

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

More than 7 million children will suffer from severe hunger in central Sahel by mid-2023



DAKAR, 15th March – Significantly more children will face severe hunger in the next six months as the critical 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 being in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) crisis level 3 or worse during the June-August 2023 lean season (see footnote). 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.

The situation for children, who make up more than half of the populations in the three countries, will become even more desperate. Children are more vulnerable and suffer more from hunger than adults because it is more difficult for them to adapt to the challenging circumstances. The lack of adequate nutrition can lead to lifelong setbacks and increases young children's vulnerability to

health problems, such as cognitive development, weak learning, low immunity, increased susceptibility to infections and in many cases, premature death.

“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.

The international community must act

Save the Children is calling on world leaders, donors, members of the UN, and non-governmental organisations to prioritising funding in the Sahel region for the necessary services to support and protect children and their families impacted by the hunger crisis and ensure their resilience.

Many factors are causing the food crisis, including conflict, poverty and climate change in the form of droughts, floods and extreme weather. With generous funding from the European Union (17,640,000 EUR, through the **EU Trust Fund for Africa**) and **DANIDA** we have established the ambitious **RECOLG** project that prevents the most vulnerable and poor people, especially children and women, from extreme poverty, hunger and improves their livelihood and social cohesion.

Acute needs of families are met through actions including cash transfers, treatment of malnutrition, and improved healthcare access through mobile clinics. Strengthened resilience is achieved through community capacity building for climate and security change adaptation, development of sustainable agricultural production systems, and restocking of livestock for vulnerable households. Over the span of project period from 2019 to the end of 2023 we are targeting more than 750,000 beneficiaries and creating sustainable and long-lasting solutions for the affected communities.

However more help and support are needed from donors, world leaders and the international society to combat the hunger crisis unfolding in the Central Sahel. Without additional commitment, we risk losing the great progress that humanitarian aid and investments has contributed to in the region in recent decades.

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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
- See the latest numbers on internal displaced people here: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/sahelcrisis%20>

- The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a set of standardized tools that aims at providing a "common currency" for classifying the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. <https://www.fao.org/europeanunion/eu-projects/ipc/en/>

About RECOLG

With funding from the European Union and DANIDA (18.24 million euros of which 17,640,000 EUR from the European Union Trust Fund for Africa), we are implementing a Humanitarian, Development & Peace Nexus project called "Résilience et cohésion sociale des communautés transfrontalières du Liptako-Gourma" (RECOLG) in the region of the Liptako-Gourma in the Central Sahel over a period of four years (December 2019 – December 2023) targeting 768,719 beneficiaries.

The project addresses humanitarian needs through social protection with cash transfers and health and nutrition services, including mental health and psychosocial support; development through the creation of youth and women's loan and saving groups; and peace through conflict prevention, mitigation and activities aiming at improving the relations between the population and representatives of the state authorities.

Overall, the project aims at building resilience and social cohesion of the communities in the region of the Liptako-Gourma to mitigate against shocks sparked by armed conflicts, the effects of climate change such as droughts and flooding, the hunger crisis, poverty, and inflation.

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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.