



Global Report 2024 - Situation overview

Hama Dawa, 54, a Malian tailor in Ouallam refugee settlement, Niger, instructs a trainee in his workshop, where he trains his fellow refugees and local youth. “I received a lot of support from UNHCR when I arrived in Niger,” he said. “They supported me with sewing machines when they learned I was a tailor.”
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Sahel+ situation

UNHCR country operations: Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger.

2024 year-end population figures

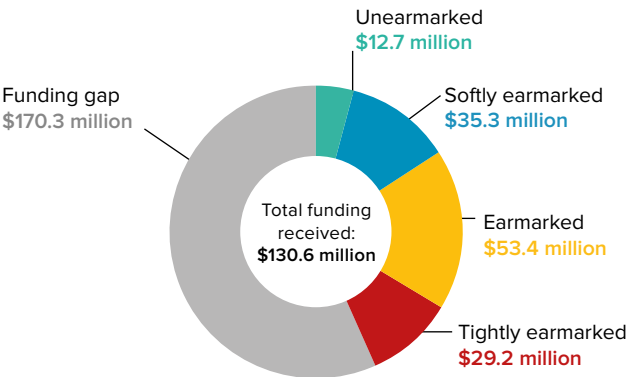
74% of the forcibly displaced population are women and children.



2024 financial overview

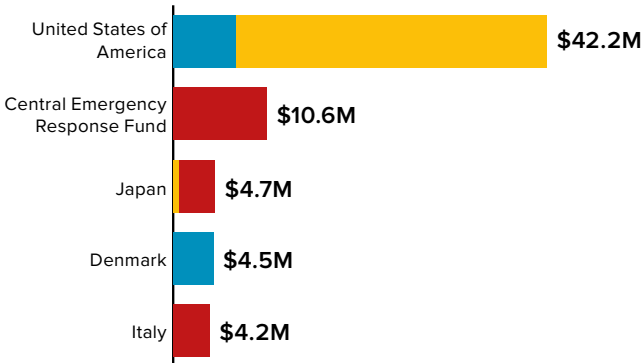
Funding received (USD)

In 2024, UNHCR required a total of **\$300.9 million** to address the emergency situation in the Sahel and received only **43%** of the needed amount.



Top 5 Contributions (USD)

Legend: Unearmarked (teal), Softly earmarked (blue), Earmarked (yellow), Tightly earmarked (red)



The percentage funded (43%) and total funding amount (\$130,595,321) are indicative. This leaves an indicative funding gap of \$170,341,656 representing 57% of the financial requirements.

In 2024, the number of forcibly displaced people across Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and the northern regions of the Gulf of Guinea countries of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo rose by 12%, from 4.2 million in 2023 to 4.7 million in 2024.

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in the Central Sahel continued to face conflict and food insecurity which drove displacement.

Data from the **Inter-Agency protection monitoring system Project 21**, collected with the support of 25 partners through 36,500 interviews in the Central Sahel revealed worsening protection risks and reduced access to basic services due to insecurity. One in three host and displaced households reported higher restrictions on movement due to attacks by non-state armed groups. Insecurity prevented one out of every two children from attending school in the Central Sahel.

62% of forcibly displaced people in the Central Sahel were displaced within their own countries. The number of **internally displaced people** has increased tenfold since 2018, from 284,000 in 2018 to close to 3 million at the end of 2024. In Burkina Faso alone, there were 2 million IDPs at the end of 2024, compared to 29,000 in 2018.

An increase was also noted in movement across borders into **neighbouring countries**. By the end of 2024, 127,000 Burkinabes had sought refuge in the Gulf of Guinea countries. The number of Burkinabe asylum-seekers and refugees in Mali reached over 93,000 by end 2024. At the same time, over 320,000 Malian refugees were hosted in neighbouring countries, with 39,300 in Burkina Faso, 122,500 in Niger, and 158,000 in Mauritania, where an additional 126,000 asylum-seekers are awaiting registration which is delayed due to funding shortfalls.

Movements outside the region also rose, with a 20% increase in 2024, comprising 47,000 people who arrived in Europe through the West African **Atlantic Route**, a sea route through coastal areas of Senegal, Mauritania, Gambia, Guinea, and

sometimes Ivory Coast to Spain's Canary Islands. Malians were the largest group from the Sahel with 19,200 arrivals in Europe, representing a 57% increase from 2023. In 2024, Malians lodged approximately 17,000 asylum applications in the EU+, more than double the number recorded in 2023 and **62% of applications were lodged in Spain**, with a recognition rate of 86% in the country and 67% in Europe.

UNHCR tailored its response along the **Sahel Plus Strategy**, prioritizing self-reliance from the onset of displacement, cash assistance to 186,500 people in 2024, allowing them the dignity and flexibility to meet their most urgent needs. The approach also deepened collaboration with development and peace actors to promote sustainable solutions and strengthen local capacities.

UNHCR worked on improving access to territory through, protection and solutions using a **route-based approach**, aiming at delivering a comprehensive response to mixed movements. It also advocated for the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in national systems, particularly considering **growing displacement towards urban areas**. Emphasis continues to be placed on empowering youth aged 12–24, about a quarter of the displaced and to supporting women and girls, who make up 49% of all displaced people in the Sahel Plus.

In line with its protection mandate, UNHCR supported the **Lomé Dialogue** on national security and refugee protection in the Gulf of Guinea, an **intergovernmental forum** with high-level officials from Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo. The political dialogue has contributed to non-refoulement, Ghana's prima facie recognition of refugees from Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire's commitment to proceed with status determination for the Burkinabe asylum-seekers in the country.

Violence against women and girls was reported as the most significant protection risk in the West and Central Africa region because of deeply rooted societal norms, displacement pressures, prolonged conflict, and heightened risks in daily activities like fetching water, firewood, and accessing markets.

Women and girls facing violence received services such as medical and psychosocial support, and empowered through cash, livelihoods, energy and dignity kits. UNHCR also supported 11 women-led organizations such as *Club de Femmes de Savannes*, in Togo which economically empowered refugee and host community women.

Over 115,000 children received **child protection services** including psychosocial support, family reunification, foster care, and support for school enrolment. To enhance access to **safe and quality education** in 2024, UNHCR supported 59,763 children in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Togo—69% refugees, 19% IDPs and 12% from host communities. Support included over 39,000 school kits, cash assistance for 6,600 displaced children to attend school, 19 classrooms built or renovated, and training for 1,322 teachers. 66,680 refugees comprising 49% female, enrolled in schools and universities, up from 59,584 in 2023. West and Central Africa hosts the largest rate of out-of-school displaced children aged 6-17 at 67%, which could be addressed with targeted funding. In Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Togo, 219 students benefited from DAFI scholarships for tertiary education.

UNHCR sustained robust emergency preparedness and response efforts across the region. In Burkina Faso, the Gulf of Guinea, Mali, Mauritania 375,600 people received essential items. UNHCR and partners supported over 401,000 displaced and host communities with **health care**. To meet **shelter needs**, UNHCR supported 166,000 displaced people with cash, tools, materials, and ready or rehabilitated homes, and 220,000 people with access to **clean water and sanitation**.

In **Mali**, as part of preparedness to **mitigate future flood disasters**, UNHCR built water drainage infrastructure. Steps were taken to support **Mauritania's** Global Refugee Forum pledge to transform **Mbera camp** into a settlement resistant to desertification. The camp's area was extended from 450 to 550 hectares. To counter **desertification in Niger**, 185 hectares of land

was reforested with 17,300 new plants, and close to 48,500 were trained on how to maintain regenerated land.

Durable solutions were achieved through returns to home countries, resettlement, and naturalization. Spontaneous returnees were monitored in the three Central Sahel countries including 2,700 returnees in Mali.

UNHCR facilitated the **resettlement** of 214 Malians, 43% of them women who departed from the Central Sahel, Mauritania and the Gulf of Guinea to Canada, France and the United States. In Mali, 450 refugees from Mauritania received Malian nationality.

Inter-agency coordination was strengthened with UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF and WFP through the **Gulf of Guinea Joint Response Plan**, which supports national authorities in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo by ensuring complementarity between humanitarian and development initiatives in areas hosting forcibly displaced people. Access to safe water was provided for over 214,000 people across the five countries, food assistance for more than 184,000 individuals, while 46,000 children received treatment for severe acute malnutrition. The response also enabled over 76,000 children to receive learning materials and 62,000 refugees to be registered. Multi-stakeholder coordination was also enhanced in Mauritania through the **2025 Refugee and Resilience Plan** to reduce dependence on assistance and foster peaceful coexistence.

To promote **self-reliance**, UNHCR supported over 45,000 displaced and host people to start livelihoods and advocated for the allocation of land to displaced people for agricultural purposes. UNHCR in Burkina Faso, with its partner *l'Observatoire National du Foncier* (ONF), facilitated access to 122 hectares of land for IDPs, and established local land commissions. In the Niger, over 830 hectares were made available for 3,604 displaced and host community households. In Mauritania, 770 refugee small-scale farmers, mainly women, cultivated seven hectares within the Mbera camp, providing food and income for families. In the Upper East region of Ghana, 40 hectares were allocated to 87 refugee households.

To ensure **refugee inclusion in decision-making**, close to 40,000 displaced communities were consulted on their priority needs and recommendations. This resulted in programmatic shifts towards targeted support for children and older people. Nineteen refugee-led organizations were supported in Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Togo, and 200 community associations engaging 2,500 refugees were trained.

Close cooperation with governments and development actors was crucial to support greater inclusion of refugees in national systems and development plans. Shelters were constructed in the **villages of opportunities** in Niger and at the

“Cité de Naata” (city of hope) in Mali, through a **humanitarian development partnership** to promote inclusion and social cohesion. National durable solutions strategies were developed in both Mali and Burkina Faso, which also adopted the National Strategy on Social Protection, including refugees in the Social Protection Programme. UNHCR supported the **inclusion of refugees in the social protection system** through close coordination with the Government of Mauritania, the World Bank and WFP, with 7,400 refugees receiving cash transfers for social assistance. Vulnerable refugees also received co-payments from the national health system.

Women and children rest in Mali after escaping from violence in Burkina Faso, sitting on a plastic mat lent by a member of the host community.
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