

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

Disturbingly many children will suffer from severe hunger in the Central Sahel by mid-2023 fueling the already critical education crisis



DAKAR, 24 January – More children will face severe hunger in the next six months as the food crisis in the Central Sahel continues. The number of hungry people in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso is projected to reach more than 7.5 million to be in the IPC crisis level 3 or worse during the June-August 2023 lean season. That is a significant rise from the level of 5.3 million people between October to December 2022. Though not as severe as the critical lean season last summer where 9.7 million people were in IPC level 3 or worse, the number is still very high. This is documented in a new joint survey by Save the Children and other agencies in the region.

Entering another dire lean season in 2023 with severe hunger is extremely worrying. Especially for children, who make up about half of the population in the three countries. Children are more vulnerable and suffer more from hunger than adults because it is more difficult for them to adapt to the challenging circumstances. Lack of food and nutrients during the developmental stage of life can lead to lifelong setbacks.

“Without urgent action in the coming months, we expect to see a growing number of families

resorting to increasingly desperate measures to survive, such as selling off the small number of assets they own to afford food and reducing or skipping meals. The time to act is now. Children's lives depend on it," says Abdou Malam Dodo, Regional Food, Security and Livelihood Advisor for Save the Children in West and Central Africa.

No education no future

Many factors are causing the food crisis, including conflict, poverty and climate change in the form of droughts, floods and extreme weather. The humanitarian crisis in the Central Sahel also has a wide range of derived consequences for children – one of the most severe is the widespread level of school closures with almost 9,000 schools shut down in the three countries leaving 1,66 million children directly impacted – most of them without any access to education¹.

Access to school is not only essential for children's wellbeing and ability to thrive here and now. It's also a prerequisite for children to acquire the knowledge and skills that are central for building a life of opportunities.

Save the Children is heavily committed to ensuring children's access to school and psychosocial support, so their wellbeing and future is not jeopardized despite the difficult conditions many children face in the Central Sahel.

And with generous funding from the European Union's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department (ECHO) we are able to help 200,000 children in the Central Sahel with quality education and mental support which essential to their recovery, well-being and development.

However more help and support are needed to combat the multifaceted crisis unfolding in the Central Sahel. The great progress that humanitarian aid and investments have contributed to in the region in recent decades must not be lost due to the current food crisis.

Save the Children is calling on world leaders, donors, members of the UN, and non-governmental organisations to prioritising funding in the region for the necessary services to protect children and to ensure their resilience and access to quality education which is crucial to their future.

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

- The survey is conducted jointly by regional entities, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations including Save the Children and can be found here:

<https://www.ipcinfo.org/ch>

According to UN Population data, children account for up to 50 percent of the population in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali

¹ While 1.66 million children are directly affected by school closures, around 10 million children of school age are not receiving education as an indirect result of the various crises unfolding in the Central Sahel in terms of poverty, hunger, climate crisis, conflict, child labour, etc.

- See the latest numbers on internal displaced people here:
<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/sahelcrisis%20>
- See the latest report on Education Under Attack (WCA) here:
https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/education_under_attack_2022_update-en.pdf

About the programme

Save the Children's programme **ECHO PPP** strengthens the wellbeing, learning and protection of 200,000 vulnerable and crisis affected girls and boys in Central Sahel through an integrated regional approach to education in emergencies, child protection in emergencies and mental health and psychosocial support. The programme runs from 2020 – 2023 and is funded by European Union's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department (ECHO) with 12.8 million euros.

About EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid

The EU – Member States and EU institutions collectively – is among the leading donors of humanitarian aid in the world. Relief assistance is an expression of European solidarity with people in need all around the world. It aims to save lives, prevent and alleviate human suffering, and safeguard the integrity and human dignity of populations affected by natural and human-induced disasters and crises.

Through the European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department, the European Union helps over 120 million victims of conflict and disasters every year. With headquarters in Brussels and a global network of field offices, the EU assists the most vulnerable people on the basis of humanitarian needs.

https://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en
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For further enquiries please contact:

arro@redbarnet.dk / +45 20151178
jofn@redbarnet.dk / +45 42925443

Save the Children exists to help every child reach their full potential. Around the world, we make sure children stay safe, healthy and keep learning, so they can become who they want to be.