

Rising needs in a neglected crisis

Analysing the humanitarian situation in Mali

January 2026 | Mali

KEY MESSAGES

- The security situation, climate change, and inadequate basic services have contributed to a severe and protracted humanitarian crisis in Mali. **The needs of communities, already widespread and complex, have further deteriorated since last year.**
- **The rise in security incidents, coupled with the resulting fuel crisis,** has triggered additional displacement, extending the crisis into new geographical areas and affecting populations already living in heightened vulnerability.
- As needs increase and the context deteriorates, humanitarian funding has been drastically reduced in 2025 and is likely to continue declining. The response in Mali, long underfunded, have been significantly weakened and is severely diminished at a time when it's needed more than ever. **Increased assistance, aligned with community needs and preferences, is critical.**

402,167

internally displaced people
in Mali

167,034

refugees¹

CONTEXT

In 2025, Mali faced a [worrying humanitarian situation](#), marked by a volatile security context, recurring health emergencies, climate shocks, and inadequate basic services. **Violent incidents linked to non-state armed groups (NSAGs) increased significantly**, particularly in the south and the Kayes region, causing further population displacement to already fragile border areas. **After more than a decade of crisis, it is essential to maintain focus on Mali and understand its various dimensions in order to best support the affected populations.**

Armed clashes are intensifying in all regions of the center and the south, particularly in Kayes and Ségou near the borders with Senegal and Mauritania.

2025

July

Coordinated attacks on an unprecedented scale in Kayes and several towns near the borders with Senegal and Mauritania, and blockade of Kayes and Nioni (Ségou) by armed groups.

Sept.

Sharp rise in violence, blockades, and fuel shortages in certain regions.

Highest number of security incidents ever recorded in the Kayes region (ACLED).

Oct.

The United States and other countries are asking their citizens to leave Mali.

Understanding needs and vulnerabilities – a multisectoral crisis

38%

of households live in inadequate shelters.

20%

of households live in emergency shelters.

22%

of households reported having a serious problem because they do not have easy or safe access to clean toilets.

According to the [2025 Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment \(MSNA\)](#), **more than four out of five households (83%) in Mali are in need**. This represents a 9% increase compared to last year, illustrating the worsening situation at the national level. This increase is mainly linked to **the shelter and non-food items (SNFI) sector, which has seen a 32% increase** due to the growing number of people living in inadequate shelters², especially in the south, where armed conflict is intensifying.

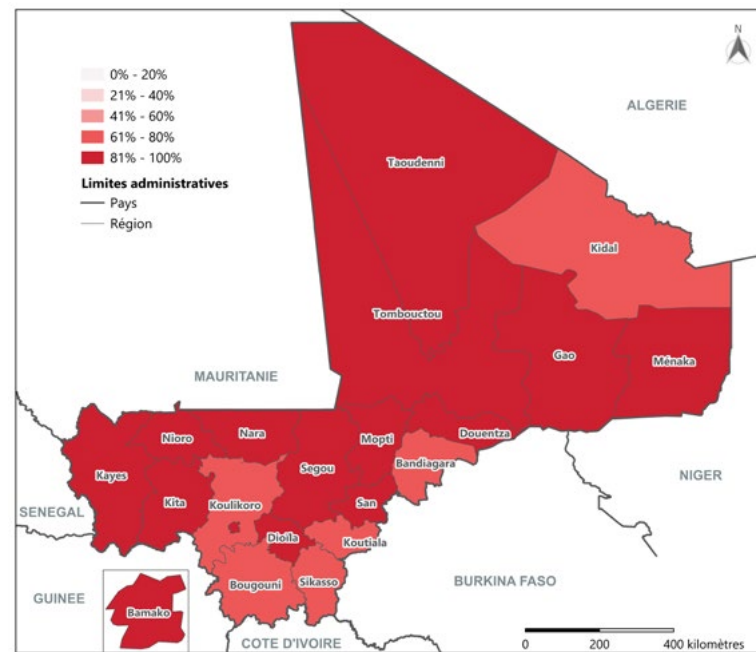
While shelter needs saw the greatest increase, **the main need for households³ was education**: 43% of children aged 6 to 18 were not enrolled in school during the 2024-2025 school year—**this could amount to nearly 4 million children**.

Education in emergencies is an essential measure of protection and a pillar for other humanitarian interventions, including access to school meals and nutrition, water and sanitation, vaccines and other health services, as well as general psychosocial support to address trauma experienced

in crisis-affected environments. Quality education is also one of the most effective investments for sustainable development. It reduces poverty, stimulates economic growth, improves health and gender equality, and promotes peace.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs are also acute, highlighting the difficulties in performing basic tasks such as cooking, drinking, and washing—which can increase the risk of disease outbreaks. Indeed, 64% of households did not have handwashing facilities, and 6% practiced open defecation.

Finally, [levels of acute food insecurity and malnutrition are on the rise](#), particularly in the northern and central regions.



Map: Percentages of households in need by region (MSNA 2025).

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees had higher prevalence of needs than non-displaced households and presented more complex profiles, with concurrent needs in several sectors. Certain population groups were particularly vulnerable, such as female-headed refugee households (94% reported to be in need).

Each region has its own specific characteristics and drivers of needs, which are important to thoroughly understand, especially given recent changes in the context.

Focus on Kidal

The region of Kidal (located in northeastern Mali) presented the highest rate of households in severe need (38%), driven mainly by needs in WASH and gaps in sanitation infrastructure. Two percent of households in Kidal had severe needs in terms of education, linked to serious protection risks, such as school closures due to damage, natural disasters, or conflict (16%). Indeed, [this region faces armed incursions, killings, and extortions despite military operations, as well as blockades leading to food and medical shortages.](#)

In addition, [Kidal is in phase 3 of the IPC](#), which is likely to continue due to access difficulties linked to very high food prices and a significant drop in income.

A deteriorating security environment, driving displacement and worsening the crisis

The beginning of 2025 was marked by a **rise in security incidents, which expanded geographically** particularly in the south and center, with a shift toward the capital. In October, [the number of violent incidents \(armed conflicts, kidnappings, attacks, etc.\) in Mali reached its highest level ever recorded.](#)

We have seen a sharp increase in incidents in the southwest and in the regions bordering Mauritania, Senegal, and Guinea. In **the region of Kayes**, the number of security incidents was the highest ever recorded (ACLED). It is also the region with the second-highest number of households in need (93%—almost the entire population), a figure that has deteriorated significantly compared to last year.

Humanitarian access also appears to be declining, with a [32% increase in incidents affecting humanitarian access](#) in May 2025 compared to May 2024.

These security incidents are forcing civilians to abandon their homes, as it was the case in Loulouni (Sikasso) and Leré (Timbuktu) in November 2025. Reduced mobility of people and goods, forced population displacement, and a decline in economic activity—including industrial production—continue to negatively impact household incomes. The country’s overall economy has slowed, with the [IMF revising its growth forecast downwards from 5% to 4.1% in 2025.](#)

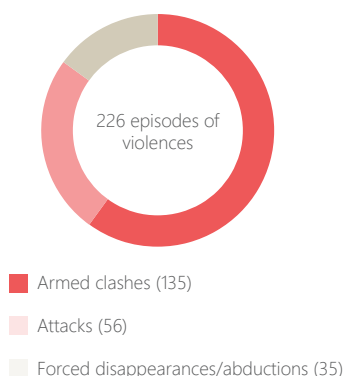
Since July, this intensification of conflicts

has resulted in economic suffocation in Bamako, particularly through blockades that have caused a fuel crisis.

These fuel shortages create logistical and economic challenges for households and are likely to increase already widespread needs, while limiting the possibilities for humanitarian intervention. In some regions, [a liter of gasoline sells for between two and six times the official price.](#) This surge in prices directly affects vulnerable populations, particularly in Ségou, Mopti, Douentza, Bandiagara, Niono, Djenne, and San, where access to fuel is severely limited. **Developments in the coming months will be crucial and must be monitored in order to adapt the response.**

[The number of IDPs increased by 22%, and the number of refugees by 35% between October 2024 and September 2025.](#) In the regional context of the Sahel, migration dynamics remain largely [determined by the deterioration of security in southwestern Mali](#) and the volatility of armed incidents in border areas—especially in the Mali-Mauritania-Senegal-Guinea zone, which have pre-existing humanitarian needs and limited basic services.

Types of violent incidents between June and October 2025 ([GRANIT](#))



As funding declines, the need for a response that reflects aligned with community needs and preferences

The current funding cuts affecting the entire humanitarian sector, and the resulting reduction in assistance (also linked to the factors mentioned above), are having a **direct impact on Mali at a time when needs are increasing in vulnerable areas.**

As of October 31, 2025, only [15.6% of the humanitarian response plan \(HRP\)](#) for Mali had been funded. By comparison, in 2024, [32% of the HRP](#) had been covered. **For years, the humanitarian response has been underfunded in this context**, as in most countries in the Sahel. [Aid in the areas of food, health, education, and basic needs has declined significantly.](#)

"At the moment, it is very difficult to access aid because we have learned that the donor who was funding programs in our region has stopped its support. The changes in aid are noticeable; all those who previously received aid no longer benefit from it.."

Participant to a focus group discussion, [ALNAP](#)

This is also reflected in the MSNA findings: 72% of households that were in need in at least one sector had not received any humanitarian assistance in the 12 months prior to the assessment. Of those households that did receive humanitarian assistance, 22% reported being moderately or not satisfied, the main reason being that the quantity of assistance was insufficient.

Communities also reported a **lack of communication** around the suspension of aid—and assistance in general. Local actors criticized the top-down nature of programmatic decisions, which were often communicated late or indirectly, sometimes even through rumors within the community. Community members also reported receiving no information or explanation regarding the reduction in aid services.

CONCLUSION

The 2025 humanitarian response plan aimed to target 4.7 million people with a budget of \$771.3 million, which was only 15.6% funded, equivalent to \$26 per person. **This amount is far from sufficient to address the scale and severity of needs and to support a gradual recovery from the crisis.**

While more than 80% of households are in need in 2025, 72% of them had received no humanitarian aid the previous year.

In 2026, as needs increase, access becomes more restricted, and the security situation becomes more complex, funding continues to decline. The [Norwegian Refugee Council \(NRC\)](#) has ranked Mali as the fifth most neglected displacement crisis in the world, showing that the funds and attention given to Mali are not sufficient to stem the deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

If security incidents and the fuel crisis continue to escalate, the effects could be disastrous. It is crucial to ensure an inclusive humanitarian response that is proportionate to needs, well-targeted, and tailored to specific regions and population groups.

Notes

1 As of 30 November 2025, [UNHCR](#).

2 Inadequate shelters are determined by the housing situation (group center/emergency shelter/hosted by another household) or by the type of shelter (unfinished or unclosed building/tent/makeshift shelter).

3 Households with a school-age child.