



Burkina Faso

Chad

Mali

Niger

Nigeria



**WEST AFRICA**

**EMERGENCY REPORT 2023**



## TABLE OF CONTENT

Foreword-----	3
<b>WHAT ARE WE SEEING-----</b>	<b>4</b>
Climate change is a key driver of the humanitarian crises in the Sahel-----	4
Conflict is an accelerator of the humanitarian crises in the Sahel-----	7
Global economic turmoil increases the vulnerability of Sahelian populations and limits the humanitarian response-----	12
<b>HOW TO BUILD BACK THE GUARDRAILS ?-----</b>	<b>13</b>
Simplified approaches: Expanding Access to Treatment for Acute Malnutrition-----	14
Information and Anticipatory Cash: They key to protect households livelihoods-----	15
Anticipatory Action to mitigate the effects of school closures-----	16
Local authorities at the fore front of the humanitarian response: The way forward to better receive displaced populations-----	17
Frontline: Frontline access: a critical commitment to providing assistance to populations in hard-to-reach areas -----	18
<b>TIME TO TAKE ACTION -----</b>	<b>19</b>



# Foreword

Mid-December 2022, the International Rescue Committee published its new [Emergency Watchlist](#), identifying the 20 countries in the world most at risk to face a severe humanitarian crisis or a deterioration of an ongoing humanitarian crisis in 2023. Once again, our unique methodology based on 67 indicators and discussions with key stakeholders in the region, concluded that the situations in 5 West African countries are of high concern. Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria are all countries where conflict, climate change, and economic turmoil impact the lives of millions of people and prevent them to access quality health, education, and protection services, food, and sometimes, even to benefit from humanitarian assistance. These countries need the world's attention to help displaced and host populations survive, recover, and rebuild their lives.

This report aims to dive into these contexts and unpack the accelerators of the humanitarian crisis to then better identify the guardrails that decision makers need to rebuild so people can move from harm, to home.

**Modou Diaw**

**IRC Regional Vice President for West Africa**



## WHAT ARE WE SEEING

The year 2022 has witnessed some worrisome trends that have accelerated the deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. Although one must acknowledge that prior to these conflicts, these five countries were all facing structural barriers to access basic social services, food, and enjoy economic prosperity, three key factors in the last few years have further prevented populations to access education, health, food, and safe water. These crisis accelerators are Climate change, Conflict, and Economic Turmoil.

### Climate change is a key driver of the humanitarian crises in the Sahel

Even though Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria are amongst the countries in the world that contribute the least to global climate change, they are amongst those that carry the heaviest burden of its consequences. The Climate Change Risk Index<sup>1</sup>, a composite index that measures the risk of a humanitarian crisis or disaster that could require international assistance, would be affected by the impacts of climate change and socio-economic trends, indicates that all 5 Sahelian countries on the IRC's [Watchlist](#) 2023 have a very high risk to be impacted and that their vulnerability gap will increase. Western African Countries' exposure to drought, river floods, and mosquito-borne diseases will keep increasing by 2050, in both the most pessimistic and optimistic scenarios. Unfortunately, these scenarios are already a reality for millions of Sahelians.



“ 5.9 million people in these five countries were affected by the most severe floodings in years, forcing 2.6 million people to move and destroying about 400.000 houses. ”

- Climate change constrains access to natural resources, forces populations to adapt ancestral survival strategies, and feeds local conflict. In Ténenkou, Mali, conflict monitoring conducted by the IRC between October and December 2021 identified 70 conflicts. Most of these were interpersonal, 49% were related to the issue of access and use of land, and 29% were related to access to water, including access to water points (67%) and fishing (33%). They manifested themselves mainly in the form of attacks on physical integrity and property rights, and in 14% of cases, forced movement of the population.

<sup>1</sup> INFORM Climate Change Brochure.pdf (europa.eu)





alone bears the brunt of the consequences of the floods. In October 2022, at least 660 people were killed in floods across the country with 2.4 million persons displaced from their communities, while 650,000 hectares of land were completely damaged. Most of the Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs) lived in schools, churches, and mosques which were overstretched and congested with little or no access to water, health care, food. This only adds to the concern for the 17 million people who are food insecure (IPC 3 – 5)<sup>23</sup> across the country who lost their income and harvest. And puts at risk the education of a generation of children leading to a continuation of intergenerational illiteracy and poverty. The effects of climate change are also felt throughout Chad where the 2022 rainy season started early.

Resource scarcity is at the root of these conflicts and climate change exacerbates the trend. The scarcity of livelihoods has encouraged groups to increase their criminal activities and to expand their territorial reach. In Mali, subsequent droughts have changed people's access to natural resources, mainly water and land. They have altered the structure of the economy, and have led to social changes, including changes in occupational activities for different population groups and the weakening of traditional local values. Droughts have led farmers, herders and fishermen to adopt survival strategies that have disrupted the established order of access to natural resources such as water and land. All this feeds local conflicts that are not resolved either through customary justice systems or through formal justice. With traditional leaders being targeted by non-state armed groups, traditional governance, and capacities to settle conflicts at local level is severely put at risk. Consequently, social cohesion is negatively impacted, and it provides fertile ground for non-state armed groups to thrive.

Global warming increases natural hazards frequency and intensity. Natural hazards manifest themselves as severe droughts such as in 2022 when Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria all suffered the most severe food crisis in 20 years. In Niger, according to national statistics, 100,000 to 120,000 ha of land are lost annually, while restoration efforts hardly exceed 20,000 ha per year. A year later, severe floodings impacted millions of Sahelians. As of November 8th, 2022, 5.9 million people in these five countries were affected by the most severe floodings in years, forcing 2.6 million people to move and destroying about 400,000 houses<sup>2</sup>. Nigeria

Flooding caused by heavy rains and overflowing rivers affected more than 1.3 million people causing significant damage in 18 of 23 provinces, including Ndjama, particularly impacting the most vulnerable communities living in flood-prone areas<sup>4</sup>. This natural hazard comes at a heavy human and financial cost. The Chadian Government and partners identified the multi-sectoral needs of 800,000 flood victims and developed a flood response plan accordingly. It also puts at risk the counter-season agricultural campaign and delays the harvest in the southern part of the country<sup>5</sup>.

- Prevalence of malnourished people tends to be higher in countries highly exposed to climate extremes as the latest exacerbates determinants of under-nutrition such as food security, water and hygiene. In Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria, the nutritional status of children is of great concern: 5.7 million children are expected to suffer from wasting in 2023 and 1.4 million children are expected to suffer from severe wasting<sup>6</sup>. In Mali, projections for the period June 2022 to May 2023 indicate that 1.5 million children under the age of five are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition. This is 19% higher than the cases forecasted in 2021<sup>7</sup>.

During the same period in Nigeria, nearly 6 million children aged 0-59 months are estimated to suffer from acute malnutrition.

<sup>2</sup> Cadre Harmonisé 2023 – pre-results shared at the Food Security Working Group meeting on the 1st of December 2022.  
<sup>4</sup> OCHA – Tchad – Note sur les inondations – 25 octobre 2022  
<sup>5</sup> <https://fews.net/west-africa/chad>  
<sup>6</sup> UNICEF and WFP, Sahel & West Africa, Food Security & Nutrition Hotspot Analysis, March 2023  
<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1156047/?i-so3=MLI>







This includes 1.6 million Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) cases and 4.3 million Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) cases<sup>8</sup>. The floodings mentioned above in Nigeria could also become a dangerous accelerating factor to the current rise of malnutrition, and to the severe cholera outbreak that has already affected 18,000 people in Nigeria since January 2022<sup>9</sup>. With increased movements of populations, including from places affected by the cholera outbreaks to parts of the country not affected, the disease may spread further across the population.

**Women and girls bear disproportionate consequences of limited access to natural resources.** As natural resources such as water and farming land become scarcer, access to water in quality and in quantity can also become an increasing challenge. Because of their traditional roles, women are dependent on natural resources. Climate change and lack of infrastructure forces people to walk up to 35 km in search of these basic commodities. This exposes women and children to insecurity, increases girls school drop-out, and limits the time mothers have for childcare. Climate change also impacts women's access to land. An example lies in Niger.

Despite measures taken in the rural code and the creation of Commissions to resolve land conflict in 1993, the proportion of women who own arable land is insignificant. Women are misinformed about their rights, poorly represented in decision-making institutions and customary laws in favor of men's ownership of properties are largely implemented. Consequently, 50% of arable land is not cultivated properly and limits investments made when they access land through women's associations. With climate change contributing to land degradation and demographic pressure increasing, women see their part of inherited land (0.25ha under customary law) being reduced and they are increasingly confined at home to perform domestic tasks rather than contributing to agricultural activities. This results in a loss of competences by younger women who do no longer get farming experience and social isolation already strong for the 76% of child brides.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1156037/?iso3=NGA>  
<sup>9</sup> OCHA – Nigeria – Floods response: Flash Update 3 – last updated: 22 November 2022







## Conflict is an accelerator of the humanitarian crises in the Sahel

“ Conflict, Climate change, and economic turmoil have pushed 23.5 million people into food insecurity in these 5 countries. If nothing is done in time, 34.5 million people will be food insecure between June and September 2023. This means that 15.9% of the population in Burkina Faso, 5.6% in Mali, 11,1% in Niger, 9,3% in Chad, and 13,1% in Nigeria will be food insecure. ”

The 5 Sahelian countries the IRC's [Watchlist 2023](#) are all impacted by conflict driving record numbers of humanitarian needs. The number of forced displacements of population keeps increasing in all 5 countries on the IRC's [Watchlist 2023](#). Amongst the 5 Sahelian countries on the IRC's [Watchlist 2023](#), the country where displacement of populations has been the most explosive is undoubtedly Burkina Faso. On the 1st of January 2019, there were 87,000 displaced people in Burkina Faso<sup>1</sup>. Almost four years later, on December 31st, 2022, this number had reached 1.9 million internally displaced people<sup>2</sup>, a 19% increase compared to December 31st 2021.

According to the Rapid Response Operational Coordination Group (GCORR), the trend reveals that the movements of populations following

a shock have increased in number and size. For 16% of the alerts issued in 2022, the number of people displaced as a result of this single shock was over 10,000 IDPs.



In Niger, by the end of November 2021, 596,000 people had been forced to seek refuge from conflict<sup>3</sup>. 11 months later, the number of IDPs and refugees had reached 712,000<sup>4</sup>. As far as Chad is concerned, it hosts to the lar-

gest number of refugees in Central Africa, with 595,000 people fleeing conflicts in Sudan, CAR, Nigeria and Cameroon. Overall, a total of 1,081,837 are displaced in Chad, including 381,000 IDPs and 100,000 returnees.

These movements of population increase the pressure on basic social services. In Gwoza, Northeast Nigeria, where more than 2.2 million people are displaced, including 1 million in hard-to-reach areas<sup>5</sup>, approximately 1,600 individuals are staying in 72 communal houses meant to accommodate only 400 people. This results in a massive congestion and lack of basic services such as food and Non-Food Items (NFIs), shelter, protection, nutrition, health services, and an increase in the rate of preventable diseases, among other things.

In the region of Ménaka, Mali, populations are facing an unprecedented deterioration in security, resulting in 50,000 IDPs finding refuge in the city, which does not have sufficient infrastructure to cover all their needs in terms of food, water, shelter, and health, and heavily stretches the RRM funding resources. But movements of population also take place once peace has returned or when political campaign promises are implemented. During the 2021 Niger presidential campaign, President Mohamed Bazoum pledged to «create the conditions for the return of IDPs to their respective villages no later than 2022».

1 <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/burkina-faso/>

2 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CsHDfkm9oQLiP9RPr\\_daw\\_tBPGM2EFHP/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CsHDfkm9oQLiP9RPr_daw_tBPGM2EFHP/view)

3 UNHCR, Situation of Refugees in Niger, Presentation to the Humanitarian Forum in Niamey on December 16th, 2021

4 UNHCR, October 2022, Presentation to the Humanitarian Forum in Niamey on December 2nd, 2022

5 Nigeria | Situation Reports (unocha.org)



The implementation of this election campaign promise started in June 2021: more than 40,000 IDPs returned with the support of the Nigerien authorities to 22 villages of origin in the communes of Bosso, Kabléwa, and Gueskérou. In May 2021, in Nigeria, the Borno State Government started to close IDPs camps in Maidaguri and relocated the populations in Local Government Areas. By January 2022, an estimate of 140,000 people had moved out of the IDP camps<sup>6</sup>. These sudden movements of population have left health infrastructures overwhelmed with flows of patients in need of being supported by this system. The health facilities supported by the IRC's were overwhelmed with returnees for some time before the bottleneck could be managed. As for children, the closure of camps meant they spread over a wider geographical area, increasing the difficulty to trace them, ensure they access vital health and education service and increasing the cost of the humanitarian response.

- The new trend of besieged cities in Burkina Faso is of highest concern and could extend to the whole Sahel region. Thousands of people are at risk of facing famine if access to food in quality and quantity is not provided soon. Since January 2022, in Djibo<sup>16</sup>, the biggest town besieged in Burkina Faso and home to the largest number of IDPs in the country, the IRC staff report a critical situation: people have not been able to access fields to grow crops and food shops are virtually empty. Limited access to fields resulted in food production that decreased from 116,000 tons in 2019 to near 40,000 tons in 2021, and the results of the 2022 agricultural season led the experts to conclude that 20,000 people are at risk of facing famine. Security risks along the main supply routes continue to limit the imports of basic foodstuffs on the markets that rely heavily on these arrivals to function. Prices are at record levels.



- To survive, many households have increased their consumption of meat still available on markets and collect wild leaves to prepare dishes. At the expense of their own security, women are reported to leave the town during the night to find food in surrounding areas of the city and the number of children begging has increased. In addition to the state of siege, the various anti-terrorist laws recently passed by the government of Burkina (banning certain motorbikes, mandatory armed escort for goods going to Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG)-controlled areas) also severely restrict humanitarian access to the various areas and the ability to bring food into town. For the time being, the only option left is to transport food and nutritional intrans by air, which means that all humanitarian actors rely heavily on the service of the WFP cargo helicopter.

<sup>6</sup> N.I.F., Government-led relocations and returns, June 21st, 2022



But today, concerns go beyond the besieged cities of Burkina Faso. In August 2022, the Food Security Cluster warned against the possibility for the blockade to extend to the whole Sahel region. The Modus Operandi of NSAG has evolved: 4 bridges on the main roads to supply the Sahel region have been destroyed, and presence of improvised explosive devices have increased along these roads. This situation puts 1.3 million people seriously at risk and the capacity of traders and humanitarian actors to convoy food and other assistance within the region<sup>1</sup>.

- **Insecurity deprives farmers from accessing their fields and herders to access pastures, pushing them further at risk of being food insecure.**

In Burkina Faso, where 82% of the population is active in the agricultural sector, 90% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) do not have access to fields<sup>2</sup>. In Mali as well, access to farming land has been a concern for the populations. Around 254,000 people have been affected by the decrease in cultivated areas in 2021. This number decreased to 183,000 in 2022, with the regions of Ségou and Mopti being the most affected due to lack of access due to conflict. In these two regions, cultivated areas that extended 10km beyond villages in 2016 are now reduced to a distance of 500m to 2km. Herders, who normally resort to transhumance for the survival of their livestock, are denied access to certain areas rich in pasture, due to insecurity and the closure of borders linked to COVID-19 restrictions and ECOWAS sanctions. This situation is also observed in the Borno State of Nigeria where a severe decrease in cropland has been observed since 2010, which impacts about half of the population living in these areas<sup>3</sup>.

There seemed to be a recovery between 2021 and 2022 but that has not yet reached the levels of croplands available in 2010<sup>4</sup>. As a result, 3 million people are currently food insecure in the Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states and this number is expected to reach 4.4 million during the next lean season<sup>5</sup>.

As far as the North-West Nigeria is concerned, there is also a decrease of croplands observed between 2017 and 2022 in Sokoto and Zamfara states.<sup>6</sup>

1 Burkina Faso - Special Bulletin - From blockade to the brink of famine | Food Security Cluster (fscluster.org)

2 HNO2022

3 <https://fscluster.org/nigeria/document/nigeria-cropland-change-dynamics-2022>

4 <https://fscluster.org/nigeria/document/nigeria-cropland-change-dynamics-2022>

5 <https://fscluster.org/nigeria/document/final-fiche-report-november-2022-cadre>

6 <https://fscluster.org/nigeria/document/nigeria-cropland-change-dynamics-2022>



This translates into 4.3 million people at risk of being food insecure during the lean season 2023<sup>7</sup>.

In Chad, recurrent attacks by non-state armed groups on the Lake and the associated population movements from the island localities reduce the capacity of local population to launch cold season planting.<sup>8</sup>

- **Displaced and host populations have limited access to basic social services and humanitarian assistance.** Among others, by increasing displacement of populations and demographic pressure on health facilities, school, waterpoints, and protection services, conflicts contribute to a bottleneck that is difficult to address. In Burkina Faso, the increase in the number of closed health facilities (195 in August 2022 compared to 183 in 2021) continues to deprive the population of health care services and to limit actions for the prevention and management of malnutrition<sup>9</sup>. 270,000 IDPs found refuge in Djibo, and the food security of populations has been described above. On top of that dramatic situation, other basic social services are also heavily impacted.

There are currently no functioning schools in Djibo and 223,000 people have seen their access to safe water severely restricted in March 2022 when 12 waterworks were sabotaged<sup>10</sup>. The combined efforts allowed to provide safe water to 32,000 people in need but most of the funding have now come to an end while the needs remain high. Currently, it is estimated that a waterpoint provides water is used by 3,000 people. The sphere standards set the limit at 500. In terms of health and nutrition services, access to medical staff, medicines and nutritional intrants, and infrastructures has deteriorated.



7 <https://fscluster.org/nigeria/document/final-fiche-report-november-2022-cadre>

8 <https://fews.net/west-africa/chad>

9 <https://fews.net/west-africa/burkina-faso>

10 "Evaluation Rapide de la situation alimentaire et nutritionnelle et des besoins prioritaires multisectoriels à Djibo" conducted by the WFP and partners in October 2022

Prior to the siege, there were 13 medical staff working in Djibo. Today, only 3 remain. In Nigeria, the 2021 Nigeria health data<sup>11</sup> identified 49 incidents against health care, including attacks on medical staff, health supplies, and health facilities.

By mid-October 2022, 34 new incidents against health care had taken place. Between January 2017 and October 2021, 107 teachers had been kidnapped and 19 had been killed<sup>12</sup>. The IRC conducted research across the BAY states, and based on interviews with 500 health workers, shows that :

- Four out of 10 respondents have been exposed to an attack against health care since the start of 2021.
- 80% of those who experienced one incident, experienced at least one more.
- The most reported incidents are direct attacks on facilities and the kidnapping of health staff. These attacks are directly linked to a lack of services in inaccessible areas, with armed groups taking staff and health resources to service non-state armed group members and communities in areas with limited health services.

As a consequence, the IRC research shows that: a combined 2,356 working days, or 6.6 years, were missed by health staff following the incidents; almost 80% of the respondents reported one or more symptoms of heightened distress. After 46% of reported incidents, communities faced difficulties accessing health services. Patients are afraid to visit the clinic or stay overnight.

- Education services are inadequate and frequently inaccessible through conflict, leading to some of the worst out-of-school and illiteracy rates globally, especially for girls and women. Over 9,000 schools were closed in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria in December 2022<sup>13</sup>, up from 3,000 two years earlier. 53% of children do not feel safe at school<sup>14</sup>, and are therefore not learning. More than 40 percent of primary-school-age children remain out of school (due to lack of enrollment, late enrollment, and dropout.<sup>15</sup>) In every Sahel country, fewer than 50 percent of adult females are literate, compared to 59 percent on average across Sub-Saharan Africa, and 80 percent across low- and middle-income countries globally<sup>16</sup>.



11 <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/nigeria-violence-against-civilians-and-vital-civilian-facilities>

12 <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2F3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com%2Fhdx-production-filestore%2Fresources%2Fb8a79d3f-decd-4814-9556-2a9e161881dd%2F2017-2021-nigeria-teacher-kka-data.xlsx%3FAWSAccessKeyId%3DAKIAIYXC32WNARK7560UG%26Signature%3DdUw4a6ftrqXJeASIBBEaP-JeNX0%253D%26Expires%3D1670429873&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

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14 NRC, UNHCR, UNICEF, 2022

15 World Bank, 2022, Sahel Education White Paper – The Wealth of Today and Tomorrow

16 Sahel Education White paper, WB 2021





Female illiteracy has a knock-on effect on the next generation: reducing the likelihood of their children being immunized, completing education or building resilience in the face of climate change. In Nigeria, while the conflict has affected the delivery of education services generally, it has had a disproportionate impact on girls. The majority of school absentees are female: only 41 per cent of eligible girls receive a primary education<sup>17</sup>.

- **Humanitarian access is becoming dangerously complex and restricted, leaving populations in need with limited humanitarian assistance.** In Niger, 2 million people are currently food insecure and during the lean season 2023, this number is expected to reach 2.9 million people<sup>18</sup>, of which 1.1 million will be in areas where humanitarian access is limited. Building the resilience of population facing food insecurity of 18% of the population living in these hard-to-reach areas, like Tilia, is impeded by Non-State Armed groups who do not tolerate land recovery activities and have therefore prohibited related cash for work activities. In Nigeria, it is estimated that 1 million people live in hard-to-reach areas. Much of the North-East remains accessible only by UN Flights. In 2022, the trend is clear: where humanitarian aid is not accessible, food insecurity rates are soaring and it becomes an absolute necessity to guarantee affected populations and humanitarians the freedom of movement to access and deliver humanitarian assistance safely. In Mali, conflict increasing volatility in 2022 resulted in limited humanitarian access in 75% of the Menaka region, as well as the Kidal region. In Burkina Faso, the increasing phenomenon of besieged cities and humanitarian escorts request by the authorities prevents thousands of people from accessing humanitarian assistance.

Barriers restricting humanitarian access vary from one context to another. Their nature is either legal, administrative, or due to insecurity. Frontline humanitarian actors are limited in their capacities to operate by both NSAGs and official authorities. They are facing increasing risks of abduction, imprisonment, illegal and legal checkpoints, control over their source of funding, clients, and areas of intervention.

All these barriers require dedicated resources, in-depth analysis of the power dynamics, and well-defined approaches of the humanitarian community in country, to engage with the different parties to the conflict at different levels.

<sup>17</sup> OCHA 2023, Nigeria Humanitarian Response Plan  
<sup>18</sup> Cadre Harmonisé November 2022

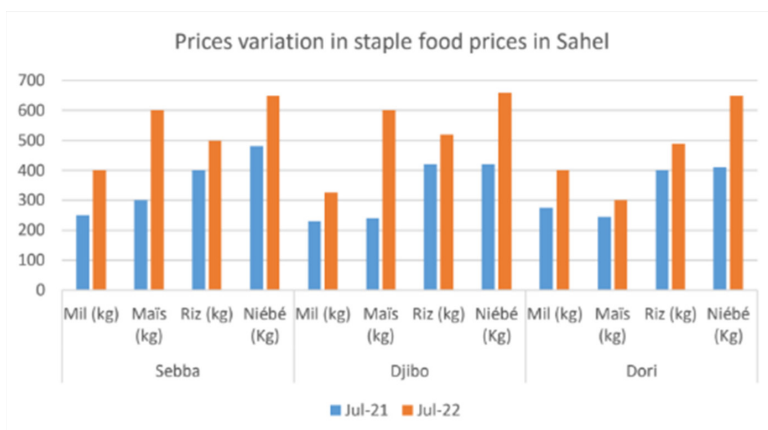
They require sound understanding, commitments, and accountability by all actors to the international humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles, and national laws that protects humanitarian actors operating in respect of the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

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## Global economic turmoil increases the vulnerability of Sahelian populations and limits the humanitarian response

Climate change and conflict contribute heavily to the economic turmoil the populations in the Sahel are facing and impact massively their access to food.

The purchasing power of households is dwindling, especially in besieged cities in Burkina Faso. The price of basic food and supplies is at an all-time high. The cereals that form the basis of the local populations' diet has almost tripled. Prior to the blockade, the price of Sorgho was 350 XOF, it now reaches 900 XOF and is expected to keep increasing. Millet used to be at 400 XOF/2Kgs and is now hard to find below the price of 1000 XOF. As for the price of oil, it has doubled. Throughout the country and, despite the harvests, grain prices remain 50% higher than in 2021, particularly in areas heavily affected by conflict. The prices of imported commodities such as wheat, sugar, oil and rice have all risen significantly.



Source : Burkina Faso - Special Bulletin - From blockade to the brink of famine | Food Security Cluster (fscluster.org)





- Resilience of populations hit by the food crisis of 2022 has been deeply affected and will take several years to rebuild. In Niger, although the 2022 agricultural campaign has been more fruitful, people's survival strategies adopted to face the lean season in 2022 forced them to sell their assets and to contract debts that they will now have to repay. This means that not only their resilience has been seriously impacted but also that populations sold their harvest at a lower price at the end of the agricultural season instead of keeping it to sell at a higher price later in the year.
- Inflation reduces the coverage of the humanitarian response and increases its cost. Both in Chad and Niger, it has been observed that the determined amount for cash transfers for the minimum food basket is no longer meeting the needs. In Niger, 32,500 CFA no longer covers the real food needs of households. Now, a minimum of 40,000 XOF are required. In Chad, the standard cost of the minimum food basket (MEB<sup>1</sup>) for food assistance is 42,000 CFA for a household. But by the end of 2022, the average cost of the basket was 66,972 CFA francs. This has strong consequences on both the households who can no longer cover some vital needs with the envelope provided, and the effectiveness of the humanitarian interventions.







## HOW TO BUILD BACK THE GUARDRAILS?

Climate change, conflict, and economic turmoil are three accelerators of the humanitarian crisis in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. These accelerators strongly contribute to the increase of humanitarian needs observed between 2022 and 2023. Humanitarian response plans for Burkina Faso, Mali, and Nigeria all point to a significant rise in number of people who will require humanitarian assistance in 2023. Yet, the available funding for the humanitarian response where already falling short in 2022. Therefore arises the question: How can we collectively work to address the increasing needs of the population, provide assistance to a larger part of the population, with increasingly limited financial resources? The IRC firmly believes that a change in paradigm is urgently needed. It is time to build back the guardrails and push new innovative solutions forward. To reduce the cost of the humanitarian response, two steps are urgently needed: improving early-action capacities and developing approaches that are increasingly cost-efficient.

### **Our innovations laid below aim to:**

- Equip populations and local authorities with the necessary information and preparedness to respond to the early stages of the crisis, and avoid the negative snowball effects on needs.
- Develop protocols that reduce the cost of the response and increase the coverage.
- And bring the response at the heart of the community.







## Simplified approaches: Expanding Access to Treatment for Acute Malnutrition

- The number of children in need of treatment across Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria remains very large, the cost of treatment high and the financial means available for the response limited. While treatment exists, only 20% of malnourished children globally access the lifesaving care they need to fully recover. Approaches to simplifying the treatment that have proven to be effective are therefore essential, particularly in hard-to-reach areas. Together with partners, the IRC is seeking to dramatically expand access to lifesaving treatment for acute malnutrition by simplifying the protocol, bringing treatment closer to home, and increasing caregiver capacity to detect malnutrition in children before conditions worsen.

At the time being, the treatment is only available in health facilities. The distance a family must travel to access care is a difficult barrier to overcome, especially in conflict affected areas. Once they reached the health facility, the current protocol for treatment is complex to navigate and requires bi-weekly or weekly follow up visits depending on the type of malnutrition the child is suffering from: Moderate Acute Malnutrition or Severe Acute Malnutrition. Because of this, some children fail to show up for appointments and never complete their full treatment causing their condition to become more severe with time. The absence of knowledge at the household level leads caregivers to seek treatment late or once the child's condition has significantly deteriorated and increases the cost of the response<sup>1</sup>.

cult for providers to manage, and it is costly to implement due to the frequency and duration of consultations and additional treatment products required<sup>2</sup>.

To address these barriers, the IRC and partners have worked in Mali, Nara district, to pilot 3 innovative, simplified approaches to treatment that could dramatically expand access and efficiency:

- Combining and simplifying the protocol
- Bringing treatment closer to home through CHWs
- Increasing caregiver capacity to detect malnutrition through family MUAC.

The IRC research concludes that:

- A simplified protocol for treating MAM and SAM is as effective as the standard treatment. This means the same percentage of children recovered when treated.
- Community Health Worker delivery of treatment makes treatment more accessible. This means more children can get diagnosed and treated in the comfort of their villages thereby reducing the time burden on their caregivers & reducing caseloads at facilities.
- Family MUAC encourages early detection and treatment of child malnutrition. This means more children receive care before their condition deteriorates.
- The combined, simplified protocol is more cost effective than the standard protocol. The direct costs reduced from US\$ 54.35 to US\$ 43.22 per child, while the direct and shared costs reduced from US\$ 80.05 to US\$ 66.29 per child. This could allow health systems to reach a larger number of children at less cost.

Our pilots in Mali build upon a growing body of evidence demonstrating the safety and effectiveness of these simplified treatment approaches. If brought to scale, these approaches have the potential to dramatically expand access to lifesaving treatment for malnourished children across Mali and other Sahelian countries. This would have a lasting impact on reducing acute child malnutrition.



And so does the standard approaches can also be diffi-

<sup>1</sup> <https://app.box.com/s/lyvlkxvadwnrdi97ibh8brg2p7kregtt/file/730773362088>

<sup>2</sup> <https://app.box.com/s/lyvlkxvadwnrdi97ibh8brg2p7kregtt/file/730773362088>

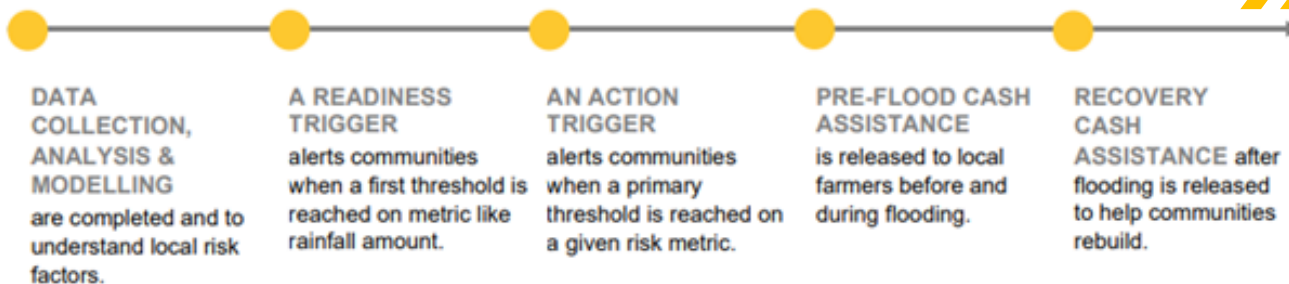
## Anticipatory Action: Key to protecting households' livelihoods

Climate change leads to an increase in flooding and drought in the Sahel. These natural disasters have a considerable impact on households, their physical and financial security. When communities have the ability to prepare for and withstand climatic shocks, they can prevent disasters, save lives and preserve livelihoods. Extensive research in humanitarian contexts has demonstrated that cash and voucher assistance is an effective intervention to improve food security and avoid harmful coping practices.

Often, NGO cash disbursements are reactive to emergencies and rely on emergency financial appeals - which are unpredictable and address the negative impacts of the climatic shocks, rather than serving as a preventative measure. Based on this observation, the IRC aims to catalyze a transformation in humanitarian preparedness for complex climate crises by investing in innovations that prevent the need for humanitarian assistance, increase the efficiency of the response, and therefore, reduce the cost of intervention and the reliability on emergency financial appeals - which are unpredictable.

The IRC has developed strategic partnerships to pilot and evaluate the use of early warning systems & anticipatory cash as a method to protect agro-pastoral livelihoods that are threatened by an increasing occurrence of severe flooding in the Northeastern state of Adamawa, Nigeria. Our central hypothesis is that when climate vulnerable communities have timely access to information and the financial and social resources to act upon that information, they will avoid negative coping strategies and build more diversified and climate resilient livelihoods.

### PATHWAY FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION



Over the course of the 2022 agricultural season, a pilot project has delivered lump sum cash payments to participating target households as triggered by the monitoring platform's risk thresholds – for example when river water volume exceeded a certain amount. Compared to monthly cash assistance, larger transfers of cash assistance can be a financial lifeline for agro-pastoral households - not only to cover basic needs in a flood emergency, but also to make critical investments that will improve the resiliency and adaptation of their agricultural production in the future through purchase of adapted seeds or water pumps for dry season irrigation.

An impact evaluation will be conducted to measure the effects of the anticipatory cash compared to the business-as-usual post shock cash on household resiliency, flood risk reduction and climate change adaptation to contribute to the growing body of evidence on what works for anticipatory action and anticipatory cash.



Cash Distribution in Mali





## Anticipatory Action to mitigate the effects of school closures

School closures – which are frequent in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria, have an extremely detrimental effect on children and communities. Even short-term closures have negative long-term effects on learning and earnings<sup>1</sup>, increasing the risk of dropout and repetition and affecting disadvantaged students the most<sup>2</sup>. In settings where student-level data is weak, it can be hard to locate children again once schools reopen and many are permanently ‘lost’<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, it is essential to develop projects that anticipate the impact of natural disasters on children’s access to education as per the IRC experience in Cameroon. The IRC implemented an education and protection project in the Far North region of Cameroon that defined an early warning system and proposed measures to mitigate and reduce each of the risks that children might face. Droughts, violent winds, and floodings were risks identified in 30% of the schools.

When floods hit the schools supported by this project, the IRC-supported communities were able to place nearly 800 sandbags to protect the schools. This allowed for a quicker return to school after the waters receded and reduced the cost of the response. With this experience in mind, over the next 2 years, the IRC will pilot and evaluate an anticipatory approach to education linked to flooding in Sierra Leone with the intention of expanding the prototype to Nigeria and additional WA Emergency countries. A fully-funded anticipatory action plan for education (AAPE)—which will include insurance, household-level cash transfers, and remote learning activities—will be developed and triggered when predictions on the scale and impact of flooding are exceeded. Funding and activities will be launched in anticipation of a flood. Drawing on a range of monitoring and evaluation methods, the IRC will assess how these interventions promote learning continuity during a crisis and improve the likelihood that students return to school when schools re-open.



<sup>1</sup> Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel. (2022). Prioritizing learning during COVID-19: The most effective ways to keep children learning during and post-pandemic. [K. Akyeampong et al]. Washington D.C., London, Florence: The World Bank, FCDO, and UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.

<sup>2</sup> Moscoviz L. & Evans D., 2022. “Learning Loss and Student Dropouts during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Review of the Evidence Two Years after Schools Shut Down.” CGD Working Paper 609. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/learning-loss-and-student-dropouts-during-covid-19-pandemic-review-evidence-two-years>

<sup>3</sup> Pritha Mitra and Ha Vu, “Boosting Climate Responsiveness in sub-Saharan Africa’s Public Investment.” International Monetary Fund, 2021, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2021/12/Africa-Boosting-Climate-Responsiveness-Sub-Saharan-Public-Investment>. As cited in, Dubai Cares and Education Commission, “Rewiring Education for People and Planet.” 2022, <https://educationcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Rewiring-Education-for-People-and-Planet-Final-Version.pdf>

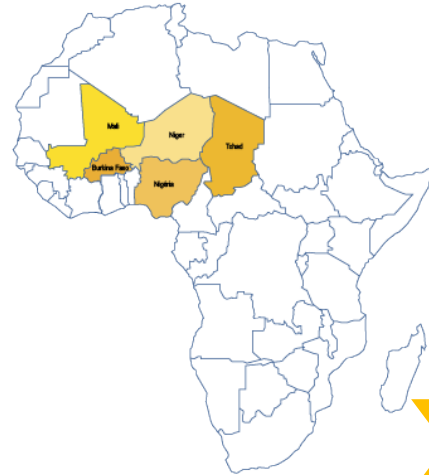
## Local authorities at the forefront of the humanitarian response: The way forward to better receive displaced populations

In Niger, inspired by the 2018 law on protection and assistance to IDPs and the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), the IRC team is implementing a project that primarily aims to raise awareness of the role that municipalities can and should play when a group of IDPs arrive. Since Niger has been affected by conflict in 2015, the RRM has played a key role in providing rapid, multi-sector assistance to people displaced by conflict. In 2021 alone, the RRM consortium provided non-food items and shelter kits to more than 22,000 households, 12% of which were supported with cash. This demonstrates the essentiality of this mechanism to address the urgent and vital needs of populations on the move and the urgency to shape it into a more sustainable solution.

As part of its longer-term commitments to increasingly localize the humanitarian response and build state capacity, the IRC is implementing a pilot project for transitioning the RRM response to local authorities. The ambition is to gradually transfer the experience, practices, and skills of humanitarian actors, and progressively empower local actors such as local authorities and civil society through an approach adapted to local challenges and capacities. To reach this objective, few key steps were required to equip municipalities with Population Movement Committees (PMC), Surge action plans, and Contingency Plans.

The Nutrition and Health Surge approach are already very well known by humanitarian actors. They consist in the definition of a series of crisis severity thresholds which, once reached, require the implementation of a predefined response plan by the intervention actors. The innovation here is to extend the Surge approach to new sectors such as education and water. These plans are intended to provide a benchmark for PMC to initiate the appropriate response to the size of the movement. This should minimize the time students are out of school, or the risk of spreading diseases due to a lack of access to drinking water. Ultimately, this should help strengthen the resilience of the State in the face of crisis and disaster management.

As for the contingency plans including monitoring, alerting and responding to population movements, the iterative and participatory process addresses the



following points:

- The identification of the different risks that could lead to population movements and development of scenarios for the different risks.
- The identification of the monitoring and alert mechanisms to be put in place as well as the modalities of triggering when the thresholds are reached.
- The definition of preparedness/anticipatory measures such as the pre-identification and development of reception areas, establishment of contingency stocks.
- The definition of response measures such as triggering of «Surge» plans for scaling up basic services such as health, water and sanitation, education.
- The clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the various local actors at each stage.
- Establish a list of stakeholders and non-state actors in the area that can be mobilized to support the various activities according to the scenarios.

Further work has to be conducted to include the preparation and response activities into the budget lines of the municipalities to ensure sustainability of the approach and a strong transition with local stakeholders. This is an ambitious initiative, and challenging project. It is a critical investment: putting local entities at the forefront of the humanitarian response and strengthening the state's capacity to deliver services to citizens. Based on its experience in the sub-region and globally, the IRC is willing to invest further in strengthening governance and systems that enable national authorities to better respond to humanitarian needs.





Water distribution by the IRC- Niger



## Frontline: a critical commitment to provide assistance to populations in hard-to-reach areas

Access to the population in need of assistance does not happen on its own. Barriers to humanitarian access include political, legal, bureaucratic, security, physical and internal constraints. Overcoming these challenges requires a coordinated strategy and effort across teams and functions within the IRC. Therefore, the IRC has invested in the Project Frontline which works with regions and countries to reach people in need in remote, hard-to-reach and frontline situations. In West Africa, they provide their technical assistance in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. Obtaining and sustaining humanitarian access in situations of crisis is invariably a political exercise which involves engaging and negotiating with political, military and other actors and objectives to create and optimize humanitarian space and acceptable conditions for program delivery.

The most successful actors in reaching people in need are those which invest time, effort and resources in understanding the strategic and operating environments. They develop deliberate strategies to address humanitarian access and acceptance, prioritizing those most in need, wherever they are. Such analysis should extend beyond the immediate situation to the political and social context around it and the full range of stakeholders involved, their interests, applicable legal and policy frameworks, barriers to access for different groups and individuals and anticipated changes that may impede or enable access. It is important to draw on all relevant internal and external sources, such as conflict and social experts, program teams, support staff, protection monitors and clients themselves. Our Frontline team provides technical support and training. Experts are available to provide technical support, guidance, and training to field based colleagues to improve their humanitarian access. This is an investment which we must make to bring the response at the heart of the community, pace and acceptable conditions for program delivery.







## TIME TO TAKE ACTION

The populations of Sahelian countries affected by crisis have a pressing need for access to basic social services and natural resources. A paradigm shift is needed to enable people to regain access to education, health, water, and food.

We must protect civilians by increasing their access to basic social services and natural resources.

- **Partner states** in central Sahelian and coastal countries should support the strengthening of natural resource governance and access to justice in order to address the interpersonal conflicts that fuel the ongoing security crisis in the central Sahel. A paradigm shift is imperative to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations.
- **National Government** should integrate simplified malnutrition approaches and the available context-specific evidence into upcoming policy reviews and updated national protocols/guidelines. They should accelerate progress for developing a Global Action Plan (GAP) on Wasting operational roadmap with key targets and activities for expanding access to malnutrition treatment through simplified approaches. They should also make bold financial and political commitments to address wasting aligned with the Nutrition for Growth Summit.
- **Donors** should invest in operational research to further test simplified approaches – including a combined protocol – for treating acute malnutrition in the Sahel. They should scale up flexible funding for nutrition including increasing financing for acute malnutrition treatment programs. Provide financial support to accelerate development of the GAP roadmaps and review of national nutrition policies.
- **Donors** should support decentralized authorities in developing preparedness and early action policies and measures to provide an emergency response to IDPs immediately after their arrival. They should reflect on how to support sustainable mechanisms to finance the implementation of defined measures by the Surge action plans. These decentralized authorities should add budget lines to communal development plans to ensure access to financial resources for the emergency response to displaced populations.

We must also work to re-establish people's right to aid

- **Humanitarian actors** need to strengthen existing coordination spaces for dialogue with all parties to conflicts, but also the resources necessary to increase their capacity to analyze power dynamics and engage with all actors on the ground.
- **Humanitarian actors** should review their communication strategies to strengthen the focus on the impact of their interventions and ultimately strengthen country level stakeholders' understanding of their ways of working and how they serve people to go from harm to home.
- **Donors** must support humanitarian actors in developing initiatives to better understand the types of risks that undermine their acceptance at the country level, particularly on social networks.



**We must fund the frontline with flexible and long term funding**

- **Donors** must break down the climate-humanitarian divide and support more programs for climate resilient agriculture, anticipatory cash programming, and investment in seed security programming. Climate change has been identified as a threat multiplier in fragile contexts, with particularly pernicious effects in the Lake Chad Basin. Environmental degradation is exacerbating challenges faced by its mostly rural population, by undermining livelihoods and coping skills, worsening conflict over resources as well as the likelihood of recruitment into armed groups. Donors have the opportunity through their pledges to support Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria to adapt to climate change threats.



- **Flexible mechanisms** must be accompanied by a lighter administrative burden in order to allow both transparency and communication with the donor and the responsiveness of teams in the field, but also give them space and resources to address the increasing bureaucratic access impediments they are facing. Such funding will strengthen trust with local populations and the quality and efficiency of programs by adapting to changes in context. This funding can also be accompanied by support from donors to promote reflection on the role of accountability mechanisms and the adaptations to be

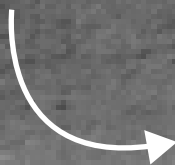
made to facilitate the use of these mechanisms by the populations located in the project intervention zones. This would make it possible to strengthen the quality of projects and, in the long term, the acceptance of the populations.

- **Donors** should increase the availability of funding and visibility on long-term funding in Mali and Burkina Faso so as not to compromise access to basic social services for vulnerable populations. They should also ensure that humanitarian funding is allocated on the basis of the needs of the most vulnerable and not on the basis of the security of the areas of intervention.





The West Africa  
Emergency Report  
refers to the Emergency  
Watchlist published by  
the IRC. Do not hesitate  
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