

The international community must remain engaged to respond to urgent humanitarian needs and better link humanitarian and development efforts, says Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel

(Bamako, 14 August 2015) – The Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel, Toby Lanzer, today completed a five-day visit to Mali. During his first visit to the country since he took up his assignment, Mr. Lanzer emphasized on the necessity for the international community to sustain its engagement to meet the vital needs of the most vulnerable communities, whilst supporting ongoing efforts toward peace and development.

“Humanitarian needs will only grow in Mali if there is no full commitment to peace and stability”, said Toby Lanzer. “I am inspired by the resilience of Malian communities and a vibrant civil society that strives to uphold values of tolerance and social cohesion. Together with the government and development partners, we must stand by the people to address their aspirations to a dignified life, development and security”, said Toby Lanzer.

Mr. Lanzer met with Government representatives and several humanitarian partners, including United Nations agencies and NGOs. In Timbuktu, he met with communities affected by the crisis and frontline humanitarian aid workers.

During this lean season, 3.1 million Malians are suffering from food insecurity, of whom 410,000 require immediate assistance. Pastoralist communities in the northern and central parts of the country face a particularly precarious situation, with severe water shortages and lack of fodder putting their livelihoods at risk. Across the country, the lives of 715,000 children are threatened by acute malnutrition. The situation is of particular concern in the Timbuktu region, where malnutrition rates exceed the emergency threshold. Significant needs in terms of protection and access to essential services -such as health and education- remain throughout the country.

“The insecurity that prevails in parts of the country hinders humanitarian access, precisely to some of the most vulnerable communities where it is generating new needs”, deplored Mrs. Mbaranga Gasarabwe, the Humanitarian Coordinator in Mali. “Stabilization and security are essential to ensure people’s access to critical services and livelihoods. Together with the national authorities, we are working towards this goal.”

This year’s humanitarian appeal for Mali calls for US\$ 377 million to address the most pressing needs throughout the country. It is the second highest appeal of the nine countries of the Sahel region. To date, only 33 percent of its financial requirements have been met.

“The international community shall remain engaged to ensure aid agencies have the resources they need to save lives and boost self-reliance of the most vulnerable communities”, said Mr. Lanzer.

For further information, please call:

Berenice Van Den Driessche, OCHA, vandendriessche@un.org, +221 77 333 91 95 (Dakar)

Anouk Desgroseilliers, Public Information Officer, desgroseilliers@un.org, +223 7599 5761 (Bamako)

To learn more about the humanitarian needs in the Sahel and how humanitarian teams plan to respond, visit:

www.unocha.org/sahel2015.

OCHA press releases are available on <http://www.unocha.org/rowca>