country compared to 7.6 per cent in the North region. During the reporting month, four internal displacements have been reported, on 1st, 4th, 11th and 16th of July, respectively in the East and North regions (Gourma and Loroum provinces) due to security incidents, namely the assassination of community leaders and exactions of local community members. A total of 567 households (4,671 individuals) fled their villages.
- In **eastern Chad**, refugees are still arriving from the neighbouring region of West Darfur in Sudan where inter-communal tensions have escalated since the end of 2019. On 25 July, more than 60 people were reported killed and nearly 60 others wounded during an attack on the village of Misterei in Beida locality, near the Chadian border, around 50km south of Geneina, the capital of West Darfur province. As a result of the violence, over 2,500 people fled to neighbouring Chad. Most of those who fled had only just returned from eastern Chad, after 16,000 had fled similar violence in December last year. Refugees were allowed to seek protection in Chad, despite the border being closed due to COVID-19 and are now being relocated to the Kouchaguine-Moura camp, which is already hosting over 6,000 new Sudanese refugees. In coordination with its partners, UNHCR is scaling up its operations in Chad and West Darfur State by increasing emergency assistance to affected populations, ensuring registration of refugees in order to respond adequately to their needs. With the conflict in West Darfur showing no sign of abating, it is expected that this displacement crisis will continue as well as the humanitarian needs of all affected populations.
- In **Mali**, UNHCR was informed of the arrival of new spontaneous returning refugees in Gossi. To date, 79 more households (400 persons), returning from Burkina Faso, were identified in Gossi. UNHCR shared the

information with DRDSES for registration. Consultations are underway with UNHCR's office in Dori, Burkina Faso, to take the appropriate actions in terms of verification and response. According to returning refugees, contacted by phone, other Malian refugees are said to be on the move from Mentao, Burkina Faso, to different localities in Timbuktu region and probably Gao. Monitoring is in progress.

- In **Niger**, internal displacement has almost doubled in the last 12 months and figures keep rising in the Tillabery and Tahoua regions as armed groups are ordering populations to leave their villages, forcing many to flee across the border into Mali. An increasing number of Malian refugees consider it safer to return to their home country rather than remain in Niger. In Ayerou, 875 households made up of 1,153 individuals have applied for facilitated voluntary return. Voluntary repatriation is however temporarily suspended due to Covid-19. To date, 69 households of 278 Malian refugees who benefitted from a grant for facilitated return, have returned to Ayerou. In Ouallam, 227 households of 1,100 individuals confirmed their intention to return to their area of origin. Counselling is being provided at the location of these households while returns activities are postponed.

Mixed movements in the Sahel

On 28 July, UNHCR and the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) at the Danish Refugee Council released a new report titled '*On this journey, no one cares if you live or die*', which focuses on the mixed population flows between West and East Africa and Africa's Mediterranean coast in which thousands of refugees and migrants are dying, while many are suffering extreme human rights abuses. Based on data collected by MMC and additional sources, the report suggests that a minimum of 1,750 people died on these journeys in 2018 and 2019 while attempting to cross the Sahara Desert. This represents an average of 72 deaths per month, making it one of the deadliest routes for refugees and migrants in the world. While most reports and data are still coming in for 2020, at least 70 refugees and migrants are known to have died in 2020 already, including at least 30 people that were killed at the hands of traffickers in Mizdah in late May. Other hotspots for fatalities included Sabha, Kufra, and Qatrun in southern Libya, the smuggling hub of Bani Walid south-east of Tripoli and several places along the West African section of the route including Bamako and Agadez. These deaths are in addition to the thousands who have died or gone missing in recent years while attempting desperate journeys across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe via North Africa. **Niger**, which lies at the crossroad of the Sahara and the Sahel, of West and Central Africa, has become a major hub for mixed movements northwards to Libya, Algeria and the Mediterranean. At the same time, the country receives an increasing number of people fleeing Libya or deported from Algeria. In response to this complex humanitarian and security situation, UNHCR works with the Government of Niger to provide protection for the asylum-seekers and refugees before reach Europe and seek durable solutions for them, such as resettlement, local integration or voluntary return to their country of origin, if the security conditions allow. Complementary legal pathways, such as family reunification, study visa or humanitarian evacuations are also examined, although the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a suspension of all voluntary return and travel to third countries.

Protection Monitoring

- UNHCR and DRC are spearheading Project 21, a harmonized regionwide protection monitoring system in three pilot countries: **Burkina Faso**, **Mali** and **Niger**. In the three-month pilot phase, data related to GBV, education, physical protection, community engagement, documentation/nationality, child protection and solutions was collected, and the following issues were highlighted in a recently published dashboard:

- ✓ 69 per cent of households and key informants interviewed expressed satisfaction with freedom of movement. However, there are restrictions mainly due to armed group activism, curfews imposed in areas where there are military operations and widespread violence. COVID-19 movement restriction measures were mentioned by 7 per cent of the households interviewed.
 - ✓ SGBV directly related to conflict accounts for 10 per cent of incidents reported (risk of attack). Forced and child marriages / physical violence represents respectively 25 per cent and 15 per cent of GBV incidents. Female genital mutilation represents 14 per cent. Almost three quarters of people say they have access to support services, although access constraints are clearly identified. 92 per cent of respondents report that due to COVID-19, GBV incidents have increased.
 - ✓ Lack of birth registration and documentation, already pervasive (37% of children), affects more children born on the move (50%). 87 per cent of respondents say they know the procedures for issuing birth certificates but report that they cannot have access due to lack of supporting documents, cost and distance.
 - ✓ 62 per cent of families surveyed indicate that children do not attend school regularly. 51 per cent indicate that this irregularity is linked to the closure of schools prior to the COVID-19 crisis. Regarding the continuity of education during the COVID-19 pandemic, only 6 per cent of families surveyed reported that children have access to distance education programmes set up by the Government, which poses a serious threat for learning opportunities and creates an increased risk of drop out.
- In **Burkina Faso**, in the Centre North region, the monitoring activities led to the identification of 34 cases of right violations, 82 per cent of which are sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). In addition, the monitoring and awareness-raising activities carried out by protection monitors helped identify people with specific needs, including women at risk, people living with disabilities and the elderly. In Dori, women at risk represent a majority of 57 per cent of those identified. The most vulnerable protection cases received a cash-based intervention from UNHCR partners and they are referred to the appropriate institutions and organizations present in the field.

Following discussions between the Government of Burkina Faso and UNHCR on the relocation of refugees to Goudoubo camp, a relocation and security plan was adopted: refugees willing to relocate will be able to do so by October 2020 at the latest. This relocation is conditional to 1/ security arrangements being strengthened; 2/ the voluntary repatriation of some 3,000 individuals who have opted to go back to Mali; and 3/ a tripartite meeting between the Governments of Burkina Faso and Mali and UNHCR to facilitate these returns. Consultations and sensitization with refugees have already begun, while an intention survey was conducted in June. A joint evaluation of the camp facilities carried out by CONAREF, UNHCR and its partner AIRD, established that most of the shelters were damaged and will require rehabilitation. UNHCR continues to advocate for durable solutions for refugees, including the possibility of local integration.

Documentation activities for refugees also took place during the reporting period, strictly adhering to COVID-19 prevention measures. ID card renewal for refugees began on 1 July in Dori and allowed for 527 individuals to be enrolled. In Bobo Dioulasso, 526 refugees whose documents had expired since 2019 were issued new ones. This brings to near completion the plan to issue 20,000 national ID cards and 30,000 birth certificates to IDPs and the local population living with them in the Sahel, Central North and North regions.



Refugee having her picture taken in Dori by the National Identification Office (ONI) after being registered. @UNHCR/C. Ngatta

- In **Chad**, the security situation in the Lake Chad province remains volatile with frequent attacks by non-state armed groups and the ongoing extensive military operation, which have caused the disruption of telephone lines in parts of the province. Combined with the measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission, including restrictions on movement, the ability to monitor human rights violations is limited in the region creating an environment of impunity and perpetuation of human rights violations. For the month of July, 44 protection incidents (excluding SGBV incidents) were reported by the Chadian Red Cross, OXFAM and COOPI. Most incidents involved attacks by non-state armed groups in the departments of Nougouba and Kaiga-Kindjira bordering Niger and Nigeria. Most of the victims (33/44) were men and boys and were subjected to physical aggressions and homicides. Mines, unexploded ordnance (UXO) and the reported use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by non-state armed groups in the Lake Chad province since end of 2019 are presenting growing threats to host populations, refugees and IDPs in the region. On 31 July, an IED exploded a military vehicle killing two people onboard 15 km from the Diamerom site hosting some 17,500 IDPs. The Protection Cluster is advocating for a reinforcement of risk education and anti-mining activities and has contributed to a CERF Rapid Response for the protection and assistance needs of 42,283 newly displaced persons following the attack on Boma at the end of March 2020 and whose needs remain largely unmet.
- In **Mauritania**, the most acute problem refugees face is their loss of livelihoods due to the stringent measures adopted by the Government to prevent the propagation of COVID-19. From 8 to 9 July, UNHCR conducted a sampling survey on socio-economic and protection impacts of COVID-19 on refugees in Mbera camp, in partnership with its camp management partner, LWF1. Ten trained refugee surveyors visited 102 households (0.8 per cent of the total households in the camp) and asked questions regarding food, health, WASH, livelihoods, education and connectivity, and SGBV/child protection. Registration of Malian asylum seekers in Nouakchott (merged registration-RSD), which has been suspended for three months, resumed on 1 July. To minimise contact, interviews are being conducted by telephone. Interviewed asylum-seekers are requested to physically present themselves to the registration centre only when they need to submit necessary documents and register their biometric information. All the staff are provided with PPEs to protect themselves.
- In **Niger**, armed groups continue to infiltrate villages, killing mayors and local leaders, looting shops, stealing cattle, recruiting combatants, forcibly collecting a tax and threatening villagers. They have also systematically destroyed the education facilities forcing teachers to flee. Thousands of children have been unable to attend school for a year. Constant pressure is exercised on the population whom suffer from severe reprisals in case of cooperation with the military and police forces. The national Government of Niger recently extended the state of emergency in the Tillaberi region, where it was first introduced in 2017. Mandatory military escorts and other measures render humanitarian access to several IDP hosting sites challenging and have delayed assistance to those in need.

UNHCR and partners are developing an action plan to help maintain the civilian and humanitarian character of Intikane and promote peaceful coexistence. In this regard, military forces and UNHCR's partners are being trained on the importance of maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum. Also, during the month of July, protection monitoring missions to the temporary Telemces site have taken place, resettlement and on livelihood support is also being offered, while water trucking continues to the site.

UNHCR RESPONSE

Covid19

- *To address the new challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic in the Sahel, UNHCR Operations are strengthening national healthcare systems, WASH structures and services in the main hosting areas and expanding livelihoods opportunities and cash assistance to help mitigate the negative socio-economic impact of the pandemic on refugees and IDPs.*
- **Addressing the economic impact of the pandemic.** The **COVID-19** pandemic is having a severe economic impact on the region, especially on forcibly displaced populations who are often employed in the informal sector with little job security nor social safety nets. In this context, UNHCR is pursuing its strategy of boosting refugees' livelihoods while allowing them to participate in the COVID-19 response through paid production of soap, masks and bleach. In **Burkina Faso**, eight refugees in Dori were supported to produce 35,000 masks for IDPs, refugees and host populations by the end of June. In July, ten female refugees started training in soap production; they will start producing once the certification process is completed. In **Mali**, UNHCR is supporting 222 refugee, IDP and host community women to produce soap and masks in collaboration with UN Women. In **Niger**, UNHCR supports refugees in the production of soap and masks in Niamey and key refugee-hosting regions. The project consists in providing cash work for a total number of 937 refugees, IDPs and host community members, who will be able to produce 165,000 liters of bleach, 102,000 laundry soaps, 82,500 liters of liquid soap and 265,000 masks. So far, over 50 per cent of the of targeted persons of concern have been trained to produce masks, soap and bleach, or in marketing.
- In **Burkina Faso**, as of 31 July 2020, there were 1,150 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 947 recoveries and 53 deaths. To date, there are no confirmed cases among populations of concern to UNHCR. The Government has progressively eased some of the precaution measures and announced on 22 July the reopening of air borders as of 1 August, while land borders remain closed until further notice. UNHCR and its partners continue to support the Government to address the crisis and focus its efforts on sensitization, prevention and response to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on people forced to flee in nine regions of the country. As part of sensitization efforts benefiting the populations of the Centre North region, UNHCR's partner broadcasted 126 awareness-raising spots and 84 short programmes on local radio stations. In addition, protection committees organized 30 awareness-raising sessions for the benefit of over 980 people. To date, UNHCR and its partners distributed over 4,000 hand washing devices, almost 225,000 bars of soap, 9,000 containers of liquid soap, and more than 55,700 masks. UNHCR also provided in-kind donations to regional health authorities. On 24 July, the Minister of Health expressed deep appreciation for UNHCR's support to the authorities' fight against the pandemic and highlighted continued support for specific needs.
- In **Chad**, 935 people had tested positive to COVID-19 between 19 March and end of July. 75 deaths and 813 recoveries have been recorded. There is no person of concern to UNHCR among the confirmed cases. The opening of the International Airport in N'Djamena on 1 August will facilitate the departure and arrival of UNHCR staff to strengthen the humanitarian work. In the meantime, UNHCR continues to inform and raise awareness among the population under its mandate about barrier measures to prevent the spread of the virus.
- In **Mali**, UNHCR continues to support three government-led COVID-19 regional response plans in Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao (covering Menaka). On 15 July, UNHCR donated additional health equipment to regional authorities in Gao region. The donation included 90 hospital beds, 90 mattresses, 100 blouses, 10 stretchers and 8,100 masks. In addition, six ambulances will be donated to the regional health authorities of Gao, Timbuktu, Mopti, Kayes, and Bamako. From 20 to 22 July, 112 people (71 women, 41 men) benefitted from four awareness sessions on COVID-19 protective measures against COVID-19, organised by the Luxembourg

Red Cross, UNHCR's partner, in Lere, Gargando, Gossi, and Douekire. In Mopti, 20 persons of concern (14 women, 6 men) took part in similar sessions conducted by AMSS, UNHCR's partner.



Part of the medical equipment donated by UNHCR to the Malian authorities in the Gao region to support their response to COVID-19. © UNHCR Mali

- In **Mauritania**, in Hodh Chargui, at the request by the governor, UNHCR and its partners engaged with and trained thirty-two youth volunteers in the creation of a community network to raise awareness of the risks related to COVID-19, as well as to carry out contact tracing and to notify the health authorities of suspected cases. Meanwhile, the awareness raising measures that were put in place in Mbera camp since the very beginning of the health crisis have resulted in 100 per cent awareness of the COVID-19 risks and preventive activities, as demonstrated by UNHCR's rapid assessment. Further, UNHCR delivered a large quantity of PPEs to Bassikounou. The items include 7,000 face masks (N95/FFP2), oxygen masks, resuscitators and examination gloves. These will be handed over to partners and local authorities so that all the health structures in Bassikounou are equipped with appropriate PPEs.
- In **Niger**, prevention and response to the pandemic remain paramount. While UNHCR continues to deliver life-saving aid, the organization has set up a strategy focusing on increased coordination with the Government and other stakeholders. In the Tillaberi and Tahoua regions, this includes support to the authorities with prevention and curative equipment and supplies, including isolation centres, the set-up of hand washing basins and sensitization in all refugee-hosting areas as well as the production of soap, face masks and bleach to be distributed for free among persons of concern and vulnerable households in the hosting communities and hospitals of the areas affected by COVID-19.

In Telemces temporary site, two latrine and shower blocks have been rehabilitated. In Abala, a total of 80 latrines are being constructed by Mercy Corps while in Ayerou, the Spanish Red Cross is building family latrines for GIZ-financed housing. 540 hygiene kits have also been distributed in Ayerou.

Shelter and Core Relief Items

- *The need for shelter and basic household items is growing with the scale of displacement in the Sahel, where refugees and IDPs often reside in overcrowded conditions. During the period under review, rain and flooding have caused damage to makeshift shelters, highlighting the need for decent housing for refugees and IDP communities and their hosts. UNHCR operations are working with partners to build, repair and rehabilitate shelters while distribution of shelter kits to affected populations are ongoing.*

- In **Burkina Faso**, efforts to mitigate risks and the consequences of the rainy season continue. The Minister for Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Social Cohesion issued an administrative circular calling upon governors and mayors to take mitigation measures against the risk of floods. Following storms, violent winds and heavy rains, many shelters in the Centre North and Sahel regions were destroyed, including hard-shelled refugee housing units (RHUs). UNHCR and shelter partners continue to support families affected by floods through shelter rehabilitation, by strengthening structures to withstand winds and rain, and advocating for relocation to areas not prone to floods. UNHCR identified the need for more than 600 shelters for the most vulnerable families and supported the setting up of RHUs as well as distributed tarpaulins. The Agency also provided Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) for shelter to over 400 IDP families in Dori, for a total of FCFA 85,600,000 (USD 153,000). The Mayor of Kaya allocated five hectares to build a site, with a possibility of further expansion. UNHCR, OCHA and UNICEF conducted a joint mission to assess the viability of the site. The Shelter Cluster, led by UNHCR, is also exploring other types of more durable shelter solutions that are more adapted to Burkina Faso's context and weather conditions.



Focus group discussions with IDP families benefiting from shelter assistance. Nyarala, Dori. ©UNHCR/M.A. Kaberuka

- In **Chad**, UNHCR in partnership with the Chadian Red Cross (CRT) finalized the construction of 900 shelters for 900 IDP households in Nguorerom, Kokolom, Ngoutou Komboua, Kalindoua, Fourkoulom, Melea Djourou, Dar-Nahim and Kafia sites located in Lake Chad province. Moreover, UNHCR provided 2,111 households with 422 blankets, 4,222 mats, 4,222 Jerrycans, 2,111 buckets, 2,111 kitchen-sets and 2,111 tarpaulins in the relocation site for displaced people of Amma in the Lake province.
- In **Mauritania**, impact surveys conducted among refugees in Mbera Camp showed that many are struggling to meet their basic needs and lack core relief items. In response, UNHCR distributed non-food items to all households between 14 and 16 July. The items included three bars of soap, clothes donated by UNIQLO and hygiene kits to all women/girls of child-bearing age (around 20,000). This was followed by the monthly food distribution which took place from 19 to 26 June, in coordination with WFP and partners.
- In **Niger**, 1,702 emergency shelter kits were donated to refugees and IDPs in Tillabery and Tahoua regions in July – benefitting almost 12,000 vulnerable persons. The one-stop-shop in Ouallam, inaugurated on 7 July, will provide protection and assistance for all urban asylum-seekers and refugees, accessing all services and information as well as any multi-sectoral assistance provided by government and NGO partners. On 10 July, UNHCR handed over infrastructure of the former refugee camps of Tabareybarey and Mangaize to the authorities. In Ayorou, Ouallam and Abala, brick production resumed, with two sample houses completed and 22 workers are trained in Abala, as part of the project of build houses for displaced and host communities.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

- *In July, UNHCR operations in the Sahel, intensified sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response programmes, including by expanding mobile clinic services in hard to reach areas and strengthening referral mechanisms as well as sensitization campaigns and legal assistance.*
- In **Burkina Faso**, UNHCR continues to strengthen its protection response for IDPs, including on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). In Wendou site, in the Sahel region, UNHCR and its partner ICAHD organized awareness-raising sessions for IDPs and host community families, with a focus on issues affecting the community, including SGBV, and referral to partners for follow up. In addition, UNHCR continued to provide medical, psychosocial, and legal support and referrals to services to many survivors of SGBV in the North, Centre North and Sahel regions, through mobile clinics and SGBV mobile teams. The mobile clinic organized a consultation and awareness-raising session with local authorities and social workers on community mechanisms for identifying SGBV cases, with an emphasis on providing care within 72 hours. Furthermore, UNHCR continues to develop its partners' capacity on SGBV standard guidelines, psychosocial support and case management.
- In **Chad**, the number of SGBV incidents reported during this period (696) has increased by 30 per cent compared to the same period in 2019 (534). This increase can be attributed to COVID-19 and the disruption it caused in the lives of most families. Overall, 96 per cent of survivors are women and girls compared to 4 per cent men and boys. This represents an increase of two per cent in the number of surviving women and girls compared to the first half of 2019. The three most prevalent types of violence are: physical attacks (38%), psychological violence (30%) and denial of resources (21%). Compared to the first half of 2019, there is a five per cent decrease in physical attacks against a five per cent increase in psychological violence and two per cent in denial of resources compared to 2019. Children represent 15 per cent of survivors. The three most reported types of violence against children are: physical assault (42%), rape (24%) and forced marriage (17%). In response, all survivors received appropriate support. A total of 2,104 responses were made. 35,679 people, including 22,618 women, were reached through 169 prevention activities.
- In **Mauritania**, 29 per cent of households from the most vulnerable categories stated that they did not feel comfortable around their spouses during confinement due to lack of freedom and means, restriction of movement, unemployment, stress, child management and boredom. These concerns have not yet manifested in an increase in normal SGBV case call trends. UNHCR is enhancing communications with both men and women on SGBV prevention as well as legal, safety, health, and psychosocial support. In urban areas, UNHCR partners in Nouakchott ensured the continuity of psychosocial support through counselling sessions by phone by a trained psychosocial worker.

Education

- *As the countries of the Sahel continue the progressive reopening of schools for exam level classes, UNHCR is supporting the authorities and partners in their efforts to ensure a smooth return to school by contributing to sensitization and capacity-building activities for teachers and students on safety measures against COVID-19. UNHCR and its partners also rebuilt, rehabilitated or are constructing new classrooms in addition to installing water systems. Moreover, UNHCR is providing personal protective equipment and assists in the cleaning and fumigation of school premises. UNHCR is also supporting the improvement of ICT infrastructure to facilitate distance learning methods by providing increased connectivity, expanding radio broadcast coverage, establishing Wi-Fi hotspots, and providing laptops to teachers.*
- In **Burkina Faso**, 83 refugee students took part in the exam session for primary and secondary schools. Following the exams, which began on 14 July after being postponed for a month due to COVID-19, 342 portable solar radios were distributed to support distance learning by enabling children to access the Ministry of Education's national programme broadcast. In total, 4,000 radios were distributed to refugee and host community students. The radios and school kits that accompany them allow students to continue learning in spite of school closures due to the sanitary crisis and to prepare for the upcoming school year.
 
- In **Chad**, following the closure of all schools in the country since 19 March due to COVID-19, students that were preparing to take exams during the summer of 2020 returned to class on 25 June. Out of the 1,744 refugee students enrolled in the final year of lower secondary, 1,353 returned to classes, a loss of 22 per cent. For the last year of upper secondary, 1,069 baccalaureate candidates returned to class out of the 1,420 that were registered in March, a loss of 25 per cent. While all students should return to class in September, the statistics are already showing the negative effects of COVID-19 on the schooling of refugee children. At tertiary level, all refugee students also gradually returned to university and the scholarship agreement between UNHCR and the French Embassy in Chad was renewed on 17 June for a third cohort of five refugee students for Master-level studies.

*Student receiving a radio for distance learning, after completing primary education.
©UNHCR/A. Sawadogo*
- In **Mali**, as part of the Education Cannot Wait-supported activities, UNHCR distributed 49 solar radios and 49 school stationary kits to 97 children, including 32 girls, in Segou and Niono (Segou region). In partnership with Stop Sahel, UNHCR also started the construction of nine blocks of three classes in Severe, Koro and Mopti (Mopti region), Menaka, N'tillit and Gao (Gao region), and Gossi, Goundan and Timbuktu (Timbuktu region).
- In **Mauritania**, UNHCR has been supporting distance learning in Mbera camp and the methodologies are being replicated in the host country as a successful model. Given the challenges in terms of refugees' connectivity options, as demonstrated in the recent rapid socio-economic survey – whereby only two per cent of the households have unlimited internet connection to receive online courses and only four per cent have radios – where educational courses are broadcast, the small-group teaching, distribution of hard copies, and mobilization of parents associations are also encouraged.
- In **Niger**, UNHCR distributed stationary kits to 25 primary and 55 secondary refugee students, along with 23 kits for teachers forced to move to Telemces following an earlier attack on Intikane and the destruction of the school there. In Ayorou and Ouallam, UNHCR also rehabilitated 21 classrooms damaged by storms, while four emergency classrooms were set up in Ayorou. In the Maradi region, NRC, UNHCR's partner, organized catch-up sessions to better prepare students for the next school year. The programme, covering the school closure from July to September, reaches 2,634 children, of whom 1,178 are refugees, in the 3 "villages d'opportunité".

Energy and Environment

- *The **Sahel** is one of the regions most impacted by climate change in the world. This has been caused by decreased rainfall and a depletion of soil due to agricultural overexploitation and progressive deforestation of the original savannahs as a result of cutting firewood, bush fires and stray animals. To address this critical dimension of the regional crisis, UNHCR is adopting a do-no-harm approach and an eco-friendly response. It is to strengthening community-based preparedness to prevent climate-related forced displacement and promoting and supporting the use of clean energy as well as plastic and waste collection in areas hosting displaced populations.*
 - In **Burkina Faso**, regular population movements to Dori increased pressure on access to safe drinking water, for which access was already limited. UNHCR had put in place water trucking to deliver potable water. Nevertheless, the early onset of the rainy season and inaccessibility to the site led to a temporary halt of rotations for a few days. As a result, the weekly volume of water delivered has decreased. As an alternative, a water tank with a capacity of 1,200 liters was installed, with a solar water pump. In Ouahigouya, North region, 100 solar lamps were distributed to IDPs who benefited from shelter assistance – the lamps can be used to charge phones.
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- Distribution of solar lamps by Canadian Ambassador and UNHCR, WFP and IOM Representatives. Youba, North region.
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- In **Mauritania**, the local authorities (Hakem and mayors of the department of Bassikounou), together with UNHCR and its partner RET-Germany, convened a meeting to discuss locations to plant 4,000 trees over the next few months, in an effort to partly restore the natural resources that have been depleted due to firewood collection by the refugees.
 - In the **Niger**, UNHCR refilled 381 gas bottles in Ouallam city, and collected 56.5 m³ of waste among the communities of Ouallam and Abala, which was transported to landfill and recovery sites. Rehabilitation of used soil continues in Inazdane. In the Tillaberi region, 147 people took part in sanitation trainings.

COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP

- *To support a comprehensive and sustainable response to forced displacement in the Sahel, UNHCR believes strongly in the need to build and sustain partnership and collaboration to raise awareness of the crisis and mobilize financial and technical support from all relevant stakeholders.*
- As part of its effort to promote a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing the needs of refugees and IDPs, UNHCR has entered into a tripartite agreement with the **African Development Bank** and the **G5 Sahel** to support the COVID-19 response across the five countries of the Sahel region. Funded through the framework of the African Development Bank's COVID-19 response facility, the [USD 20 million project](#) will allow the Governments of **Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania** and **Niger** to strengthen their national health response to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and limit its social and economic impact in a region already facing a dire humanitarian crisis. Implemented with the support of UNHCR, the project will prioritize activities in areas most impacted by conflict and violence, with high a concentration of forcibly displaced people and limited presence of government institutions. In line with the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, this

partnership serves as a model for other financial and development entities to explore and engage in addressing the massive needs created by forcible displacement during the pandemic.

- In **Burkina Faso**, the Shelter Cluster adopted the priorities for the remainder of the year, including revisions to the current shelter response and the transition towards more durable solutions, an analysis of partners' capacity and further analysis on the shelter and non-food items (NFI) needs of IDPs, as well as the strengthening of advocacy efforts with regional authorities for the consolidation of sites, among others.
- In **Niger**, with forced displacement considered a development, poverty reduction and climate issue, UNHCR interventions target not only refugees and IDPs, but also host communities who live in same conditions of high vulnerability, aiming towards economic integration and social inclusion. The 'out-of-camp' strategy is operationalized through ongoing collaborations with the World Bank, GIZ, EU and ILO. Through its convener role, UNHCR is also aiming at strengthening relationship with private sector actors as they are a crucial partner for boosting economic growth and job creation.

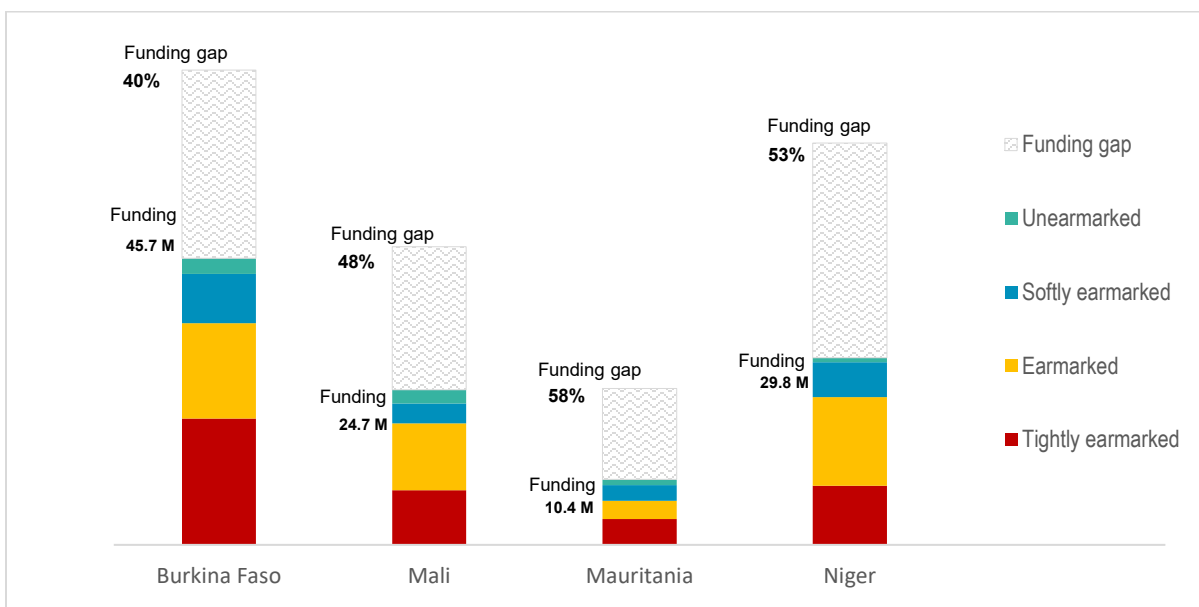
COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

Communication and advocacy pieces recently published by UNHCR on the Sahel crisis:

- [US\\$20 million for Sahel drive to curb COVID-19, 23 July 2020](#)
- [Landmines, improvised explosive devices pose deadly risks for displaced in Sahel and Lake Chad, 28 July 2020](#)
- [Thousands of refugees and migrants suffer extreme rights abuses on journeys to Africa's Mediterranean coast, new UNHCR/MMC report shows, 29 July 2020](#)

DONORS

Sahel Appeal funding per country (USD) – As of 18 August 2020



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CONTACTS**Regional Bureau for West & Central Africa**

Romain Desclous, Senior Communication Officer: desclous@unhcr.org, Tel: +221 78 639 6385

Antoine Sfeir, Regional Reporting Officer: sfeira@unhcr.org, Tel: +221 77 332 58 57

Twitter : [@UNHCRWestAfrica](https://twitter.com/UNHCRWestAfrica) – Facebook : [UNHCR West & Central Africa](https://www.facebook.com/UNHCRWestAfrica)