HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS
OVERVIEW
SAHELM CRISIS
The Sahel

Escalating needs in a regional crisis

- **Mali**
  - People in need: 5.9M
  - People targeted: 4.7M

- **Burkina Faso**
  - People in need: 3.5M
  - People targeted: 2.9M

- **Senegal**

- **Mauritania**

**Total**
- Total population: 121.1M
- People in need: 29M
- People targeted: 21M
- Country HRP requirement: $3.7B
This report is produced by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It covers the period from January to December 2021. Where not stated otherwise, Sahel and all related figures are referring to Burkina Faso, northern Cameroon (Far North region), Chad, Mali, Niger, north-east Nigeria (Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states). Requirement and funding figures are for entire HRP/country. Food security and nutrition figures also include Senegal and Mauritania.
Deepening crisis, deteriorating needs

The humanitarian situation in the Sahel is worsening fast and significantly

Deep poverty, climate change, violence, chronically high food insecurity and malnutrition continue to drive extreme levels of vulnerability. The context is getting increasingly volatile and prone to shocks and natural hazards, putting millions at risk. In conflict-affected regions, civilians are facing an ever-increasing dramatic protection crisis. Millions of people had to flee their homes. Insecurity and violence are threatening lives and livelihoods, increasing human rights violations, and jeopardizing social cohesion. Women and girls are at heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Insecurity is also constraining humanitarian access, leaving communities without essential assistance, and exposing aid workers to increased risks. Across the region, COVID-19 is further compounding acute needs.

In 2021, almost 29 million Sahelians will need assistance and protection, 5 million more than one year ago. Six countries – Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria – have developed Response Plans for 2021, requiring a total US$ 3.7 billion.

VIOLENCE DEVASTATING RURAL COMMUNITIES

Conflict in the Sahel has worsened and spread to new areas, making it the key driver of needs. Both in the Central Sahel and in the Lake Chad basin, violence is showing no sign of abating: security incidents, attacks, and kidnappings are a daily reality for millions of civilians. They are caught between armed groups, intercommunal violence and military operations that severely impact their access to basic social services, livelihoods, and assistance, generating short- and long-term needs.

Multi-year trends show a dramatic deterioration. From 2015 to 2020, the number of violent attacks increased eightfold in the Central Sahel and tripled in the Lake Chad basin. Insecurity is expanding to and worsening in the cross-border area between Burkina Faso and Benin, North West Nigeria and Maradi, in Niger. Affected communities in remote rural areas are already struggling with high vulnerabilities and chronic needs. Exposed to violence and insecurity, they quickly slip into deep crisis.
SAHEL: HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW

**Uprooting Lives and Livelihoods**

Vital basic services such as education and health, are badly affected. Almost 5,000 schools are closed in affected areas in Burkina Faso, the Far North of Cameroon, Chad’s Lac Province, Nigeria’s north eastern regions, Niger and Mali, depriving hundreds of thousands of children of education and putting them at risk of exploitation and abuse. Millions of people have no access to medical care. Across the Central Sahel, 137 health centers remain closed due to insecurity, while most of the ones still open are not fully functional. This particularly impacts women and girls of reproductive age, who constitute more than half of the affected population.

As the crisis deepens, more and more populations are forced to flee their homes in search of safety. In Burkina Faso, in the fastest-growing displacement crisis in the world, more than one million people were forced to flee their homes since 2019. In the Central Sahel, the number of displaced persons has increased five-fold in one year. In the Lake Chad basin, the number of IDPs has steadily increased since 2018, and doubled in Chad’s Lac Province in 2020. Across the Sahel, 5.4 million people, more than ever before, are uprooted. Large-scale displacement is straining weak services and scarce natural resources. Many of the displaced have also been forced to flee several times, further deepening their vulnerabilities.
SPILL-OVER RISKS

Violence in the region risks further spreading, with non-state armed groups expanding operations, and sporadic incidents already hitting new areas. Throughout 2020, small scale attacks were recorded in Benin and Cote d’Ivoire and armed groups’ presence confirmed in several cross-border areas. The northern regions in the coastal countries are also experiencing the impact of climate change, rising tensions within agro-pastoral communities, and weakening governance systems. Similar to the catalysts to the crisis in the Sahel, these vulnerabilities contribute to increased risks of conflict and crisis.

North-west Nigeria is facing a complex crisis compounded by the rise of criminality and attacks on civilians. The violence and increase in protection needs has dramatic consequences on the civilian population in the cross-border area between Nigeria and Niger. Some 464,000 people have been uprooted from their homes, and last year alone saw 260,000 people fleeing internally and 44,000 to Maradi region in Niger.

In this worsening context, the Sahel’s southern border areas risk further destabilization, with criminal groups eventually creating linkages with non-state armed groups already active in the Sahel.

Countries are preparing their response capacity by increasing their security presence on the northern borders whilst introducing preventive strategies. The complex social dimension of violence calls for the implementation of multiparty approaches, including preventive development activities as well as humanitarian preparedness. Lack of data, monitoring systems and contingency plans might hamper quick responses, should they be needed. In 2021, regional partners are working closely with Benin, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Togo to reinforce preparedness activities, improve response capacities and identify areas to reduce risk and vulnerability.
SECURITY SITUATION TREND

The maps and graph focus on Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, parts of Cameroon (Far North region), Nigeria (Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states) and Senegal. Security incidents include battles, explosions / remote violence, violence against civilians and strategic developments (looting / property destruction).

February 2015 - February 2016

February 2020 - February 2021

HITTING WOMEN AND CHILDREN WORST

The impact of violence on women and children is devastating. Women and girls are doubly affected due to harmful social norms and multiple discriminations based on age and gender, further exacerbated by the socio-economic impact of Covid-19. In emergency contexts, incidents of gender-based violence (GBV) spike. Women and girls in local communities are exposed to widespread and increasing risk of being abducted, married by force, sexually assaulted and raped. The worst affected communities are also suffering the most of incomplete and unequally distributed multisectoral care and protection services.

Sahel countries have some of the world’s highest rates of child and forced marriage. In Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger, between half and three quarters of children are married and one adolescent girl out of two is giving birth before the age of 18. The impact of the current crisis further increases risks of forced marriage. In addition to gender-based violence, children are also exposed to child labor, economic exploitation, child recruitment and abuse, physical and verbal violence, and psychological distress.

MOPTI, MALI
Mariam is 12 years old. She attends the study centre on the IDP site and helps her mother with daily household chores, including fetching water for her family and livestock.

UNOCHA/Evelyne Annette Massoma Colomina
FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION AT RECORD PEAKS

The Sahel is characterized by high chronic vulnerabilities. Over the past years, the fast deterioration of the security context, climate shocks, and high food prices have deepened people’s vulnerability and challenged their access to food. In addition, measures taken by governments to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the restriction of movements within and between countries, had significant impact on people and animal mobility as well as trade flows. As a result, food insecurity in the Sahel has reached record peaks. During the upcoming lean season, almost 14 million people will face severe food insecurity across the region. In the Central Sahel, conflict and its impact on communities has become a key driver of food and nutritional needs, steadily deteriorating since 2017. In 2021, 5.2 million people will find themselves in a food crisis. The Lake Chad basin will experience a new increase for the first time in four years: 5.1 million will face hunger in 2021, half a million more than last year.

These figures reflect increasing human suffering and require coherent short and long-term solutions. Emergency aid needs to be stepped up while structural needs must be tackled to avoid further and catastrophic deterioration of the context.

The crisis is disproportionately affecting children and women. Children suffer strongly from short- and long-term effects of the crisis. Food insecurity increases the risks of adoption of negative coping mechanisms resulting in early marriages and, in some cases, survival sex. In the Central Sahel, almost one million children under five will be affected by acute malnutrition.

RESILIENCE TESTED BY CLIMATE SHOCKS

Nowhere has resilience been more sorely tested than in the Sahel. The region is becoming increasingly arid and fights the advance of the desert, but also must deal periodically with devastating floods, a double sentence with multiple causes.

Climate change is disrupting already fragile livelihoods and having adverse impacts on security in the Sahel, especially as intercommunal tensions over access to resources fuel conflicts and become the foundation of recruitment for non-state armed groups.

Existing tensions between pastoralist communities and farmers are intensifying as communities compete for access to available land and water for cultivation and pasture. Overall, the increasing vulnerability of rural populations, insecurity, and conflict over resources, are disrupting social cohesion, leading to a worsening crisis.

With one of the world’s most rapid population growth rates in an environment with dwindling resources, vulnerabilities in the Sahel will likely further increase, fueling new conflicts and forced migration due to climate change.

This must be met with substantial investments in rural livelihoods and social services, to reinforce social cohesion and provide the foundations for peace in the region.

MAURITANIA & SENEGAL

Mauritania and Senegal have faced recurrent and acute climate shocks since 2012. Erratic rainfall and severe droughts strongly affect local food production and livestock management. This negatively impacts people’s access to food, causing food insecurity and malnutrition.

Experts predict that the next lean season in Mauritania and in Senegal will lead to close to 480,000 and 490,000 people not being able to meet their food needs, respectively. The most affected areas are in the Matam and Kedougou regions of Senegal, which could face cross-border population movements, particularly of pastoral communities during the transhumance period.

In addition, in 2020, heavy rains caused devastating floods that affected more than 32,000 people in Senegal and destroyed homes and wide areas of crops. As the climate is becoming more volatile, seasonal rains are causing increasingly severe emergencies.
Across the region, in 2020, exceptionally severe seasonal floods affected more than 1.7 million people resulting in destruction of houses, goods, crops and fields, and land degradation, threatening the livelihoods of communities whose majority rely on agriculture. Many of the regions most affected by droughts, land degradation and floods are also struggling with insecurity, high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. Since the Sendai Conference, disaster preparedness has been more integrated into national policies, but it remains insufficiently prioritized in the aid spectrum.

Further efforts are required to respond and be prepared for climate shocks, while adaptation to climate change needs to become a priority.
INCREASING ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

2020 saw an increase in access constraints across the Sahel. Conflict, direct threats to aid workers, administrative barriers, natural disasters, and the COVID-19 pandemic all had a deleterious impact on humanitarian access in the region.

Constrained humanitarian access leaves communities without essential assistance and protection, and exposes aid workers to increased risks. The direct targeting of humanitarian operations further impedes life-saving support. One-third of abductions of aid workers in the world occurred in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. These factors significantly contribute to the slowdown and suspension of humanitarian activities. In Niger, in 2020, some areas were inaccessible for up to 226 days. In Mali, the increased use of IEDs by non-state armed actors, and destruction of infrastructure targeting the military has also reduced civilian access to basic social services and humanitarian assistance.

The lack of distinction between humanitarian and military actors poses significant risks to humanitarian access in the region. This is particularly induced by the imposition of armed escorts, the uncoordinated implementation of quick impact projects (QIP) and the lack of robust civil military coordination mechanisms. The imposition of armed escorts for international organisations in parts of the Sahel in 2020 led to the partial suspension of critical humanitarian projects, hampering civilians’ access to aid and responders’ security.

Non-state armed groups (NSAG) have targeted civilians who are suspected of having cooperated with military and police forces. The support provided by armed forces to civilians in some areas has also blurred the understanding of distinction between military and humanitarian actors. This has an impact on the perception and acceptance of humanitarian actors by the civilian population as well as non-state armed groups.

Enhanced civil-military coordination remains imperative to establish structured relations between civil and military authorities and humanitarian actors and to guarantee humanitarian principles are respected. Structured dialogue is needed between States and their partners engaged in humanitarian, development, and peace-building work to define cooperation, make clear distinctions, establish red lines where they are needed, always ensuring respect of international humanitarian law and humanitarian operational independence.

Anti-terrorism legislation also had an impact

- Humanitarian actors should be able to exercise, as much as possible, their right to negotiate humanitarian access with all parties to the conflict, including non-state armed groups.
- Safe access to essential services for all affected communities must be facilitated.
- The distinction between humanitarian and military mandates must be respected.
- Humanitarians must not be compelled to use armed escorts and the principle of “last resort” must be respected.
- Administrative constraints need to be alleviated.
- Joint advocacy for the protection of humanitarian space and access is needed.
- CMCoord and humanitarian principles training must be strengthened.
- Financial and logistical support for UNHAS flights is necessary to help facilitate access to difficult to reach areas.
on the capacity of humanitarians to enter into negotiations on humanitarian access with some actors, contrary to international humanitarian principles. This further restricts access to people in need.

**Administrative barriers continue to threaten access to people in need in several countries.** Some aid operations have been forced to focus on certain areas for intervention and recipients of aid, violating humanitarian principles.

**The 2020 rainy season hampered humanitarian access to certain conflict-affected regions, with huge sections of roads inaccessible because of flooding and erosion.**

**Access is particularly difficult for rural populations, particularly women and girls.** The lack of female involvement in field activities, needs assessments and community engagement activities, in contexts of high insecurity, excludes considerations of women’s and girls’ particular needs. Some organisations have faced restrictions by local authorities on mixed gender operations and programming on education, gender-based violence, and reproductive health.

**ATTACKS TARGETING HUMANITARIANS**

Facing worsening insecurity and a complex operational environment, aid workers are increasingly at risk, have been abducted and killed. Insecurity has forced the suspension of operations in some locations, leaving communities without access to basic assistance. Recent examples include the attacks by non-state armed groups on 11 April in Damasak and on 2 March in Dikwa, both in Nigeria’s Borno State, directly targeting humanitarian facilities, warehouses and a hospital.
COVID-19 COMPOUNDING NEEDS

After over a year, Sahel countries have registered nearly 300,000 cases of COVID-19. The delivery of humanitarian assistance continued with delivery modalities adapting to the COVID-19 context and accompanied by sensitization measures, as well as innovative approaches to engage communities at distance, through community leaders. The socio-economic impact of the pandemic, however, has been felt across the region, and livelihoods have been affected by restrictions on movement and gathering put in place to prevent transmission, further accentuating needs in the region.

COVID-19's compounded impact has significantly contributed to soaring food insecurity in the region, particularly in vulnerable communities. Poverty is high, and commodity market volatility and supply chain disruptions impact access and availability of food. Cross-border transhumance activities are severely disrupted, affecting the livelihoods of vulnerable pastoralists. In Burkina Faso, Chad and Nigeria, COVID-19 mitigation measures negatively impact access to agricultural inputs and labor.

The COVID-19 crisis, on top of the escalation of conflict, forced displacements and natural disasters has strong negative effects on the wellbeing of populations, especially for women and girls who disproportionately experience gender-based violence and livelihood loss. While women represent the majority of front-line workers, they are disproportionately and inadequately represented in policy spaces and community structures. The pandemic has also led to an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls. Harmful social norms and belief systems are one of the root causes of gender discrimination and inequalities in the region and the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to cause a one-third reduction in progress towards ending gender-based violence by 2030.

Closure of schools between March and July 2020 disrupted learning opportunities for millions of children, in addition to all those who are deprived of education due to insecurity. In Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger alone, 12 million children were impacted. Gains made in education in both access and quality are at great risk of being lost. For the continuity of learning, innovations in distance learning were harnessed. However, difficult access to internet, television or radio is hampering the effective use of these new techniques.

Preventive services were suspended in some places and are likely to experience a discontinuity, which could lead to the suspension of immunization and prophylaxis campaigns with potentially serious consequences.

Several countries in the region are taking part in the COVAX Advanced Market Commitment (AMC). As of April 2021, vaccination campaigns have started in Mali, Nigeria and Niger. The AMC is the COVAX Facility's mechanism to provide donor-funded vaccines to lower-income countries.
NEEDS OUTPACING FUNDING LEVELS

Thanks to generous contributions from donors, the UN and humanitarian partners provided life-saving assistance to more than 15.8 million people in 2020 - often in challenging environments and hard-to-access areas. UN agencies and NGOs have stayed and delivered throughout this intensifying crisis, providing food aid, therapeutic nutrition, emergency shelter and access to health care, water, sanitation and hygiene, education, and protection.

Timely and targeted response with sufficient resources saves lives and reduces human suffering. Funding levels, however, are not keeping up with increasing needs. In 2020, response plans were funded at an average 53 per cent.

With better funding, much more can be achieved.

In 2021, humanitarian partners will continue to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection across the Sahel, prioritizing the most acute needs. All activities will promote the safety, dignity and equitable access of affected girls, women, boys and men to humanitarian aid.

Enhanced efforts are required to provide essential services and maintain access to the most vulnerable populations.

Acceptance and community inclusion in aid programming are critical in mitigating risks and accessing populations in need. Transnational issues such as displacement and food insecurity, and their impact on border areas, need to be considered in a coherent and interconnected way.

Support for women and girls, reproductive health, and women’s empowerment, will be key. Investing in women-led crisis response and prioritizing gender equality are key to effectively meet humanitarian and recovery needs, and to achieve peace and prosperity by elevating their leadership and equal participation in humanitarian responses and crisis. Women and girls’ priorities too often go unmet and their voices and expertise unheeded. Despite an upward trend of gender equality efforts, front-line women’s organizations in fragile and conflict-affected areas still receive only 0.2% of total aid funding.
TOWARDS REDUCING THE IMPACT OF PROTRACTED CRISES

Populations and livelihoods in the Sahel region are increasingly exposed to complex and interlinked risks: conflict, violent extremism, climate change, pandemics and food insecurity are compounded and contributing to growing fragility.

Against the framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the promise of ‘leaving no one behind’, ending needs by reducing risks and vulnerabilities is now a shared commitment.

Joint efforts by humanitarian, development, and peace actors aim to implement a ‘new way of working’ towards collective outcomes. This approach seeks to align short and long terms strategies and operations in situations of protracted crisis at the country level. It builds on the need to respond to complex risks in a complementary way to reduce vulnerabilities, improve the protection of civilians, contribute to the prevention of conflicts and foster peace.

New working methods across the humanitarian and development fields are imperative, strengthening efforts towards sharing data, joint analysis, and assessment of needs, as well as aligning multi-year planning.

Several nexus initiatives are taking place in the Sahel through AGIR alliance, UNISS, and government led interventions. To reduce the impact of protracted crises on affected populations in the Sahel, it is imperative to support development action and invest in the medium to long term while continuing to provide immediate life-saving assistance. These activities need to be planned and started at the onset of a crisis in close coordination with humanitarian actors and mindful of humanitarian principles, both within the country and in the neighbouring countries.

- **Development action** needs to be more responsive, risk focused and flexible through context-adaptable programming, including a stronger focus on presence and impact in communities and a flexible approach in terms of working with fragile institutions.
- **Wherever relevant, peacebuilding efforts** should be more preventive, focused on engaging national stakeholders, and more risk tolerant to address root causes of conflicts and crises.
COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS TO SCALE UP AID TO MILLIONS IN THE CENTRAL SAHEL

In October 2020, a Ministerial Roundtable on the Central Sahel was co-hosted by Denmark, Germany, the European Union and the United Nations to mobilize support to address the humanitarian needs and challenges in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, gather political momentum and provide strategic guidance. Participants made strong commitments and donors announced more than US$1.7 billion to scale up lifesaving aid.

Policy commitments focused on addressing the root causes of the crisis in respect of international humanitarian law and human rights, safeguarding protection as a central element of the response, strengthening humanitarian civil-military coordination, and prioritizing joint-up efforts for an effective humanitarian, development, and peace nexus.

To ensure collective accountability, OCHA and partners have developed a framework to follow up on progress made against the major commitments. The macro diagnostic tool will allow partners in the region to step up advocacy or technical support as needed at national, regional or global level.

Commitments were made across three main themes:
1. Basic Social Services
2. Protection
3. Access/CMPoord

As such, the follow up framework is aligned with these three themes, working through existing coordination mechanisms led by the Humanitarian Country Team. The follow-up will be strengthened by a robust advocacy strategy at regional level to highlight successes across the region, and address challenges.

A regional report on the progress will be presented to the Roundtable co-chairs in October 2021.

Meanwhile, humanitarian action should be placed within the broader context: while protecting humanitarian space, humanitarian actors must clearly indicate the scope of the humanitarian response and actions required to support its phase-out, considering sustainable access to services and protection and the transfer of service delivery to non-humanitarian actors.
Sahel

Regional dashboard

(as of April 2021)

$3.7B

Requirement

29M

People in need

21M

People targeted

4.4M

Internally displaced people

890K

Refugees

PEOPLE IN NEED & TARGETED

29M

people in need

21M

people targeted

HRP REQUIREMENT & FUNDING

$3.7B

required

FOOD SECURITY

14M

at crisis and emergency level

NUTRITION

1.6M

severely malnourished children

IDPs & REFUGEES

4.4M

890K

Sources: HNO, HRP, UNICEF, UNDP, Government - UNHCR

Food insecurity phases

No data

minimal

Under Pressure

Crisis

Emergency


Sources: HNO, HRP

Food security data and map based on the March 2021 Cadre Harmonise/RPCA as of 22 April 2021.

Some data and geographic boundaries are being further cleaned up and verified.
Burkina Faso: Humanitarian Needs and Requirements Overview

**Burkina Faso**

Burkina Faso is facing a growing and unprecedented humanitarian emergency. Conflict and insecurity have provoked what is now the fastest-growing displacement crisis in the world, forcing more than 1.2 million people to flee their homes, leaving everything behind. Many of the displaced have had to flee several times. Despite the generosity of host communities, more than 75 per cent remain without adequate shelter.

In 2021, a record number of 3.5 million people require emergency assistance in six priority regions. The violence and climate variability have significantly impacted food production in Burkina Faso. Almost 2.9 million people are expected to be food insecure during the lean season. Without the humanitarian assistance they currently receive, thousands of families would go hungry. Essential basic services such as access to water, sanitation infrastructure, education and health are severely affected. Nearly a million people have no access to medical care, a situation that leaves them vulnerable to epidemic disease, including COVID-19. Some 2,200 schools are closed in affected areas, depriving more than 300,000 children of an education, and putting them at risk of exploitation and abuse. Specialized and multisectoral services for GBV care and protection of women and girls covers only 12% of the affected territory. In one of Burkina Faso’s most affected regions, Sahel, school attendance has dropped from an already low average of 50-60% to 25% over the past two years. This has an enormous impact on children’s futures, particularly for girls, who are often unlikely to return to school, get pregnant or marry before the age of 18.

The country is facing large-scale protection challenges arising from spiraling insecurity and the erosion of people’s access to livelihoods and basic social services in its northern and eastern regions, along the borders with Mali and Niger. Conflicts between communities remain a serious concern, while children and women are bearing the brunt of the violence, with gender-based violence among IDPs and host communities exacerbated by the humanitarian crisis. At least 1.5 million people need protection assistance, of which 85 per cent are women and children.

Despite the many challenges, the humanitarian community has expanded access to assistance in Burkina Faso. Thanks to generous donor contributions and concerted efforts, humanitarian aid reached more than 2.4 million people in 2020 – more than twice the comparable figure for 2019 – through the provision of food aid, therapeutic nutrition, emergency shelter and access to health care, water, sanitation and hygiene, education and protection, particularly in difficult to access areas. But the impact of conflict continues to accrue, and additional resources are needed. Response capacities need to be strengthened to meet the vital needs of crisis-affected people and to cope with the volatile context.

Among the 3.5 million people in need of assistance, the humanitarian community has targeted 2.9 million of the most vulnerable people and is calling for the mobilization of US$608 million to maintain and increase emergency response.

Aid that saves lives must also be accompanied by development action to reduce future needs. That means investing in basic social services, first and foremost in northern and eastern Burkina Faso. It also means improving infrastructure and education, combating the impact of climate shocks and climate change, and supporting sustainable livelihood models for future generations.
Cameroon (Far North)

Cameroon continues to face a highly challenging humanitarian context, characterized by multiple crises that severely stretch the response capacity of authorities and humanitarian partners.

The Far North region suffers from a complex emergency triggered by the long-standing violence in the Lake Chad Basin. Over 1.2 million people are estimated to need humanitarian assistance in the Far North region of Cameroon in 2021. Over 320,000 people have been internally displaced by the conflict, and population movements are ongoing. Displacement often happens in anticipation of attacks, with families carrying minimum goods with them and searching for temporary safe areas. As a result, displaced people tend to settle in makeshift shelters.

Civilians are deeply vulnerable to rights abuses and violations. The civilian population continues to be subjected to armed attacks, kidnappings, including of children, looting and destruction of property and infrastructure. Displaced persons continue to be particularly affected by violence and increasing forced displacement, which has contributed to the weakening of family and community safety nets, affecting most particularly vulnerable people such as women, children, older people and persons living with disabilities. The level of violence, exacerbated by forced displacement and lack of adequate lifesaving gender-based violence (GBV) services, puts women and girls at heightened risks.

In areas affected by violence and insecurity, access to basic social services such as health and education is constrained. The region is also prone to climate shocks, both floods and prolonged dry periods, that undermine community resilience. The volatile context is also strongly affecting people’s capacity to feed themselves. The Far North region presents a high prevalence of acute malnutrition of more than 5 per cent.

Insecurity and insufficient funding severely limit the humanitarian response, including the provision of lifesaving GBV and Child Protection services. At the national level, the GBV and Child Protection response were only funded at 4.5 per cent and 6.8 per cent, respectively, in 2020.

Beyond the Far North, Cameroon faces two other humanitarian crises. The situation in the North-West and South-West regions continues to deteriorate. Thousands of families continue to flee their homes in search of safety. In Cameroon’s eastern regions, an increase in the influx of Central African refugees has been observed. Overall, 300,000 refugees are putting significant pressure on the already limited resources and basic social services in the host areas. In 2021, some 4.4 million people need life-saving assistance in Cameroon.

*Requirement for the entire country, targeting 3 million people. The portion for the Far North is estimated at US$100 million.
In Chad, multiple crises continue to compound the vulnerability of people. The already fragile socio-economic context is strongly affected by increasing conflicts and violence, recurrent health risks and food insecurity.

The rise of violence inside Chad’s borders but also shocks felt in its cross-border areas due to the fragile political and security context of neighboring countries are affecting the lives of many.

Population movements are increasing and almost one million people are displaced, including IDPs, refugees and returnees.

In the western Lac province, the number of IDPs doubled during 2020. The vulnerability of host populations is deepening, as livelihoods are increasingly affected by challenges to access the lake for fishing or to plant and harvest. In 2020, 1,058 protection incidents have been reported in the province, plus 262 incidents during the first two months of 2021 alone. The majority are kidnappings (30%) and killings (24%) and most incidents are accompanied by theft and pillage of cattle and infrastructure. A total of 1,295 victims of incidents of GBV received services in 2020. Early 2021 also saw 4,482 new arrivals in the East from Sudan, following attacks by armed militias in West Darfur.

Chad is exposed to climate shocks such as rainfall deficits, droughts leading to the degradation of natural resources, the decline in pastoral production, and the erosion of biodiversity, as well as recurrent floods, with consequences in terms of food insecurity and loss of livelihoods.

Across the country, 1.8 million people are expected to suffer from food insecurity during the next lean season from June to September, an increase by more than 50 per cent compared to last year. In the Lac province particularly, food insecurity is impacted by on-going conflict reducing access to livelihoods, climatic events including excessive flooding in mid-2020, and COVID-19 movement restrictions. Malnutrition remains particularly preoccupying in 16 of the 23 provinces. Overall, the prevalence is 10 per cent for moderate, and 2.1 percent for severe malnutrition, and 3.9 per cent among children under five.

In 2020, some 388,000 people across the country – especially the west, south and northeast – were affected by extensive floods, losing totally or partially houses and belongings, with considerable impact on food stocks and harvests and loss of animals. N’Djamena itself was also affected as the Chari river burst its banks. Despite efforts, funding challenges prevented humanitarian actors to deliver sufficient response.

In several southern provinces, clashes between farmers and herders continue, with eight separate incidents in January and February, resulting in the deaths of at least 70 people. Clashes are triggered by livestock causing damage to crops and disputes over water sources.

The country is also suffering from recurrent epidemics such as measles, malaria and meningitis. Poor access to drinking water, hygiene and sanitation, and the weakness of the health system, constitute major obstacles in terms of supply and accessibility to primary health care, putting the lives of 1.7 million people on the line.
Throughout 2020, the humanitarian context in Mali worsened due to the immediate effects of multi-faceted conflict and violence driving displacement and increased humanitarian needs, particularly in the border regions with Burkina Faso and Niger. This negative trend continues into 2021. Inter and intra-community conflicts, non-state armed group violence, the consequences of counter-insurgency operations, the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), crime and banditry, and sexual violence affect the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. Climate shocks, such as droughts and floods, add to an already precarious context. The consequences of COVID-19 have increased the vulnerability of populations and the severity of their needs.

Caught between armed groups and military operations civilians flee their homes to seek safety. Displacement in Mali has grown since 2017 with a significant increase of over 116,000 internally displaced persons, in 2020. As of January 2021, there are 347,000 IDPs and if this trajectory persists the numbers will soon exceed, for the first time since the beginning of the crisis in 2013, the historic threshold of 353,000 IDPs. Large-scale displacement is straining weak services and scarce natural resources deepening people’s vulnerability and their reliance on negative coping mechanisms such as forced early marriage. More than 400,000 children were affected by the closure of schools in December 2020, primarily due to insecurity.

Approximately 1.3 million people need livelihoods support due to the loss or significant reduction of household income and livelihoods as a result of the conflict and the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19. Some 1.3 million people are in need of emergency food assistance and more than 1.1 million people need nutritional assistance. The three-border area is in an alarming situation with 30 per cent of the population facing severe food insecurity in Bankass and Bandiagara in the Mopti region. The northern parts of Kayes, Segou and Koulikoro have 300,000 people in need of emergency food assistance.

**Humanitarian access constraints remain very high.** In Mopti, UN agencies reported a high number of access constraints in 75 per cent of the region’s communes from September to December 2020, 43 per cent for international NGOs and 37 per cent for national NGOs. To address this, OCHA and its partners have launched a programme to build capacity and reinforce civil-military coordination and humanitarian principles.

In 2020, joint efforts by the Government and humanitarian partners made it possible to assist over 2.2 million people, despite funding shortfalls and access constraints. Only 47 per cent of the funds sought for the humanitarian response were received in 2020. Immediate and generous funding is necessary to cope with needs and have a tangible impact on people’s lives. The UN and NGOs are on the ground, providing food aid, therapeutic nutrition, emergency shelter and access to health care, water, sanitation and hygiene, education, and protection - and with better funding, much more can be achieved.

**In 2021, 11.7 million people are affected by the crisis, of whom 5.9 million need humanitarian assistance. 54 per cent are children.** Humanitarian organizations are targeting 4.7 million people and are calling for the mobilization of US$ 563 million.
Niger faces a complex humanitarian emergency marked by continued insecurity and violence against civilians perpetrated by non-state armed groups, endemic poverty and demographic pressure, the effects of climate change including seasonal floods and pockets of drought, and chronic food insecurity and malnutrition. The situation is further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic causing an exponential increase in needs. This year, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection has increased from 3.7 million to 3.8 million.

Armed conflicts in Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria continue to result in instability and forced displacements in border areas, and violence is spilling over into Niger’s cross-border regions. Spikes of violence particularly in the Diffa, Tillabéri, Maradi and Tahoua regions create new displacement and increase humanitarian needs. As of February 2021, persisting insecurity led 570,000 people (IDPs and refugees) seeking refuge from violence. Most displaced people have been forced to flee multiple times and cannot return home due to insecurity.

Increasingly severe weather and intensifying climate shocks are exacerbating chronic vulnerabilities. In 2020, exceptional floods severely impacted Niger. More than 632,000 people were affected by torrential rainfall that destroyed their homes. About two million people face acute and chronic food insecurity because of recurring shocks and climate change. More than 400,000 children aged 6 months to 59 months are exposed to severe acute malnutrition and more than 50 per cent of children are out of school. The preexisting conditions are exacerbated by sporadic outbreaks affecting the most vulnerable. Measles, cholera and meningitis are the most common live threatening diseases.

Insecurity and attacks are severely disrupting essential social services and jeopardizing national development efforts. In 2020, health infrastructures were directly targeted by attacks. Approximately 70 health centers had to close due to the insecurity in Tillabéri and Diffa regions. The number of reported violations is also increasing. Gender-based violence (GBV) services have expanded making it possible to support 3,261 GBV survivors from January to August 2020, against 1,399 in 2019.

Getting humanitarian aid to vulnerable people remains a challenge. Because of insecurity, humanitarian organizations in Niger have faced increased access constraints, affecting their ability to respond to affected people’s needs, particularly in Tahoua, Tillabéri and Diffa. In 2020, 318 security incidents affected humanitarian workers including 7 humanitarians killed.

Despite ongoing risks and uncertainty, the humanitarian community is committed to stay and deliver emergency assistance such as clean drinking water, food and primary healthcare services to the most vulnerable people. About 151 humanitarian organizations are providing multisectoral emergency assistance nationwide, including in hard-to-reach areas.

The humanitarian community is calling for the mobilization of US$523.2 million to cover the acute needs of the most vulnerable people in 2021.

Structural vulnerabilities in Niger are unlikely to improve significantly. People will remain vulnerable to climate shocks such as droughts and floods, malnutrition, food insecurity, and disease outbreaks. Resilience programming, including further investment in prevention and capacity-building, is critical to reduce people and communities’ vulnerability and better respond to crises’ root causes.
The humanitarian crisis in Nigeria’s north-eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe is expected to persist unabated and remains one of the largest crises in the world. 2021 marks the twelfth year of conflict and of human suffering. Protracted insecurity and violence compounded by climate change and the impact of COVID-19 are further increasing vulnerability, putting almost 9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. Close to two million people are internally displaced, living in camps or in host communities.

The combination of escalating conflict and disruption to and loss of livelihoods due to COVID-19 restrictions and displacement is exacerbating food insecurity. More than 4.3 million people in the north-east are expected to face hunger during the upcoming lean season – the worst outlook in four years. At the same time, malnutrition is on the rise. Every day, 165 children are at risk of dying of malnutrition in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states.

Conflict and weak rule of law institutions create an environment conducive for gender-based violence. With the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence has sharply increased. Some 3,732 cases of gender-based violence were supported towards specialized services, which is very likely a significant underreporting. Survivors often face immense challenges in accessing affordable quality services.

The operating environment for humanitarian partners has become increasingly challenging. Attacks against humanitarians and civilians are pervasive, putting civilians and aid workers at risk. Many key logistical routes across the north-east are insecure, impeding transport of personnel and humanitarian supplies critical for the operation.

In 2020, combined humanitarian and Government efforts helped reach over five million people with urgent assistance, despite funding shortfalls, security challenges and movement restrictions. Malnutrition was averted for over two million children through their provision with fortified nutritious foods to address or prevent malnutrition. Two million people were reached with protection services, including sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response, enhanced mine awareness, and support in addressing housing land and property concerns.

Despite relentless efforts, the gap in financing is increasing. 2020 marked the lowest level of funding received since the beginning of the joint response, with only 58% of the required funds received.

Humanitarian presence needs to be brought to scale to cope with the increasing needs and avoid further deterioration of the crisis, putting even more people in need of assistance. The humanitarian community is calling for US$1 billion to enable partners to provide critical services to the 6.4 million most vulnerable people - amongst a total of 8.7 million people in need of some form of humanitarian assistance in 2021.
What if? ... We fail to respond
If humanitarians are not able to raise funds and deliver aid for the Sahel crisis...

1. 29 million Sahelians risk being cut-off from life-saving assistance and face deepening vulnerabilities, half of them are women and girls that will experience higher risks of gender-based violence.

2. More than 5 million displaced people will struggle to survive. Inadequate shelter and congested living conditions will expose families to multiple risks.

3. The status of almost 14 million people struggling with severe food security will further degrade without assistance. The number of people facing hunger will increase.

4. More than 1.6 million severely malnourished children will not receive treatment. Many could die or suffer lifelong mental and physical damage.

5. Millions of people will not have adequate access to water, hygiene and basic sanitation. In addition to COVID-19, the risks of outbreaks of communicable diseases will grow. Healthcare resources will dwindle and diseases such as diarrhea, pneumonia, malaria, measles, and cholera will thrive.

6. Millions of people across the Sahel will be left without support to help them sustain their livelihoods, leading to negative coping strategies and increased tension around scarce resources.

7. Millions of children out of school due to violence and displacement will remain idle and exposed to risk of abduction, enslavement, and forced recruitment.

8. Communities struck by droughts, floods, and other climate disasters will not be able to cope with shocks and loss of livelihood, intensifying both conflict risks and health emergencies.

9. Millions of people will be at heightened protection risks related to displacement, mines, violence and grave violations against children.

10. Communities under stress will adopt more conservative or customary patriarchal practices that will disproportionately harm women and girls.

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