

**URGENT ALERT ON SAHEL**



**INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL NGOs ARE SOUNDING THE ALARM ABOUT THE RECORD NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN NEED OF FOOD AND NUTRITION ASSISTANCE IN 2023 IN THE WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICAN REGION.**

**THE 2023 FIGURE IS THE HIGHEST SINCE THE “CADRE HARMONISE” STARTED IN 2013.**

Action Against Hunger, Helen Keller Intl, Oxfam, Save The Children, NRC, Mercy Corps, AFAO, Solidarités, IRC, RBM





## overview

For the sixth year in a row, the number of people who will be unable to meet their basic food and nutrition is on the rise in West Africa, the sahel and several countries in Central Africa (Chad and Cameroun). The 2023 figure is the highest since the “Cadre Harmonisé” (the tool used to assess food and nutrition security in West Africa) started in 2013.

If no measures are taken to address the situation, 45 million people, 11% of the population of the 407 million people analyzed in 17 countries<sup>1</sup>, will be unable to meet their basic food and nutrition needs. Currently, 32.6 million people, approximately 8% of the population analyzed, are already unable to meet their basic food and nutrition needs.

This situation is the result of a combination of several determining factors, including insecurity, conflict and forced population displacement, regional and global climatic and economic shocks, and the residual effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### URGENT HUMANITARIAN AID NEEDED TO SAVE LIVES AND PROTECT LIVELIHOODS.

For the period of June-August 2023, which corresponds to the peak of food insecurity in most of the region, 45.2 million people will be affected by food and nutrition insecurity (Phase 3 or worse of the CH), meaning that they need urgent action required to protect livelihoods and reduce food consumption gaps. This a further increase of the number of people in urgent need of food and nutrition assistance compared to the same period in 2022, calling for significant increase of support to protect lives and livelihoods of vulnerable households and reduce the risk of catastrophic food insecurity. This also highlights the need for short to medium term investments in food security and nutrition programs that reinforce the resilience of communities to reverse the increasing trends in acute food insecurity observed in the recent years.

**“We can't say it enough. The situation is quite worrying and critical. The Sahel and West Africa are facing year after year, the worst food and nutrition crisis in a decade. There is urgent need for increased and sustained political and budgetary commitments from decision-makers (governments and donors) for a sustainable and targeted response to needs and root causes of hunger in West and Central Africa” alerts Mamadiop Diop, Action Against Hunger’s Regional Representative for West and Central Africa.**

<sup>1</sup>Bénin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinée, Guinée Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Chad, Togo, Nigeria, Cameroun

Five countries have more than 10% of their population expected to reach a crisis or worse situation between June and August 2023. These include: Nigeria (25.3 million, 13 % of the population analysed), Burkina Faso (3.5 million, 16%), Cameroon (3.2 million, 12% ), Niger (2.8 million, 11%), Mauritania (0,7 million, 16%).

There is also an increasing trend in the prevalence of acute malnutrition among children under 5 years of age, with rates above the emergency threshold (15%), particularly in certain areas of Senegal (28% in Louga, 23% in Matam), Mauritania (19.1% in Gorgol, 19.7% in Guidimaka), north-eastern Nigeria (18.1% in Yobe and 17.2% in northern Borno), and Niger (16.1% in Dogon-Doutchi).

25,500 people living in the north-eastern part of Burkina Faso (Soum, Seno, Oudalan and Yagha) and in Borno in Nigeria are expected to face a catastrophic situation (CH Phase 5, the worse of the CH classification) if nothing is done. These are households who have extreme food gaps and are unable to cover other needs even by using any available coping strategies. 4800 people are already in a catastrophic situation between October to December in Soum in Burkina Faso and in Bama in Borno, Nigeria. This is the first time since 2017 in Nigeria that the population is in Phase 5 of the CH during the post-harvest period from October to December.

## **CONFLICTS AND INSECURITY AGGRAVATE HUMANITARIAN NEEDS.**

Several areas will see more than 20% of their population face large food deficits resulting in very high acute malnutrition or mitigating large food deficits by using emergency coping strategies and by liquidating their assets. Between June and August 2023, and if nothing is done, these areas will reach Phase 4 of the CH, the second worst Phase of the CH in terms of severity.

It is also important to note that the Cadre Harmonisé analyses predict for the entire region that more than 100 million people will be in phase 2 (under pressure) during the next lean season and at the slightest shock these people could find themselves in crisis phase or worse.

Displaced population, that could be analysed, will also be in an emergency by June-August 2023. More generally, the situation remains very worrying in the Liptako Gourma areas across the borders of Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Niger and the whole Lake Chad Basin that are affected by insecurity and conflict.





The Norwegian Refugee Council shares that in Djibo for example, women and children risk wandering outside of town to pick leaves and flowers - often the only thing left to eat because of empty markets and inadequate food assistance due to the conflict engulfing Burkina Faso. "It's been four days with nothing to eat," says 76-year-old Amadou, who was born in Djibo and says he has never seen anything like the current crisis. He now hosts 40 internally displaced people in his own courtyard, as fighting has entrapped some 370,000 people in the town.

A recent study and interviews conducted by Save The Children in Liptako Gourma in over 640 households reveal that the food and nutrition crisis have significant social impacts, particularly in terms of increased marriage of girls and school dropouts. School is no longer a priority. Households shared that "a hungry stomach has no ears". The search for small jobs to support their parents in the effort to feed the whole household is becoming the main task of especially young boys who no longer attend school while young girls are prematurely married off to reduce the "burden of the family and an additional mouth to feed." The crisis is accentuating the practice of child marriage which denies the rights of young girls. This is not only a food crisis it is a child rights crisis.

The pastoral surveillance bulletin (November) for the region produced by RBM and ACF shows that, of the "three borders" that are often confronted with ecological disturbances, southwestern Niger has low forage production. This observation is also valid for northern Senegal, southwestern Mauritania, Nigeria and the coastal countries, due to poor rainfall distribution.

Assalama Dawalack Sidi, Oxfam's Regional Director for West and Central Africa says: "West Africa, and especially the Sahel, is in the grip of a perpetual hunger crisis, due to conflicts, soaring prices and climate change. Beyond the emergency response, we need to establish agricultural policies that serve the most vulnerable populations and provide them with social protection that allows them to resist and adapt to shocks in order to finally prosper".

According to Ms. Khady Tall, President of AFAO, "Policies must systematize food support to vulnerable households especially during the lean season in order to promote their food resilience in the face of the lack of purchasing power".

Diop adds that "Action Against Hunger alongside its partners remain committed to work in saving lives by providing direct support to the ones most in needs and affected by food shortages, hunger and malnutrition, as well as preventing hunger by strengthening the resilience of individuals, communities and institutions to adapt to shocks. To provide our response, we also need free and effective humanitarian access to be facilitated by all parties to the conflict, to enable us to address the needs of communities in hard-to-reach areas.

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