

Nigerian refugees in Maradi region

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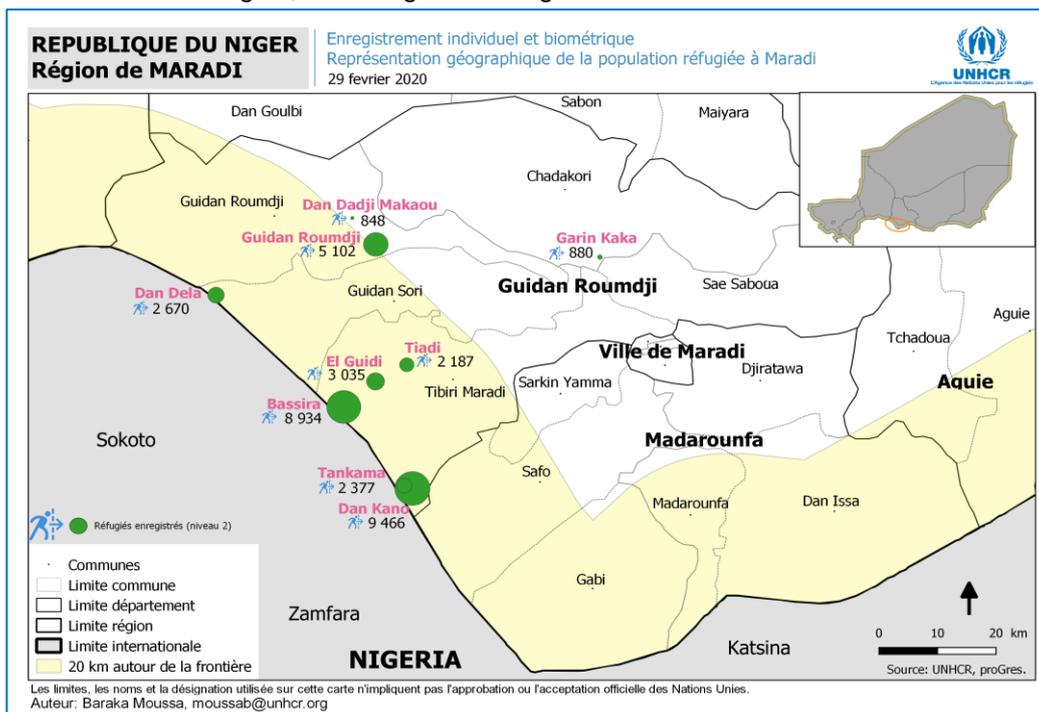
Background

Since May 2019, Niger's Maradi region has witnessed a continuous influx of Nigerian refugees fleeing killings, kidnappings for ransom and pillaging of property in Nigeria's North West. The security situation along both sides of the border remains precarious. Violence has spilled over into Niger, posing a threat to refugees and local communities alike, and heightening the risk of further displacements.

At the onset of the crisis, UNHCR deployed an emergency team and opened a sub-office in Maradi in September. The emergency response focused on protection and life-saving activities, including *inter alia* registration, protection and border monitoring, education, health, shelter and WASH services. An important component of the response was also the relocation of refugees to 'opportunity villages' away from the border to ensure their safety and ease pressure on the host population who generously welcomed them. This scheme contributes to developing rural areas that lack adequate infrastructure and basic services, in line with the humanitarian-development nexus, ensuring that assistance provision is sustainable and reaches the host population.

Population Statistics

UNHCR and the Government have individually registered and biometrically enrolled a total of **35,499 refugees** (9,728 households) in the Maradi region as of 29th February 2020. 23% of those registered are women, 10% are men and 67% are children. Continuous registration and update of the database are also ongoing. On the other side of the border, in North West Nigeria, some 210,000 people are internally displaced. New influx has been witnessed in Madaou Department in Tahoua region, bordering Maradi region.



Nigerian refugees in Maradi Region © UNHCR

Progress and Achievements

- By the end of February 2020, UNHCR and the Government (Commission Nationale d'Eligibilité) have registered individually and enrolled biometrically **35,439** Nigerian refugees. As the situation is still volatile in Nigeria's Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina states, population movements continue, and biometric registration is ongoing. All refugees receive a registration certificate while their intentions of relocation are collected. Discussions with the Government are ongoing regarding the prima facie recognition of this caseload.
- The government and the UNHCR have identified 10 opportunity villages to relocate refugees settled nearby the border for an effective protection response. This is always done on a voluntary basis. The first relocations began on October 11 to pre-identified villages. The setup of the villages of Dan Dadji Makaou and Garin Kaka were finalised in December 2019 while additional sites are being prepared, notably the village of Chadakori. The accommodation capacity of these three opportunity villages is **7,152 refugees**, 1.626 in Chadakori, 2.700 in Garin Kaka and 2.826 in Dan Dadji Makaou.
- In cooperation with the regional departments who give technical guidance, extension of existing relocation sites is under discussion in order to increase the reception capacity. This will be aligned to the Government's relocation strategy.
- In October 2019, a transit center with a capacity of 450 persons was set up in Guidan Roundji in order to free 5 schools which welcomed refugees.
- To date, 2,400 individuals (619 households) had been voluntarily relocated to the opportunity villages. 913 individuals (231 households) were relocated to Dan Dadji Makaou and 1,052 individuals (277 households) to Garin Kaka. 435 people (111 households) are living in the **transit reception center** in Guidan Roundji.
- UNHCR has witnessed a significant gap between the relocation intentions gathered during the registration process and the final relocation decisions due to a reluctance of community leaders and village chiefs, refugees and hosts towards relocation, amongst others. However, as protection incidents persist along the border, the government of Niger and the UNHCR are strengthening their sensitization in favor of relocation. A reflection is ongoing on a strategy for host villages while the relocation process is ongoing.
- In Dan Dadji Makaou and Garin Kaka, refugees have access to health. A health center is available 24/7 at each site with primary health care, maternal care, an ambulance and a functioning referral system. On average, 50 consultations take place per day per site and benefit both refugees and the local community. A reproductive health program is also being implemented in both sites. A mobile clinic is covering health needs in the transit center in Guidam Roundji.
- In Dan Dadji Makaou, 2 30m³ water bladders were erected as well as 3 standpipes (12 taps), 48 latrines, 34 showers, 2 washing areas, 2 drying areas and 18 hand washing devices. In Garin Kaka, 1 40m³ water tower was erected as well as 7 standpipes (23 taps), 28 latrines, 30 showers, 2 washing areas and 15 handwashing devices.
- Regarding shelter, 184 RHUs were installed (including 177 fit to live) in Dan Dadji Makaou which can accommodate up to 2,826 people. In Garin Kaka, 220 RHUs have been installed (including 204 living spaces) which can accommodate 2,700 people.
- 218 NFI kits including blankets, mats, cooking utensils were distributed as well as 144 dignity kits at Dan Dadji Makaou, 9 delivery kits and clothing. In Garin Kaka, 203 NFIs kits were distributed along with 100 dignity kits, 37 delivery kits and clothing. Foot assistance has resumed after having been suspended by the regional authorities due to security risks.

- In order to promote **peaceful coexistence** between communities and enhance community participation, the local population also benefits from access to health centers, receives various NFI kits and participates in awareness sessions on various themes (hygiene, child protection, SGBV, peaceful coexistence...). Garin Kaka and Dan Dadji Ma-kaou's drinking water infrastructure also serves a host population of more than 2,000 people.
- No case of **refoulement** have been recorded. The strengthening of protection monitoring is ongoing through field missions of partner organizations (CIAUD and ANTD). Weekly and monthly reports are produced and shared with the humanitarian community. The analysis of the various incidents and population movements allows us to identify trends in population movements for a better response.
- The identification and response to people with **specific needs** is done on the one hand through the data collected at the level of continuous biometric registration but also through regular protection monitoring. Referral mechanisms are put in place for a more holistic response to these cases. In the opportunity villages where people have been relocated, 100% of people with identified specific needs received adequate responses.
- The identification and follow-up of **SGBV cases** is done through the referral and coordination mechanisms put in place such as the thematic committee and the protection working group that coordinate the protection response. In addition, the operational procedure documents drawn up allow better monitoring. In the villages of opportunity, 100% of SGBV survivors are identified, referred and treated.
- The identification of and response to **persons with disabilities** is carried out. 100% of persons living with disabilities are identified, referred and cared for in the villages of opportunity.
- A referral system for **mental health cases** is set up as many refugees have suffered traumatism before or during displacement. 100% of those identified with psychosocial and mental health problems received appropriate care and were taken care of. Medical and educational staff are trained to recognize signs of psychosocial distress.
- While shelter, additional classrooms and health centers are being constructed with the support of Italy, a cash for work approach will be implemented during the construction.

Main Challenges

- **Financial resources remain insufficient:** In 2020, UNHCR and the other actors responding to the Maradi situation require 33,6 million USD. The response plan for 2020 is about to be finalized. Concurrent needs in other Nigerien areas struggling with insecurity, namely Diffa, Tillaberi and Tahoua, further strain humanitarian actors' financial resources and hence their capacity to respond.
- **Security situation continues to be volatile:** Incursions by armed groups are still recurrent, which calls for continuous monitoring of the situation and preparedness to respond to any potential new displacements. This is more challenging considering the lack of information on the humanitarian situation and dynamics on the other side of the border.

External / Donors Relations

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