

Briefing note on the Sahel

Informal Joint Meeting of the FAO Council, IFAD Executive Board and WFP Executive Board

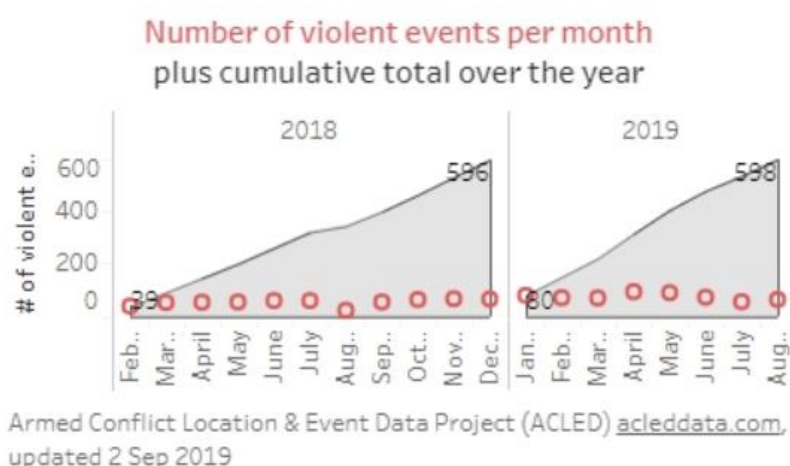
Friday, 13 September 2019

Document prepared by the office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Mali, in consultation with Resident Coordinators in the region

Unprecedented situation in the Sahel

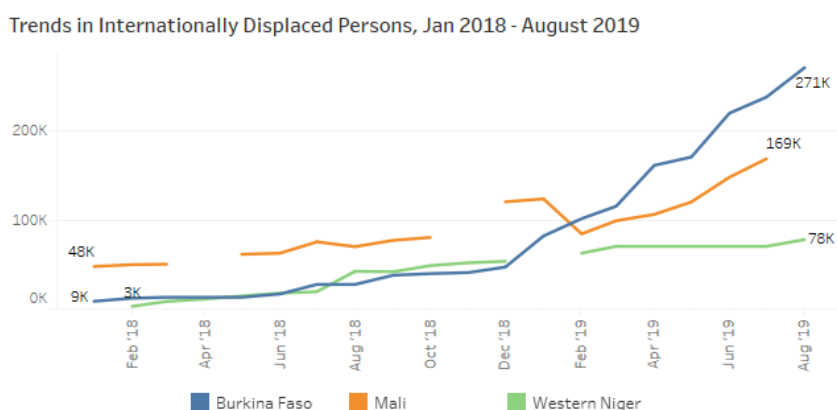
1. A surge in armed violence is causing an unparalleled humanitarian emergency in the Sahel. Needs are rising fast as conflict and insecurity affected hundreds of thousands more lives. Over the past six months, armed groups have intensified attacks in Burkina Faso and parts of Mali and the Niger and inter-community conflict also increased. Regions around the three countries' borders are new hotspots of violence, in particular with encroachments on the borders of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. Transhumant pastoral people and agricultural sedentary population are mostly the main actors involved in these areas.

Figure 1



2. Insecurity continues to have a negative impact on food security in the Sahel. New displacement continues at a high level, while the increased duration of displacement means that many internally displaced persons (IDPs) will be unable to cultivate during the 2019 agricultural season, with negative repercussions for the food security situation going into 2020. This increase in population displacements and the spread of insecurity exacerbate already existing vulnerabilities and tensions. There are currently over 750,000 persons internally displaced across the Sahel.

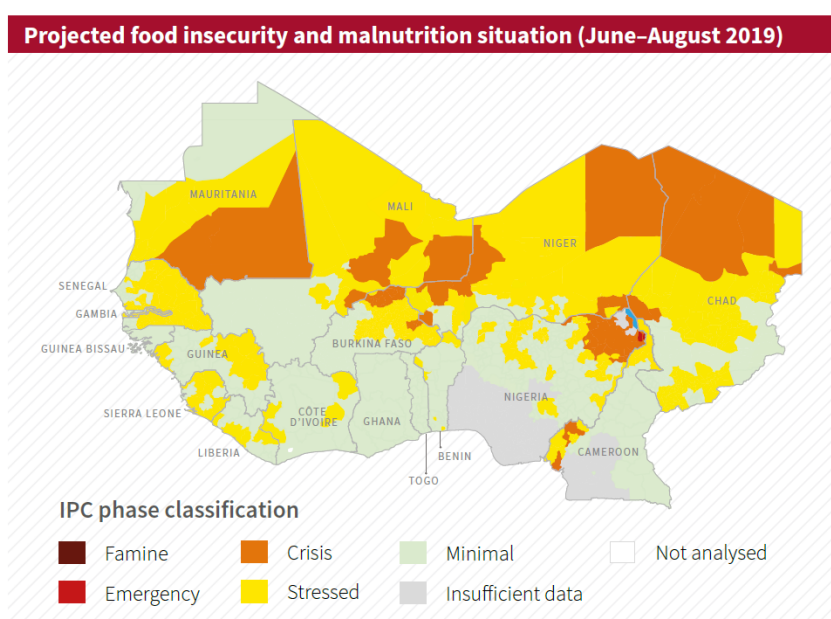
Figure 2



Insecurity and conflict increasingly driving food insecurity

- Food insecurity and malnutrition are exacerbated by persistent conflict and violence, severely affecting communities particularly in the Lake Chad region, eastern and western Niger, northern and eastern Burkina Faso, and northern and central Mali. Despite relatively favourable climatic conditions during the 2018/19 agricultural season, markets remain severely disrupted in areas affected by insecurity.
- The upward trends regarding food insecurity in 2019 have been extremely worrying, with humanitarian needs growing fast. The March 2019 Cadre harmonisé¹ projected that over 3.6 million persons would be in need of emergency food assistance during the June to September lean season, the period of the year when food stocks are exhausted, and resources stretched. In addition, forced internal displacement has continued, compounding an already complex humanitarian situation and leading to increasing needs across the region.

Figure 3

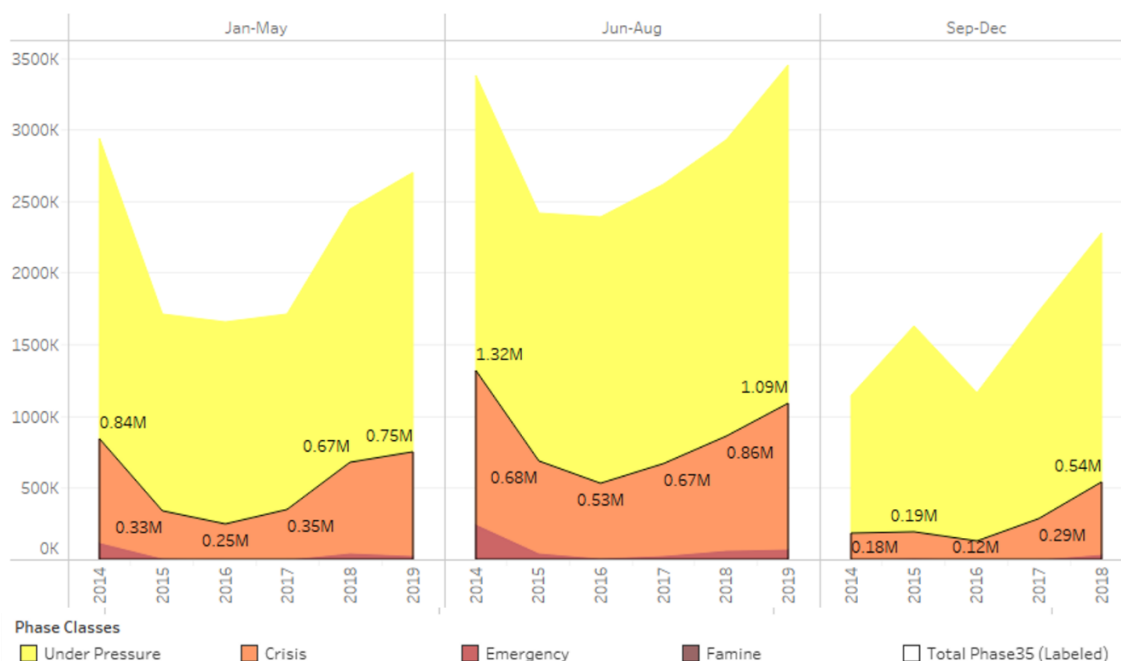


Source: *Cadre Harmonisé*, April 2019

¹ The Cadre harmonisé is the regional framework for identifying food-insecure populations. It considers various indicators of food and nutrition security outcomes and the inference of contributing factors.

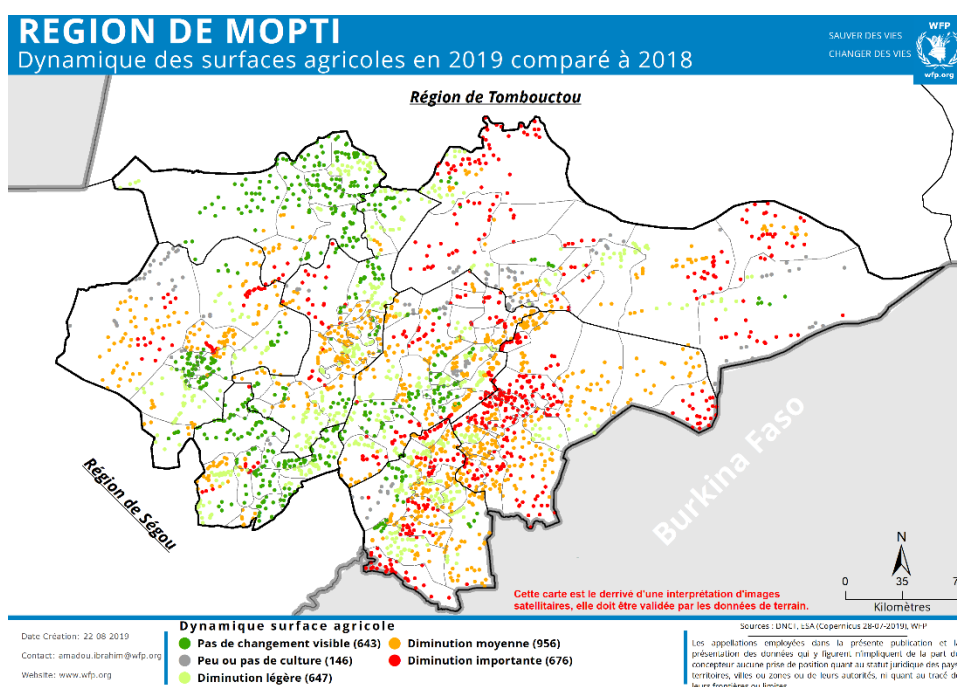
Figure 4

Food Insecurity (Phase 3-5) plus Under Pressure (Phase 2) in Liptako Gourma by period, CH 2014-2019



- An increasing number of populations are facing threats to their livelihoods due to constraints on their access to livelihoods and markets. For example, in Mali, analysis of satellite imagery has revealed a significant decrease in agricultural and pastoral activities in several areas due to ongoing insecurity. Preliminary results from analysis carried out in July 2019 highlighted that over half of the analysed villages in central Mali had suffered from significant reductions in the amount of agricultural land cultivated compared to the 2016–2018 average. Taken together with increasing displacement, this points to a challenging food security outlook moving forward.

Figure 5



6. Similarly, undernutrition remains one of the greatest challenges in the Sahel region with 3.8 million children aged 6–59 months expected to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2019. In pockets of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger, global acute malnutrition rates far exceed the serious or emergency threshold. A “Fill the Nutrient Gap” analysis is being done in the five Sahelian countries, to better understand the challenges and barriers to access nutritious food in the Sahel region.

Reinforcing efforts to achieve lasting food security

7. Climate change, land degradation and rapid population growth have increased competition for renewable resources such as land (agricultural and pasture) and water. Unmitigated, the negative effects of climate change and subsequent environmental issues such as degradation of soils, forests and water ecosystems further aggravate poverty. More than ever the need to scale up and invest in resilience-building activities that contribute to mitigate food insecurity for the most vulnerable, address and reduce the root causes of food-land insecurity, malnutrition and instability is apparent in the Sahel.
8. It has thus become increasingly clear that a holistic approach is required where all national and international actors have a role to play, whereby the focus lies in addressing the structural factors which affect food insecurity. We cannot overcome the present crisis in the Sahel, unless we address the root causes of conflict, including poverty, lack of basic social services and food insecurity. The Rome-based agencies (RBAs) are fully committed to the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel as well as supporting the implementation of the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Program. Indeed, as outlined by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr Mark Lowcock, in June 2019, “The current trajectory is extremely worrying, but if we commit to address not only the symptoms but also the root causes of the crisis, we can – and must – turn this situation around.”
9. In addition, peace and stabilization are interconnected to food security as recognized in the **United Nations Security Council Resolution 2417** (2018). But food insecurity also underlies conflict, particularly in the Sahel region. A single factor such as food insecurity can rarely be blamed for radicalization or insurgency, but hunger, and the inability to get hold of food to feed oneself and one’s family, accompanied by a lack of livelihood opportunities, is one of a number of underlying causes that can combine to aggravate longstanding tensions and grievances. Addressing food insecurity is therefore paramount, and indeed a necessity, in the pursuit of stabilization and sustained peace in the Sahel. This is especially true in areas where climate change and limited access to land, water and pastures have eroded traditional livelihoods and rendered a large proportion of the population food insecure, without credible prospects for betterment.
10. It is therefore important to implement a wide range of activities which span across the **humanitarian-development-peace nexus** and link the emergency response to immediate needs of populations in distress with joint stabilization efforts, rendering vulnerable populations more resilient in the face of instability and adverse climatic and socio-economic conditions. It is in this context that the RBAs will reinforce collaboration to effectively address the root causes of food insecurity, unsustainable agricultural practices, limited integration with and between markets, inadequate knowledge of nutrition at household level and limited access to basic services.

Other challenges: governance, demographics and coordination of strategies

11. **Governance:** The performance of governance in the five Sahel countries according to the components of Mo Ibrahim's Governance Index in Africa for the period 2008–2017 clearly indicates a deterioration of the security and human rights situations. In this shifting context, leaders are seen to be placing more emphasis on short-term governance rather than addressing the structural problems evident in each country. The maintenance of such governance does not provide a social and political field that is sufficiently prepared and open to the populations, especially young persons and women, to be part of real economic, social and political dynamic. This negatively impacts the consolidation of social cohesion and their participation in development efforts.
12. **Demographics:** The severe development challenges of the Sahel, which refer to certain structural factors such as low agricultural productivity, the very low level of human development and security crises, are exacerbated by the exceptional increase of the population. For several decades, Sahelian countries have experienced high population growth rates, averaging 3 percent, with rates ranging between 3.6 percent and 3.9 percent for Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger.
13. **Coordination of strategies:** Several subregional organizations are in place to respond to the various challenges of the Sahel, including: Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS); G5 Sahel; Monetary and Economic Union of West Africa (UEMOA), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); Integrated Development Authority of the Liptako-Gourma Region; Community of Saharo-Saharan States. Similarly, initiatives and cooperation strategies on the Sahel are developed and implemented such as: Alliance Sahel; United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS); World Bank strategies; OCI; African Union, Asian Development Bank (ADB) etc. But the major challenge remains the synergy to build between different organizations and different strategies for more efficiency and effectiveness.

RBA progress made to date

14. Collaboration between the RBAs is expanding across the Sahel region, with an increasing number of joint projects in place. Based on the comparative advantage of each respective agency, the goal is to pursue an integrated package of interventions to strengthen community and household resilience. In the Niger for example, successful results have been achieved, notably through pursuing joint objectives, establishing common frameworks for operational planning and coordination, alignment to key approaches under the leadership of the Government, joint planning and programming of activities, joint targeting of the poorest households, and implementing the package over several years. In Burkina Faso the RBAs are working together on the design of a new project addressing post-harvest losses where FAO will provide training to farmers organizations, WFP will offer technical support in processing and marketing activities, and IFAD will support knowledge management activities. In Mali, WFP and FAO are working closely together and have also achieved significant results in resilience building of vulnerable communities mobilizing jointly important resources from financial partners (European Union, Peacebuilding Fund). A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between FAO and WFP since 2014 with a plan of action. IFAD and FAO have for long time been collaborating for technical assistance provision, currently FAO provides technical support to IFAD operations in the country especially on nutrition. IFAD collaboration with FAO and WFP will be enhanced with the design of the new country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP), where WFP support is foreseen to support extension of IFAD operations to the northern regions and FAO will support the implementation of value chain projects. IFAD has engaged consultations with

WFP to seek partnership opportunities on agricultural insurance, nutrition and resilience building.

15. With respect to the region as a whole, IFAD has recently launched a large grant to support family farming, regional markets and cross-border trade corridors in the Sahel and has invited FAO and WFP to participate in the program.

The situation in Mali

Crisis and humanitarian context

16. In Mali, 2019 has been marked by escalating violence and conflict, leading to a sharp increase in internal displacement, the disruption of markets and a deterioration of basic social services, with negative repercussions on the food security situation and wellbeing.
17. The number of IDPs more than doubled in the space of a year, from 63,000 to 168,500 persons. In addition, 8,000 to 10,000 new IDPs are registered each month in the northern and central regions. Nearly half of IDPs are in the two central regions; Mopti increased from 10,000 to 58,000 persons and Ségou increased from 8,000 to 22,000 persons in the space of one year.
18. Evaluations carried out by the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) found that more than 75 percent of displaced households identified food needs as their most urgent (over shelter, health, etc). In addition, further analysis carried out by the DTM points to a significant reduction in livelihood activities undertaken by IDPs, who are consequently increasingly dependent on humanitarian aid. For example, only 1 percent of IDPs currently rely on agriculture to sustain their livelihoods.
19. In addition to those displaced, other populations face threats to their livelihoods due to constraints on their access to livelihoods and markets. People in several communes in Mopti remain confined in their village due to intercommunal conflict and armed terrorist groups. Satellite imagery analysis shows a significant reduction in the area cultivated in the conflict-affected areas of Mopti where people are relinquishing the exploitation of fields on the outskirts of their villages for fear of insecurity. This situation also impacts on the mobility of livestock resulting on feed shortage for animals and consequently malnutrition for children and lactating women of pastoral communities. Further analysis is being conducted during the current growing season.
20. The March 2019 Cadre harmonisé² projected that about 550,000 persons would be in need of emergency food assistance during the June to September lean season, the period of the year when food stocks are exhausted, and resources stretched.
21. By its very nature, violence and forced displacement is unpredictable. The rising numbers of displaced populations are almost entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance, including food assistance, to meet their most basic needs. The evolving context means that humanitarian assistance will be required beyond the normal period of June to September, when spikes in food insecurity are generally observed, towards a year-round response for conflict-affected persons.
22. Regarding the education system, in June 2019, 920 schools were closed, an increase of almost 350 schools compared to two years earlier. School closures continue to directly affect over 270,000 children. The central region of Mopti, which has witnessed an upsurge in violence since the start of 2019, accounts for more than half of these closed schools, and currently almost one-third of all schools in the region remain closed.

² The Cadre harmonisé is the regional framework for identifying food-insecure populations. It considers various indicators of food and nutrition security outcomes and the inference of contributing factors.

United Nations collective responses to crisis challenges in Mali

23. Facing the many human security challenges which disrupted the socio-political and economic situation of Mali since 2012, the Government, in close collaboration with civil society organizations, and United Nations agencies, has set up arrangements aimed at urgently and efficiently meeting the needs of vulnerable populations. This translated, among others, in:
 - setting up of shared frameworks enabling to coordinate interventions in the northern regions, namely through the activation of clusters (protection, education, WASH, food security, health, etc.);
 - developing United Nations emergency programs for the recovery and economic revival in the northern region affected by the crisis;
 - developing and implementing the Joint Youth and Resilience Program by the the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, ILO and FAO designed to enhance youth resilience, particularly among the most vulnerable (women, young school dropouts, IDPs, marginalized) and to support policies and initiatives promoting the creation of economic opportunities, while supporting their involvement in peace-building and social cohesion;
 - developing and implementing a United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) funded joint Programme for the resilience and security of women and Youth in the North;
 - developing assistance program for the IDPs and refugees: (WASH, food for work, cash for work, non-food item programs, etc.);
 - setting up protection devices through consortiums of international non-governmental organizations, and some United Nations agencies (such as the United Nations Children's Fund) namely in favour of crisis affected children and women and girls victim of gender-based violence; and
 - implementing education projects in relation with UNICEF/WFP to ensure education of children in the north and to restart the educational system.
24. These various joint intervention approaches, based on comparative advantages and complementarity of stakeholders, have permitted to efficiently meet the urgent needs of the populations in the regions directly affected by the conflict, on one hand, and to engage a logic of stabilization and then mid-term development, on the other hand.
25. It should also be noted the FAO-UNICEF-WFP, WHO and UNDP (2010–2013) Joint Program aimed at improving food security and nutrition in the most vulnerable areas of Mali, particularly in Mopti (Bandiagara).
26. From 2012 to 2013 FAO and UN-WOMEN implemented a joint project "Support for Rural Women's Economic Empowerment in the Context of Food Insecurity and Climate Change in Mali" funded by Sweden, an amount of USD 2,194,000 in 10 municipalities in Mopti, Koulikoro, and Ségou regions.
27. Also, funds including the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund and the UNTFHS provide concrete opportunities for enhanced collaboration between agencies and joint activities.

28. United Nations Peacebuilding Fund: To stop the unravelling of inter and intra-community relations in the regions of central Mali, WFP, UNHCR and FAO of the United Nations have jointly designed an innovative pilot project peers for peace: building social cohesion in the regions of Mopti and Ségou. By supporting the revitalization of traditional conflict management mechanisms and unlocking the economic and social potential of 500 peers for peace, the project aims to mitigate intra- and inter-community conflicts related to access to resources.
29. A joint FAO, UNICEF and WFP strategy for resilience and zero hunger has been finalized, to guide the three agencies towards providing more coherent support to SDG 2 and the broader SDG agenda. WFP is also working with other partners (including GIZ) to strengthen convergence activities and government ownership to resilience building. Due to different zones of intervention this collaboration has not yet been operationalized with IFAD, while two joint FAO/WFP projects have been implemented, i.e.:
 - WFP and FAO worked collaboratively on a resilience project in northern Mali financed by DEVCO (2015–2017);
 - WFP, FAO and UNICEF joint project for Mopti under approval by Canada. The three agencies all took part in the development of the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR) process in Mali.
30. FAO and WFP co-lead the food security cluster effective at the national and regional levels and provide policy support on policies and strategies on food security and nutrition and social protection.
31. FAO and WFP are also both engaged and committed on the joint action plan for the United Nations agencies in the Scaling Up Nutrition network (FAO, UNICEF and WFP are part of this process) outlining our joint work in support to the government (mostly institutional support).