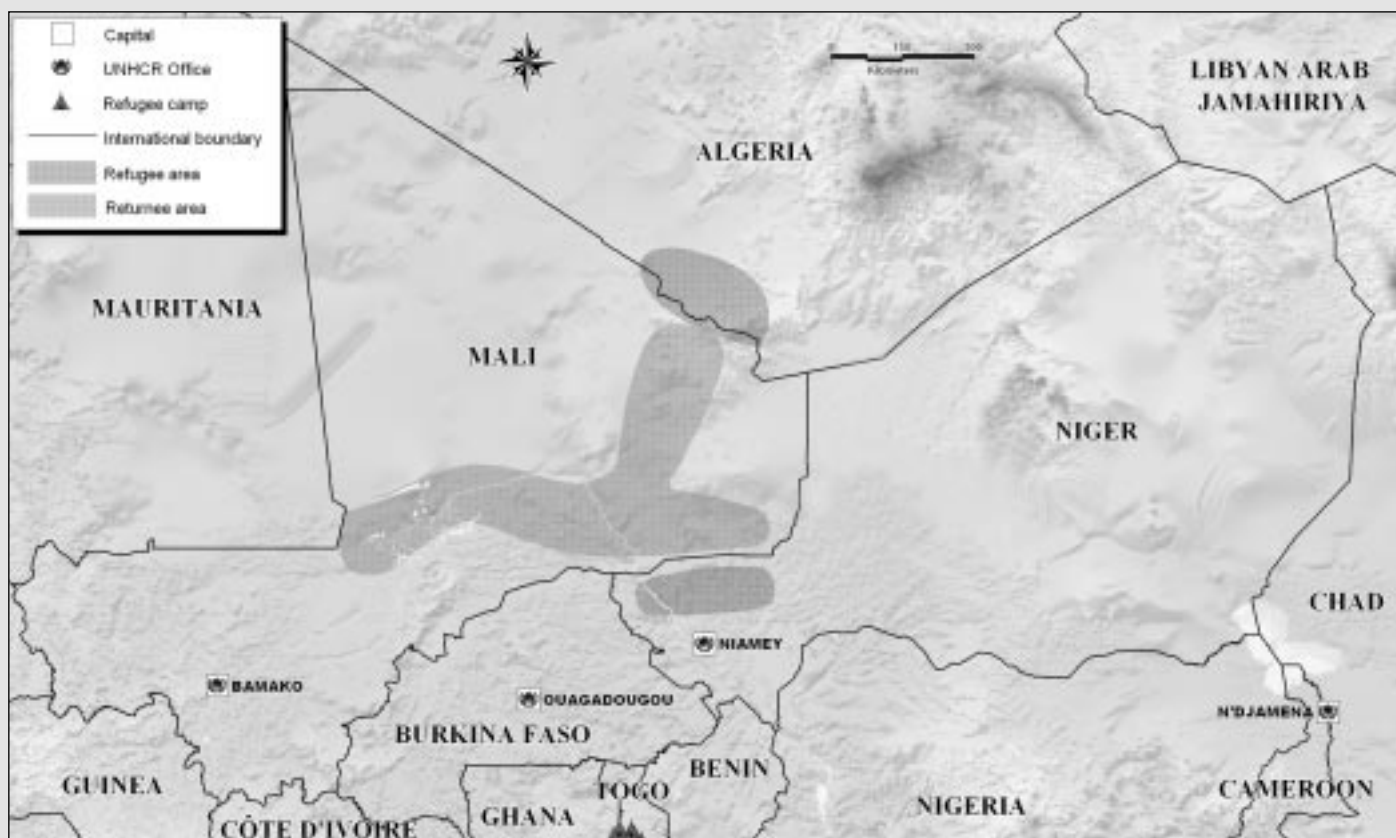


CONSOLIDATING REINTEGRATION IN MALI



THE CONTEXT

The year 1999 marked an end to UNHCR's reintegration programme for some 132,000 Malian Touaregs, who during the period 1990-1994 had fled armed rebellion across a wide area of northern Mali for the relative safety of four neighbouring countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. Following the signature in 1991 of the *Pacte National* between the Government of Mali and the *Mouvement des Fronts Unifiés pour l'Azawad* (the organisation representing the Touaregs and Arabs in the north) peace negotiations continued for a further two years. Tripartite agreements were signed in 1994 between each asylum government, UNHCR and the Government of Mali, paving the way for voluntary repatriation.



RETURNING HOME

Voluntary repatriation took nearly four years (1995-1998). It was a complex operation as the refugees were returning to an area of more than a million square kilometres. Some were hesitant about travel in motor vehicles. Summer temperatures frequently exceeding 50 degrees Celsius made it virtually impossible to move during the daytime. But at night convoys were especially prey to banditry. Incidents of armed robbery resulted in the loss of more than 20 UNHCR vehicles and the killing of a driver. UNHCR had to take armed escorts during monitoring missions to returnee areas.

As of October 1996, returning Malians received a three-month food ration from WFP (at times augmented by UNHCR) and some 32,800 of them also received food during their stay in transit centres. Until then, it had been difficult to meet the food aid requirements of the refugees as WFP did not initially take a regional approach to assisting the Malian refugees (food had been distributed in excess in some countries of asylum, due to over-registration, and not at all in others). More than 26,400 families received a repatriation kit containing one blanket, one plastic sheet, one mat, one mosquito net, soap, cooking utensils, crockery and clothes. Although the majority of refugees repatriated prior to 1999, five trucks were still available to transport potential returnees and their belongings. Some 200 persons returned from southern Algeria in June 1999, and 5,000 refugees (who had registered for repatriation and received their kits in previous years) returned spontaneously from Niger in October. This left approximately 5,800 Malians in asylum countries at the end of the year.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

From the beginning of the repatriation operation, UNHCR and its partners worked to improve the living conditions of returnees and the local population in northern Mali. More than 600 sites were targeted by reintegration projects. In order to reach the largest number possible of returnees, the programme focused on community participation (in the distribution of aid and project formulation) and authority was delegated to joint committees (comprising UNHCR, WFP, NGOs and local authorities). Projects in the water sector were by far the most important input provided by UNHCR. They involved the construction of 131 wells and 57 boreholes, and the installation of 72

water pumps in more than 200 sites. Four hydraulic engineers were hired to work in each of the UNHCR field offices to monitor and give advice on water-related projects. Other activities involved the upgrading of health centres with better equipment and medicines and the improvement of schools by adding new classrooms to accommodate returnee children. Building on skills acquired while in exile, returnees were encouraged to engage in micro-projects, with 40 per cent of the funds for these going to women. More than 100 micro-projects (small shops, handicrafts, cereal banks, farming, cattle-raising, sewing, adult education) were set up, helping thousands of returnees provide for their families. Although most activities were completed prior to 1999, some 20 workmen continued to be trained to maintain water points and received tools and equipment. About 27 sites in Kidal and Gao had new equipment installed, including solar-driven pumps and generators.

CONSTRAINTS

Successful reintegration was seriously hampered as there is a shortage in northern Mali of everything from water to health centres and schools. Prior to their flight, many of the nomadic refugees depended on cattle raising and trans-Saharan trade routes for their livelihood. During their stay in asylum countries they became accustomed to amenities such as health services, water and education. The availability of reintegration assistance therefore became a decisive factor for many refugees in deciding to return, and delays in Mali inevitably postponed repatriation. Some of these delays were due to insufficient staffing and experience, a situation that was rectified in 1996 when a new management team was put in place.

FROM RELIEF TO DEVELOPMENT

Prior to 1995, development assistance to the region had been very limited. Many humanitarian organisations then pondered how to sustain reintegration activities once the operation was completed. This led to the creation, in 1998, of the UN Development Assistance Framework which promoted closer partnerships among UN agencies. A Commission led by WFP identified some 120 sites that needed additional support and a joint project was launched, whereby UNDP and ILO implemented a water project, WFP continued to provide increased food security for returnee communities

through food-for-work projects, and UNHCR provided logistical support. Community-based works in 1999 included the construction of health centres, schools and dams. Involvement by NGOs in the north of Mali continued after UNHCR's withdrawal in June. Several international and national agencies (such as *Action contre la Faim*, *Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*, Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development, *Africare*, *Agro-Action*, *Projet d'appui au développement local*, *Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers* and *World Vision*) pursued development-oriented projects in the area.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Although UNHCR's programme was modest in size, its social impact on a poor and sparsely populated region was greater than expected. Many refugees who returned to Mali were hoping to create a new life, some using the skills they had acquired in exile, others participating in building new communities. In a region without UN rehabilitation programmes, their return would not have been sustainable without UNHCR's (and later WFP's) interventions.

Offices

Bamako
Gao (closed in June)
Kidal (closed in June)

Partners (until 30/6/99)

NGOs

Africa Muslim Agency
Centre canadien d'Etude et de Coopération internationale
Croix Rouge malienne/Croissant Rouge algérien
Islamic Relief (UK)
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
Fondation Partage
International Organisation for Islamic Relief

Other

International Labour Organisation
United Nations Development Programme

Voluntary Contributions (USD)

Donor	Income	Contribution
European Commission	1,652	0
España con ACNUR (SPA)	179,197	0
TOTAL	180,849	0



Financial Report (USD)

Programme Overview	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects	
		notes		notes
Opening Balance	2,730,697	(1)		
Income from Contributions	180,849	(1)		
Other Funds Available	172,677			
Total Funds Available	3,084,223	(5)		
Expenditure	2,154,540	(1) (5)		
Closing Balance	929,683	(1) (5)		
Expenditure Breakdown				
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination*	549,015		48,078	
Community Services	959		0	
Health / Nutrition	0		408	
Income Generation	1,575		263,121	
Legal Assistance	3,146		531	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	78,416		0	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	284		0	
Transport / Logistics	58,004		15,983	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	1,355,516		(16,496)	
Combined Projects	0		165,418	
Sub - total Operational	2,046,915		477,043	
Administrative Support*	87,150		0	
Sub - total Disbursements/Deliveries	2,134,065	(5)	477,043	(6)
Unliquidated Obligations	20,475	(5)	0	(6)
TOTAL	2,154,540	(1) (5)	477,043	
Instalments with Implementing Partners				
Payments Made	1,378,774		123,956	
Reporting Received	23,259		140,452	
Balance	1,355,515		(16,496)	
Outstanding 1 January	0		85,550	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		60,837	
Currency Adjustment	0		(8,217)	
Outstanding 31 December	1,355,515		0	
Unliquidated Obligations				
Outstanding 1 January	0		685,709	(6)
New Obligations	2,154,540	(1) (5)	0	
Disbursements	2,134,065	(5)	477,043	(6)
Cancellations	0		208,666	(6)
Outstanding 31 December	20,475	(5)	0	(6)

* Includes costs at Headquarters.

Figures which cross reference to accounts

(1) Annex 1 to Statement 1

(5) Schedule 5

(6) Schedule 6