



**SITUATION SUMMARY**

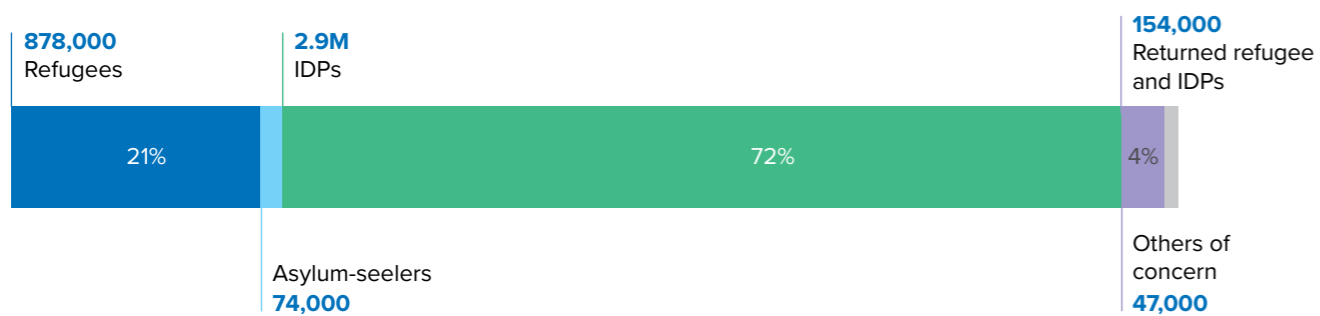
In Kaya, Burkina Faso, Rasmata Barry tests an improved cooking stove she was trained to produce through a UNHCR-supported initiative. The programme helps reduce protection risks, including exposure to gender-based violence, by limiting the need for displaced women to collect firewood far from their shelters. © UNHCR/Ivone P. Ouedraogo

# Sahel+ situation

Country operations involved in the response: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire multi-country office, Mali, Mauritania, Niger.

## 2025 year-end population figures

**4.1 million** refugees from Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali and IDPs inside those countries and in neighbouring countries



## Context

By the end of 2025, an estimated 4.1 million people from Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger were forcibly displaced within their countries and toward Mauritania and the coastal States of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo (the Sahel Plus) – a 5% increase from 3.9 million in 2024. Displacement was driven primarily by conflict and insecurity, compounded by extreme weather events, food insecurity, and economic fragility.

Internally displaced people (IDPs) accounted for 72% of the displaced population, amounting to nearly 3 million people, including 2.1 million in Burkina Faso, 459,600 in Niger and 414,500 in Mali. Refugees and asylum-seekers reached 951,000 people, a 22% increase compared to 2024. Mali recorded a sharp rise, with 51,000 new arrivals from Burkina Faso, bringing the total number of refugees hosted by Mali to 286,700 – more than double the 2024 figure. The crisis continued to spill over into coastal States and Mauritania, which hosted together 384,000 refugees from the Central Sahel, underscoring the need for coordinated regional responses.

Protection risks remained acute. In 2025, the inter-agency protection monitoring mechanism [Project 21](#) conducted 38,800 household and community consultations across Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Three in five households reported restrictions on freedom of movement due to insecurity, while violence against women and girls accounted for one-quarter of reported protection incidents. However, 91% of respondents reported feeling integrated within host communities, reflecting strong social cohesion.

Onward movement toward North Africa and Europe persisted amid protection risks and limited economic opportunities. Niger's Agadez region – a key migration hub along the [Central Mediterranean route](#) – recorded [206,400 people](#) on the move in 2025, up sharply from 27,700 in 2024. Women and children accounted for 13% of these movements and faced heightened risks of violence, exploitation and family separation, reinforcing the need for strengthened protection along migration routes.

Arrivals along the [West African Atlantic Route](#) to the Canary Islands declined by 61%, from 46,800 in 2024 to 17,700 in 2025, largely as a result of tighter maritime controls, with departures shifting

southward to the Gambia and the Guineas. Meanwhile, Malians lodged 20,000 asylum applications in the European Union – a 16% increase from 2024 – of which 80% were registered in [Spain](#). Recognition rates exceeded 80%, reflecting significant protection needs linked to deteriorating conditions in Mali.

## UNHCR in action

Under the [2024–2025 Sahel Plus Strategy](#), UNHCR focused on delivering protection and assistance, preventing repeated displacement, and advancing solutions. Severe funding cuts constrained operations, requiring prioritization of life-saving protection activities and an accelerated transition of responsibilities and resources to governments to support more sustainable, nationally led responses.

UNHCR advanced political dialogue on forced displacement through the Lomé Dialogue, convening Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo, and culminating in the adoption of the [Lomé Declaration](#) (in French) in July 2025, committing States to uphold international protection standards, strengthen inclusion, and enhance cross-border coordination.

### Major achievements

- 1 million** people received protection services
- 177,000** people received financial aid
- 238,700** people received in-kind assistance
- 57,300** people received shelter and housing assistance
- 175,300** people supported with access to water and/or sanitation services
- 40,800** people benefited from specialized gender-based violence programmes
- 32,100** children and caregivers received child protection services

Advocacy and technical support to governments contributed to improved asylum space. Niger adopted an implementing decree clarifying the legal framework for the entry, stay, and documentation of non-nationals, including people in need of international protection. Ghana granted prima facie recognition to asylum-seekers of Burkina Faso, while Côte d'Ivoire extended the same to Burkinabé and Malian asylum-seekers, easing access to asylum and protection.

To address mixed movements, UNHCR, governments, and partners – including IOM – advanced a route-based approach along the West African Atlantic Route. The approach was rolled out in Mali, Mauritania and Senegal, and further operationalized in Chad and Niger. Protection services were mapped along key routes, coordination strengthened, and access to asylum improved. Multipurpose hubs in Chad and Niger provided protection and safer alternatives to dangerous journeys. Governments endorsed the approach and requested digitalized, decentralized asylum services, opening pathways towards national ownership.

Efforts to prevent statelessness progressed. Mali adopted legislation granting stateless persons equal access to basic rights. Niger registered 18,100 births, while Burkina Faso issued 37,900 civil and identity documents and revised its civil status framework to strengthen statelessness prevention.

Community-based protection strengthened responses to child protection risks and violence against women and girls. Awareness-raising reached 58,500 people in Niger and 11,800 in Mali. In Niger, 8,000 people accessed specialized services. In Burkina Faso, all identified survivors received psychosocial support; 4,000 dignity kits were distributed; and essential items were provided to 300 vulnerable children.

Emergency responses increasingly used cash-based assistance to improve flexibility and support local economies. Across Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, 238,700 people received non-food items, while financial aid supported 177,000 people for food, shelter and healthcare, including 58,600 flood-affected people in Niger and 648 disaster-affected households in Mali.

Access to basic services improved through inclusion. Burkina Faso included refugees in the social protection registry, linking humanitarian assistance with state systems, while 94% of displaced people accessed public health services. In Niger, UNHCR-supported facilities delivered 108,400 medical consultations.

Education inclusion progressed despite constraints. In Burkina Faso, 6,200 displaced children enrolled in local schools. In Mali, UNHCR provided 20,000 school kits and constructed 750 learning facilities. Niger adopted the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Displaced Children (2025–2030), though more than 55,000 IDP children remained out of school, and 1,097 schools were closed due to insecurity.

UNHCR also strengthened self-reliance and livelihoods. In Burkina Faso, 2,300 people benefited from crop production and skills training. In Mali, 30 women's groups received agricultural inputs and business kits. In Niger, 79 hectares of land were restored, and 9,000 fruit trees were planted, boosting food security and environmental protection. UNHCR also supported government-led initiatives promoting livelihoods and economic inclusion, including the [Ghana Refugee Agribusiness Sustainability Programme](#) and the [AWERIKPA/AVENIR initiative](#) in Togo.

Durable solutions remained constrained by limited resettlement and complementary pathway opportunities. In 2025, 444 refugees from Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger were resettled, while 13 refugees accessed complementary pathways to Canada and France. Around 1,000 Malian refugees returned home, with UNHCR supporting reintegration through civil documentation for 600 children. In Burkina Faso, the Government reported the spontaneous return of 1.1 million IDPs, with UNHCR supporting efforts toward a national integration strategy.

## Coordination and partnerships

UNHCR strengthened partnerships with governments, UN agencies, development actors and the private sector to advance coordinated, solutions-focused responses. In Burkina Faso, it co-hosted the first [International Colloquium on Forced Displacement](#), mobilizing support for solutions-focused approaches, while working with over 30 civil society organizations and partners, including UNICEF, WFP and OCHA to deliver rapid, protection-centred assistance. A joint UNHCR–IOM–FAO initiative also advanced the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in Tannouyan.

In Niger, collaboration with UN and development partners supported four flagship programmes co-developed with the Government, anchoring displacement responses within national systems. In Mali, 12 partnership agreements – with government entities and national and international NGOs – strengthened protection, service delivery and national ownership, while inter-agency coordination with WFP, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, OCHA and the World Bank enabled joint analysis, funding and inclusion efforts.

Across coastal States, UNHCR contributed to the UN Joint Response Plan for the Gulf of Guinea with 15 partners, integrating humanitarian and resilience actions. It also led a €10 million project with IOM, UNICEF and WFP to strengthen resilience in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. Togo and Benin became eligible for the World Bank Host Communities and Refugees financing window, securing funding to support high-concentration refugee areas and strengthen national systems.

UNHCR has revised the [Sahel Plus Strategy covering 2026–2027](#), aimed at maintaining life-saving emergency assistance, strengthening protection and solutions, and advancing social and economic inclusion for greater self-reliance.

## Use of flexible funding

Flexible funding enabled UNHCR to sustain protection, basic services and livelihoods support despite severe funding constraints. In Burkina Faso, 56,400 refugees and asylum-seekers were registered, securing access to documentation and services. In Niger, protection monitoring and referrals reached 54,000 people. UNHCR also provided safe water to more than 32,000 refugees in Sayam Forage camp, delivered hygiene promotion activities to 5,000 people, and ensured water, sanitation and hygiene services for 1,000 at the Agadez reception centre.

### Strengthening protection and expanding alternatives to risky onward movements through a route-based approach

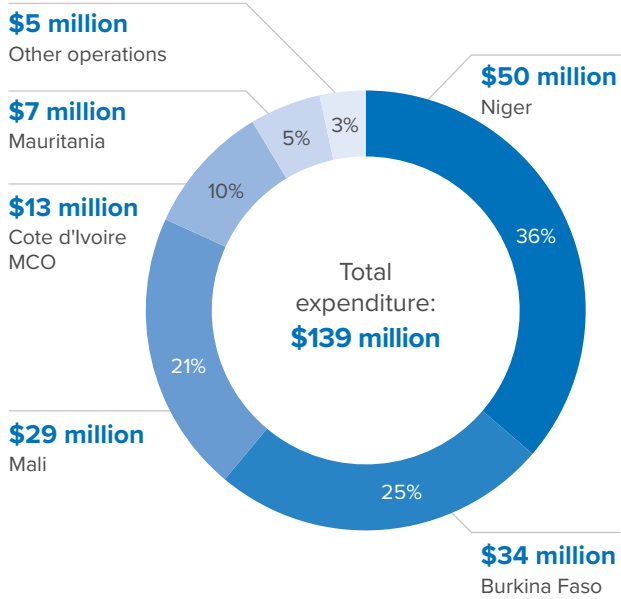


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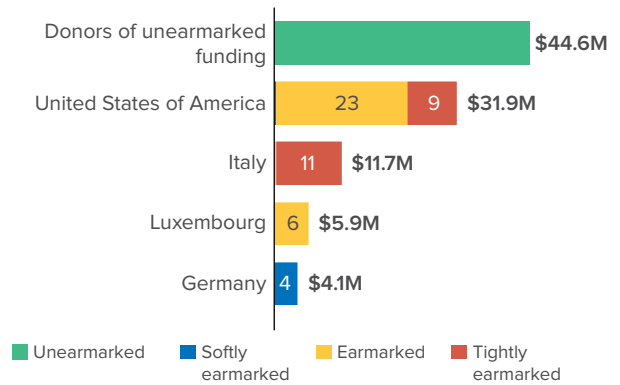
In Niger, the route-based approach has delivered critical protection in high-risk transit areas. UNHCR deployed 92 protection monitors at key entry points, including in Agadez, identifying and referring 14,400 asylum-seekers, of whom over 13,700 accessed asylum procedures. Specialized gender-based services reached 8,000 women and girls, while 25,300 children and caregivers received targeted support. Through advocacy with the Government, 40 refugees and asylum-seekers were included in entrepreneurship training programmes, improving economic opportunities for 1,000 young people.

## Financial overview

### Expenditure by operation



### Top 5 donors



Voluntary contributions from all other donors, carry-over and other adjustments were \$33.8 million.

### Funding received

In 2025, UNHCR required a total of **\$410 million** to address the Sahel situation but received only **32%** of that amount.

