

# FACT SHEET

## CENTRAL SAHEL FOOD CRISIS

### NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

**9.7 MILLION**

people are projected to be food insecure from June to August 2022 in the Central Sahel (Harmonized framework, March 2022)

**+166%**

annual increase of people in crisis or above (phase 3 or above) in Mali (Hunger Hotspots 2022 WFP/FAO)

**+110%**

annual increase of people in crisis or above (phase 3 or above) in Niger

**36%**

projected drop in cereals production in Niger in 2022 (WFP, Nov. 2021)

**2.3 MILLION**

people displaced by the conflict (OCHA, April 2022). Displacement increased by 30% between 2020 and 2021

**140,000**

refugees across the Central Sahel (OCHA, April 2022)

**13 MILLION**

people in need of humanitarian assistance (OCHA, April 2022)

**600,000**

children severely malnourished (OCHA, April 2022)

### BACKGROUND

The Central Sahel has been plagued by a humanitarian crisis for close to a decade with needs that have drastically increased in the last two years in correlation with protracted conflict, massive population displacement, climate change, and socio-political instability.

All those factors combined are pushing us towards an impending food emergency in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.

According to WFP and FAO<sup>1</sup>, the three Central Sahel countries are among the 20 food security hotspots with 4.4 million people projected to be food insecure in Niger, 3.5 million in Burkina Faso and 1.8 million in Mali, and the situation is worsening fast. Yet the humanitarian response in the Central Sahel remains largely insufficient, with lack of funding, problems of access, and weak coordination. As of 4 May 2022, the Humanitarian Response Plans for Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso were only 0%, 9%, and 11% funded respectively<sup>2</sup>.

Early recovery<sup>3</sup> and resilience responses are the least funded, failing to stem the accelerating deterioration of the food crisis and risking to turn back the clock on overall human development and human rights gains made over the past decade, including in girls' rights and gender equality.

<sup>1</sup> [WFP-FAO Hunger Hotspots 2022](#)

<sup>2</sup> [OCHA WACA Regional Funding Status](#)

<sup>3</sup> Shared space between humanitarian and development actors to provide the foundation for full recovery and for the quick reduction of humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of a crisis.

# KEY DRIVERS

## CIVIL INSECURITY AND INCREASING DISPLACEMENT WEAKENING PEOPLE'S LIVELIHOODS

- Non-state armed groups loot and destroy crops, steal livestock, and extort money from communities, starving hundreds of thousands of families.
- Markets in affected areas are no longer functional or operate at a slower pace, making it difficult to access basic foodstuffs and income.
- Sahelian pastoral strip is largely inaccessible due to insecurity.
- Insecurity, food crisis and climate change are correlated, leading to a vicious circle:
  - The interaction of climate change with social, economic and political factors could exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and increase the risk of conflicts over access to limited or unevenly distributed resources.
  - Climate change can increase the risk of clashes between herders and farmers over access to water and pasture.

## ADDITIONAL DISRUPTIVE FACTORS

- Food prices have increased due to several factors including low domestic production, price increases on international markets, inflation, etc. and this is worsened by a decline in agricultural production across the region. Current food prices on the international market rose by 3.1% points above the highest level recorded in 2011<sup>4</sup>.
- Effects of the crisis in Ukraine: cereal shortages and price increases are reported, with Russia and Ukraine being two of the world largest wheat and sunflower cooking oil exporters and Belarus a major producer and exporter of fertilizer. According to FAO estimates, 30% of the wheat consumed in Africa comes from Ukraine and Russia. In particular Mali is more than 50% dependent on wheat imports from Russia for its consumption<sup>5</sup>.
- Fuel price increases are contributing to overall inflation that will make many commodities out of

reach for vulnerable households in the coming months.

- Economic sanctions by regional and international institutions against recently installed military regimes already have economic consequences on prices and availability of food.
- Residual effects of COVID-19's restrictive management measures in 2020 are still observed.

## VULNERABILITY FACTORS

- Climate shocks et disasters: The Central Sahel countries are among the most vulnerable to climate change according to their vulnerability index<sup>6</sup>.
  - Significant rainfall deficits have led to a decrease in cereal production in 2021.
  - Major floods have affected the central Sahel countries in recent years, resulting in deaths, destruction of habitats and loss of livestock, property and crops.
- Recurrent insect infestation, in particular legionary caterpillars and crickets, and granivorous birds' attacks destroy crops.

## ALERT LEVELS ALREADY EXCEEDED

- Food consumption is already very degraded in Burkina Faso (Centre-North, East and Sahel), in Niger (almost all regions), and in Mali (Gao and Mopti regions).
- In Niger, emergency thresholds set by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in chronic malnutrition, acute malnutrition, and severe acute malnutrition are already crossed according to a survey published in December 2021.

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<sup>4</sup> Regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (FSNWG) West Africa – April 2022

<sup>5</sup> [WFP - Implications of the Crisis in Ukraine on West Africa](#)

<sup>6</sup> [ND-GAIN country index 2019](#)

## WORRYING PROJECTIONS

- Nearly 9.7 million people will be in phase 3 to 5 during the upcoming lean season<sup>7</sup> according to the March 2022 Harmonized Framework.
- Significant drops in cereal production are expected in Niger, Burkina Faso, and central Mali.
- Decrease in forage production in the northern part of the Sahelian strip will have a strong impact on the earliness of herd movements and the length of the pastoral hunger gap.
- The risk of deterioration in the nutritional status of children and women will increase with the decrease in attendance at health facilities and the closure of health facilities due to insecurity<sup>8</sup>.
- Long-term projections suggest temperature increases in the range of 3°C to 6°C<sup>9</sup>, which will contribute to worsen the food crisis in the Central Sahel and make it chronic.

## IMPACT OF FOOD CRISIS

**When food insecurity arises, women and children are the most at risk of malnutrition and hunger as well as associated rights' violations.**

### IMPACT ON CHILDREN

- Stunted growth
- Greater vulnerability to infections
- Death
- Inability to attend school/walk long distances to school
- Drop out of school so that children can work
- Increased exposure to all forms of gender-based violence for girls, those who have been withdrawn from school or have never attended school being particularly at risk
- Girls forced to marry early for their families to have one less mouth to feed and/or get a dowry

### IMPACT ON WOMEN AND GIRLS

- Severe and long-term health consequences for pregnant and lactating women and their babies
- Women and girls sacrificing their food rations for their families, eating less and last<sup>10</sup>
- Girls more likely than boys at risk of being taken out of school to work

### IMPACT ON THE GENERAL POPULATION

- Increased vulnerability of communities to predation by armed groups. Some armed groups recruit from communities whose livelihoods are affected, including children and youth.

<sup>7</sup> [Cadre Harmonise Mars 2022](#)

<sup>8</sup> 114 nonfunctional health centres in April 2022 according to OCHA.

<sup>9</sup> [IPCC - Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#)

<sup>10</sup> In 2021, FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO reported that the prevalence of moderate to severe food insecurity was 10% higher among women than men throughout the world in 2020 and that the food insecurity gender gap widened from 2019 to 2020:

[The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021 \(fao.org\)](#)

# BURKINA FASO

“ When we arrived in Kaya, my father could only register five people for the WFP donations, but there are ten of us. Every day, we only eat ‘to’ (a Sahelian dish made of millet, maize or sorghum). We cook in the evening and we eat the leftovers in the morning when there are remains. In our village, we were used to not paying for anything. We grew our own cereals, we collected wood for free in the bush, we could collect and cook leaves. Here, we suffer from hunger. ”

**RIHANATA, 19, IDP IN THE CENTRE-NORTH REGION OF BURKINA FASO**



## KEY POINTS

- Of the three countries in the central Sahel, Burkina Faso is the most affected by massive population displacement due to insecurity. More than 1.8 million Burkinabe were internally displaced as of February 2022<sup>11</sup> out of an estimated population of 22 million. More than half of the IDPs are under 14.
- 180,000 children were severely malnourished in April 2022 according to OCHA<sup>12</sup>.
- In 2021, insecurity coupled with inconsistent rainfall, drought, and attacks by army worms and granivorous birds - more than 44,000 ha infested in total<sup>13</sup> - have had a major impact on agricultural production.
- In the North, production has dropped by 50% on average and up to 80% in some pockets<sup>14</sup>.
- Transhumance departures are reduced due to the security situation (limited access to watering points and grazing areas).

## PROJECTIONS

- 12% of the total population, or 2,632,503 people, will need immediate assistance during the upcoming lean season in the regions most affected by insecurity and displacement (Centre-North, Sahel, East, North)<sup>15</sup>.
- According to the March 2022 Harmonized Framework, 3,453,510 people are projected to be food insecure (phase 3 to 5) during the upcoming lean season<sup>16</sup>.
- The projected national cereal production for the 2021-2022 season will drop by 9.07% compared to the previous season<sup>17</sup>. A decrease of more than 25% is expected for other food crops (cowpea, voandzou, sweet potato and yam).
- The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has threatened to impose financial and economic sanctions against the military government, which could worsen the food crisis.
- The intensification of military operations in the many regions affected by the crisis will aggravate the impact of the conflict. This could lead to massive displacements that will contribute to worsening food crisis among internally displaced persons and host communities.

## HRP 2022: FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION SECTOR<sup>18</sup>

	Persons in need	Persons targeted	Funds required
Food security	2.9 M	2.4 M	224.9 M US dollars
Nutrition	1.1 M	645 K	40.3 M US dollars

<sup>11</sup> According to the National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation (CONASUR).

<sup>12</sup> [OCHA Humanitarian Snapshot April 2022](#)

<sup>13, 14, 15, 17</sup> [Fiche de communication cadre harmonise - Novembre 2021 Burkina Faso](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Cadre Harmonise Mars 2022](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Burkina Faso Humanitarian Response Plan 2022](#)



“ We were no longer free to move around because we had to respect the disease prevention measures. Added to that, we had to stop mass gatherings in the village to prevent the virus from spreading. I could no longer run my small businesses as I used to and this was really difficult. My breast milk was not enough for both of my children because I was not eating enough myself. ”



ADA, MOTHER OF MALNOURISHED TWINS IN THE MOPTI REGION, MALI

## KEY POINTS

- Mali is facing the worst humanitarian crisis in over a decade with over a third of the population, or 7.5 million people, in a situation of extreme vulnerability.
- +166% annual increase of people in crisis or above (phase 3 or above) (Hunger Hotspots 2022 WFP/FAO).
- 310,000 children were severely malnourished in April 2022 according to OCHA<sup>19</sup>.
- The collective sanctions adopted by ECOWAS, combined with the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, have direct negative impacts on the population, especially now that these have become prolonged.
- State responses to needs were severely impacted by the ECOWAS sanctions and the suspension of budgetary support from major development donors. The government was unable to finance the National Food and Nutritional Security Survey at the beginning of 2022. The response will probably be based on underestimated data.
- Acute malnutrition has reached emergency levels in Mali (circles of Timbuktu, Koulikoro, Kayes, Taoudénit, and among internally displaced persons in the Segou and Timbuktu regions.)

- In February 2022, prices for the main cereals and pulses that make up the staple diet rose by an average of 79% for millet, 95% for sorghum and 55% for maize compared to the same period in 2021<sup>20</sup>.

## PROJECTIONS

- According to the March 2022 Harmonized Framework, 1,841,067 people will be food insecure (phase 3 to 5) during the upcoming lean season<sup>21</sup>.
- The number of children aged 6-59 months suffering from acute malnutrition could reach 1.2 million by August 2022.
- According to IPC<sup>22</sup> forecasts, if nothing is done by June 2022 to significantly increase the prevention and management of malnutrition, 82% of Mali's administrative districts will face severe to critical levels of nutritional crisis.
- The agricultural harvest of 2021-2022 forecasts a 20-50% drop in crops is observed in the central regions, in the Sahelian strip of Kayes and Koulikoro, Gao, Kidal, Ménaka, Taoudéni and Timbuktu respectively due to floods, water scarcity and abandoned fields as a result of the escalation of violence (GHO 2022).

## HRP 2022: FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION SECTOR<sup>23</sup>

	Persons in need	Persons targeted	Funds required
Food security	3.6 M	2.9 M	294 M US dollars
Nutrition	3.4 M	2.7 M	78.1 M US dollars

<sup>19</sup> OCHA Humanitarian Snapshot April 2022

<sup>20</sup> Breaking the Spiral of the Food and Nutrition Crisis in Mali (April 2022) - Mali | ReliefWeb

<sup>21</sup> Cadre Harmonise Mars 2022

<sup>22</sup> The IPC is a set of tools and procedures to classify the severity and characteristics of acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition crises as well as chronic food insecurity based on international standards. The IPC consists of four mutually reinforcing functions, each with a set of specific protocols (tools and procedures).

<sup>23</sup> Mali Humanitarian Response Plan 2022

# NIGER

“ Since my family and I fled our village to find refuge here, we can hardly feed ourselves. My husband is too old to work. I tried to find some housework to do for other families to feed my 12 children and my husband. We barely manage to eat once a day. Thanks to the project, I received a one-off cash transfer of about 183 euro. I spent some of it on food, including maize and rice. We will be able to eat three times a day for at least a month. ”



**SALAMATOU, IDP IN THE TILLABERI REGION, NIGER**

## KEY POINTS

- The emergency thresholds set by WHO have already been exceeded:
  - Chronic malnutrition across Niger reached 45.1%, exceeding the 30% emergency threshold, according to a survey published in December 2021.
  - The prevalence of global acute malnutrition among children under 5 is estimated at 12.5%, which exceeds the 10% emergency threshold.
  - The rate of severe acute malnutrition is 2.7%, above the 2% emergency threshold.
- 130,000 children were severely malnourished in April 2022 according to OCHA<sup>24</sup>.
- +110% annual increase of people in crisis or above (phase 3 or above) in Niger.
- The below-average cereal production has been recorded at 38% below the five-year average, and millet, the country's staple food, is already becoming scarcer on markets (Hunger Hotspots 2022 WFP/FAO).

- Niger is dealing with recurrent floods during the rainy season. As of October 2021, torrential rainfall destroyed 11,521 homes and affected 250,331 people, including 77 deaths, 11,135 heads of cattle lost<sup>25</sup>.

## PROJECTIONS

- A significant drop of -36% in cereal production is expected for 2021/2022.
- According to the March 2022 Harmonized Framework, 4.402.406 people will be food insecure (phase 3 to 5) during the upcoming lean season<sup>26</sup>, or 17% of the population of the country.

## HRP 2022: FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION SECTOR<sup>27</sup>

	Persons in need	Persons targeted	Funds required
Food security	3.9 M	2 M	173 M US dollars
Nutrition	2.4 M	1.3 M	99.7 M US dollars

<sup>24</sup> OCHA Humanitarian Snapshot April 2022

<sup>25</sup> OCHA Niger situation des inondations en 2021

<sup>26</sup> Cadre Harmonisé Mars 2022

<sup>27</sup> Niger Humanitarian Response Plan 2022-

# PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S RESPONSE

Plan International has used its community-based development program to scale up its humanitarian response including first phase response and conflict-sensitive programming to alleviate the impact of crises and conflict on girls and young women in the Central Sahel. Out of a target of 2,006,303 programme participants, 1,167,350 were reached including 50% girls and women as of April 2022 in Burkina Faso, Mali, and western Niger.

The three countries of the Central Sahel are experiencing similar crises with the same root causes. Our cross-sectoral regional approach allows us to respond to this crisis in a holistic way and to coordinate our actions by pooling efforts and expertise. The coordination unit works according to a response plan targeting 15% of the population affected by the crisis. Through an inter-sectoral response to key vulnerabilities, it aims to help strengthen the resilience of affected people in protracted crises and fragile settings by applying a development lens in its humanitarian response, aligning its recovery and development interventions accordingly, and adopting a gender-transformative perspective.

In addition, enhancing the Humanitarian, Peace and Development nexus approach has helped address the key drivers of armed conflict, food insecurity, malnutrition, and implement mitigation measures with a variety of local and national partners. Plan International, in coordination with Government authorities, partners, and local leaders, has and will continue to create mechanisms to encourage dia-

logue and relations between community members, especially at the local levels in order to strengthen the culture of acceptance, limit the negative practices of certain groups being marginalized, and subsequently accepting each other as community members having equal rights and opportunities.

The response plan includes interventions in nutrition and food security, including the support to resilience to disasters and climate change. Acute food insecurity is likely to deteriorate which implies a need to scale-up interventions by:

- Delivering immediate, life-saving assistance to those in the most urgent needs including food security initiatives for children and pregnant women/girls
- Supporting familial agriculture production systems
- Addressing specific negative coping strategies affecting girls during food crisis and other protection risks to advance gender equality and children and girls rights
- Protecting communities' livelihoods and building community resilience through early recovery actions.





# PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S RESPONSE

Various approaches are being implemented and other being considered to address the food crisis and to anticipate the deterioration of the situation in the Central Sahel, including:

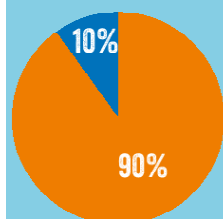
- Multipurpose unconditional cash transfer
- Support to livelihoods and IGAs through capacity building, equipment, and cash transfer with the possibility to implement the Food Assistance for Assets (FFA)<sup>28</sup> approach depending on assessments' results
- Food distribution as component of education and protection projects
- Improvement of the nutritional status of children and pregnant women through mobile clinics and awareness raising. The Positive Deviance Hearth (PDH)<sup>29</sup> approach may be introduced
- Agricultural support through a market-based approach and strengthening of familial farming
- Support to participatory and sustainable natural resources management and climate-adapted farming

- as a result of climate changes most farmers tend to stick to the old farming systems which are no longer productive

- Graduation approach model, targeting the most vulnerable communities through cash-based assistance, training, economic empowerment, financial literacy training, entrepreneurship, and saving skills for a defined period of time. This will build economic empowerment and self-reliance activities for communities
- Policy support and advocacy by establishing social accountability mechanisms that will empower communities to claim their rights through social and leadership structures.

Plan International will implement and advocate for its response plan in the Central Sahel by working with a wide range of partners - UN agencies, humanitarian organisations and research institutions - to combat food insecurity on multiple fronts, from agriculture and macroeconomic stability to social protection, health and water.

## FUNDING



**FUNDING REQUEST FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION:**

**9,161,282.68 €**

**SECURED FUNDING:**

**958,640.58 €**

**FUNDING GAP:**

**8,202,642.10 €**

<sup>28</sup> Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) aims to address the most food-insecure people's immediate food needs with cash, vouchers or food transfers while improving their long-term food security and resilience (WFP).

<sup>29</sup> Positive Deviance Hearth (PDH) aims at scaling up positive nutritional practices within communities to be implemented by the majority of people with the involvement of both women and men.



# KEY MESSAGES

- Protracted conflicts and displacement, climate crisis, and sanctions imposed on military regimes by regional institutions combined with the socio-economic consequences of measures against COVID-19 in 2020 have led to the current food crisis. If this situation is not addressed with appropriate measures, it has the potential to undermine all other humanitarian efforts.
- Acute food insecurity is getting worse in the Central Sahel. According to WFP and FAO<sup>30</sup>, the three Central Sahel countries are among the 20 hotspots where food insecurity can deteriorate and lead to the most severe consequences. More than 9.7 million people are expected to be food insecure during the 2022 lean season (June-August 2022), according to the WFP. 600,000 children are already suffering from acute malnutrition in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, according to OCHA.
- The starvation of civilians is sometimes used as a method of warfare by parties to conflict. This is a violation of international humanitarian law and has been condemned by the UN Security Council<sup>31</sup>. In the Central Sahel countries, non-state armed groups loot and destroy crops, steal livestock, and extort money from communities, starving hundreds of thousands of families.
- When food is scarce, girls often eat less and eat last. Not only do they have access to less food, but they often bear the brunt when families resort to negative coping strategies: girls are most likely to be removed from school and are most at risk of child labour, child early and forced marriage and sexual exploitation.
- Plan International draws the attention of the humanitarian community to the specific and serious consequences of the food crisis on girls and adolescent

girls, which further expose them to all forms of gender-based violence and put their future at risk. Adolescent girls have unique needs that are overlooked, with devastating consequences on their wellbeing, in particular when they live in crisis settings for years.

- The specific nutritional requirements of girls and boys under 5 years and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, including adolescent girls, mean that these groups are particularly vulnerable in the context of food insecurity, with long-term and inter-generational impacts on health, development and wellbeing.
- The lingering effects of climate change combined with challenges to address the root causes of the endemic poverty, limited access to essential services and livelihoods, and human rights violations in conflict-affected areas will likely continue to affect the protection of the most vulnerable communities and increase their humanitarian needs.
- Humanitarian actors should propose innovative, coordinated, and agile ways to deal with the medium-term consequences of the food crisis by focusing on sustainable agriculture including off-season cultivation aiming at improving food self-sufficiency in affected communities.
- Mobilization of international public opinion, governments, and donors on food security is highly needed. Beyond Ukraine, the Central Sahel crisis continues to demand attention, and especially to avert a full-blown food crisis.

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<sup>30</sup> [WFP-FAO Hunger Hotspots 2022](#).

<sup>31</sup> [UN Security Council Resolution 2417 \(2018\)](#)