

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION MONITORING IN THE THREE BORDERS AREA (HSM 3B)

March, May, and September 2023 | Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Since the start of the security crisis in Mali in 2012, the border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger has been characterized by a climate of insecurity due to the presence of non-state armed groups (GANEs), rising crime and intercommunity tensions. To compensate for the lack of information on these localities, REACH, in collaboration with humanitarian clusters and working groups, has set up a quarterly monitoring of the humanitarian situation in the departments located in this zone¹.

This assessment provides a periodic overview of the relative severity of multi-sectoral needs and their evolution in the Three Borders area between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. More specifically, the study focuses on the East, Sahel, North and Centre-North regions of Burkina Faso; the Ménaka, Gao, Mopti, Ségou and Timbuktu regions of Mali; and the Tahoua and Tillabéri regions of Niger.

Table 1. Assessed localities

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	3 Borders
March	624	1128	651	2403
May	694	1142	443	2279
September	658	1070	477	2175
Mean	659	1113	524	2286

NOTE TO READERS

All results are to be read as **% of localities evaluated, according to information reported by KIs**. All data refer to the 30 days prior to collection - unless specified otherwise.

KEY MESSAGES

- Improved **access to food** for the non-displaced population has been reported in September, which remains **still inadequate for the displaced population (IDPs, refugees, returnees)** in more than half of the assessed localities (inadequate in 58% in Burkina Faso, 60% in Mali, 63% in Niger).
- Population access to livelihoods continues to deteriorate.** In September, the KIs reported that the majority of the population had no access to their livelihoods in 76% of localities assessed in the three countries (62% in Burkina Faso, 82% in Mali, 83% in Niger).
- Access to school services for the non-displaced population remains problematic** in almost half of the localities assessed in the three countries during September (61% in Burkina Faso, 39% in Mali and 38% in Niger). The start of the 2023-2024 school year was characterized by the closure of several schools in the Trois Frontières zone.
- During the three collection cycles, KIs reported the **absence of functional markets within walking distance** in several localities evaluated within the regions of **Ménaka** (46%), in Mali, **and Tahoua** (58%), in Niger. The main reasons for this were lack of market infrastructure and closures imposed by the authorities.
- In parallel, between March and September, KIs also reported that **the majority of the population was unable to obtain health care** in 68% of localities assessed in **Ménaka**, and 38% in **Tahoua**, due to the absence of nearby infrastructures (88% in Ménaka, 100% in Tahoua).
- In terms of sanitation, the results collected over the three survey periods show that **the practice of open defecation remains widespread**. In September, the KIs reported that the majority of the population did not use latrines in 41% of the localities surveyed, notably 50% in Burkina Faso and 74% in Niger.

PROTECTION

A decrease in the feeling of insecurity between March and September has been reported, particularly marked in departments bordering Burkina Faso and Niger, which could be explained by the fact that during the rainy season (June-September) there is a reduction in security incidents due to the fact that roads are less accessible.

According to the information gathered over the three assessment periods, the feeling of insecurity among the majority of the population in the assessed localities increased between March (67%) and May (75%), and then decreased in September (59% - Maps 1). During the September data collection cycle, the security risks for women (Table 2) and men (Table 3) highlighted by the KIs varied between the three countries. In particular, we note that in Burkina Faso, restrictions on movement are the main security

risk for both population groups (women/girls, boys/men). In Mali, although various security risks are reported in almost equal proportions, it is worth highlighting livestock theft for men and harassment, violence or sexual assault for women. Finally, in Niger, livestock theft is considered the main risk to which men are exposed, while women are exposed to threats of violence.

According to OCHA's Humanitarian Snapshot of early October 2023, despite a recent slowdown in the number of security incidents, the high number of reported deadly attacks on civilians continues to push thousands of households into forced displacement in the Three Borders area. In Niger, humanitarian access was limited following the political events of July 26, 2023, and supplies were partially interrupted. In addition, between June and September, Burkina Faso and Niger faced climate-related difficulties due to severe flooding².

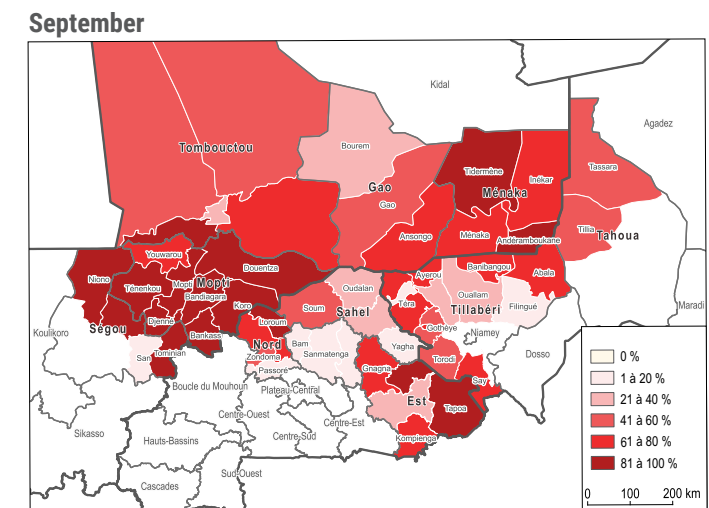
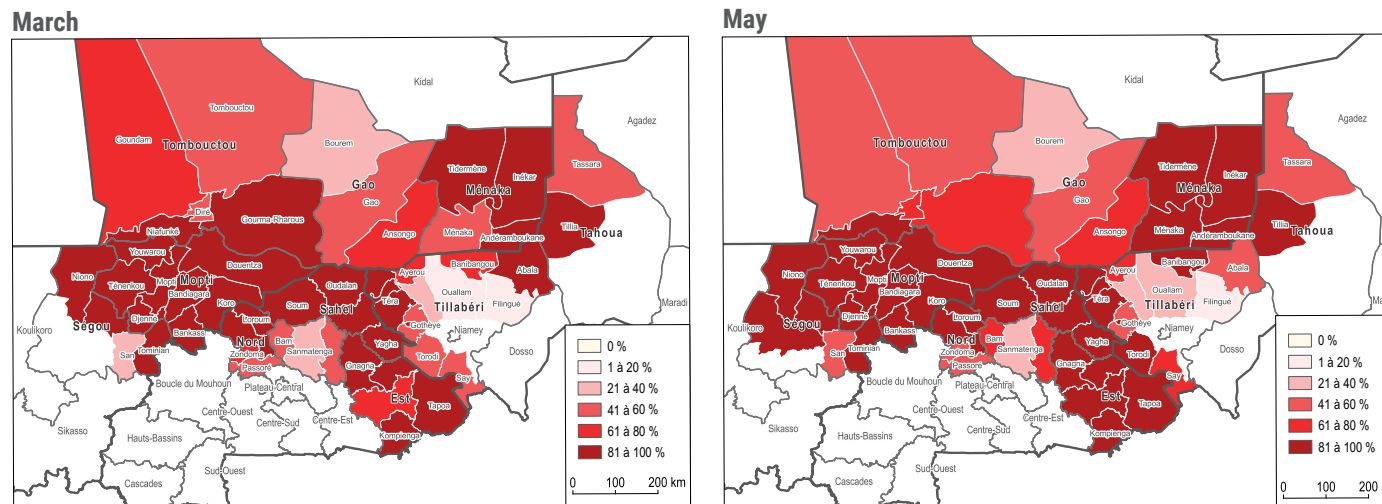
Table 2. % of localities by main security risks to which boys/men are exposed (September)

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	3 Borders
Restrictions on movement	64%	29%	12%	36%
Livestock theft	25%	38%	30%	32%
Violence threat	34%	33%	14%	29%
Kidnapping	25%	27%	5%	22%
Criminal activities ³	15%	30%	9%	21%

Table 3. % of localities by main security risks for girls/women (September)

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	3 Borders
Restrictions on movement	63%	27%	10%	34%
Violence threat	32%	20%	13%	22%
Harassment, violence or sexual assault	14%	32%	4%	21%
Verbal harassment (non-sexual)	30%	23%	4%	21%
Forced marriage ⁴	4%	26%	3%	15%

Maps 1. % of locations where the majority of the population felt unsafe most of the time



→ DISPLACEMENT

The presence of IDPs remains stable in almost half of the localities assessed in the Three Borders area (Maps 2), particularly in the border regions between Mali (36%) and Burkina Faso (84%).

The information gathered over the three cycles (March, May and September) shows the presence of IDPs in a significant proportion of the localities assessed, notably in Burkina Faso in the North (94%; 96%; 95%), Centre-Nord (98% ; 96%; 90%), Sahel (90%; 90%; 87%) and East (65%; 51%; 59%) regions; in Mali, in the Mopti (61%; 52%; 54%), Ségou (33%; 22%; 23%) and Ménaka (27%; 11%; 20%) regions; and in Niger in the Tahoua region (23%; 15%; 22%).

According to UNHCR reports, in September there were over 2 million IDPs in the tri-border area, of which 1,471,694 were in Burkina Faso (Centre-Nord, Nord, Est and Sahel regions)⁵ ; 337,634 in Mali (Gao, Ménaka, Mopti, Ségou and Timbuktu regions)⁶ ; and 209,397 in Niger (Tahoua and Tillabéri regions)⁷.

In addition, in the 30 days prior to the September collection, KIs reported displacements of the non-displaced population, notably within the localities assessed in the East (24%) and North (23%) regions of Burkina Faso; in the Ménaka (29%), Ségou (24%) and Mopti (23%) regions of Mali; and in the Tillabéri (24%) region of Niger. The reasons for the departure of the local population to other localities vary between the three countries (Table 5). In Niger, the main reason is the search for better job oppor-

tunities; in Mali, the reasons are mainly security-related (threats to the population and armed conflicts); finally, in Burkina Faso, the reasons are both economic (better job opportunities) and security-related (threats to the population).

Table 4. % of localities reporting displacement of non-displaced population to other localities

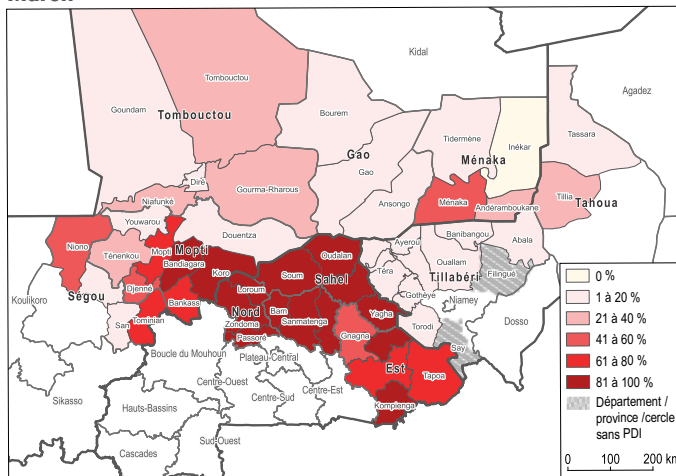
	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	3 Borders
March	22%	16%	28%	21%
May	20%	17%	29%	20%
September	12%	19%	22%	17%
Mean	18%	17%	26%	19%

Table 5. % of localities reporting movement of non-displaced population to other localities, by main reasons for departure (September)

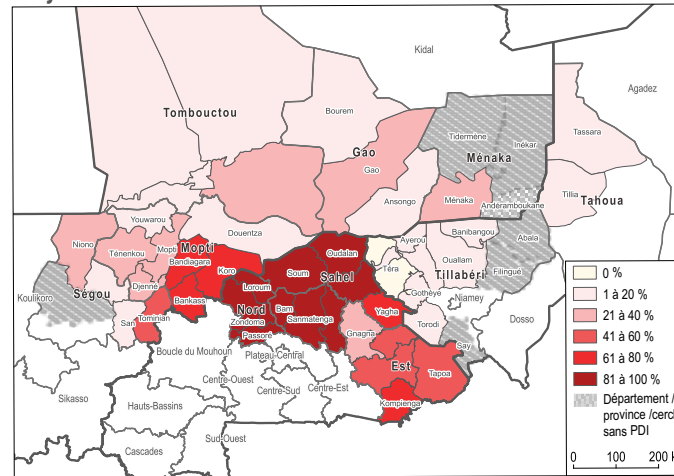
	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	3 Borders
Meilleures opportunités de travail	51%	27%	86%	48%
Menaces envers la population	46%	57%	17%	44%
Conflits armés	26%	40%	12%	29%

Maps 2. % of localities reporting the presence of IDPs

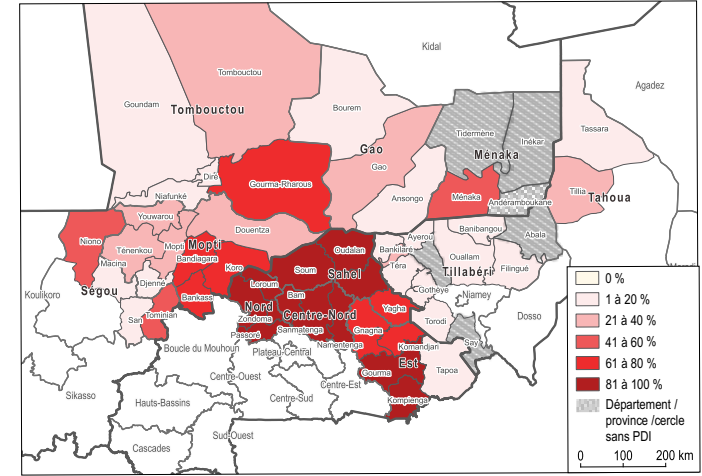
March



May



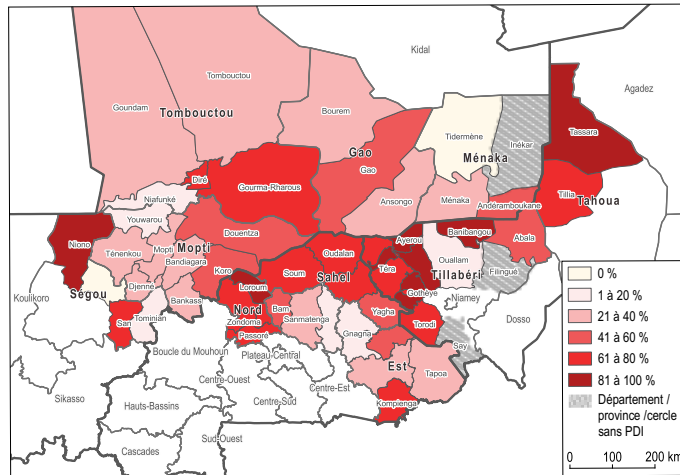
September



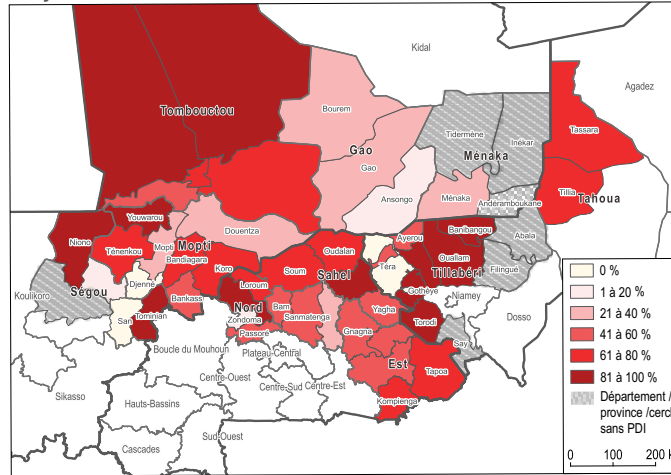
FOOD SECURITY

Maps 3. % of localities where the majority of the displaced population (IDPs, refugees, returnees) did not have access to sufficient food⁸

March



May



September

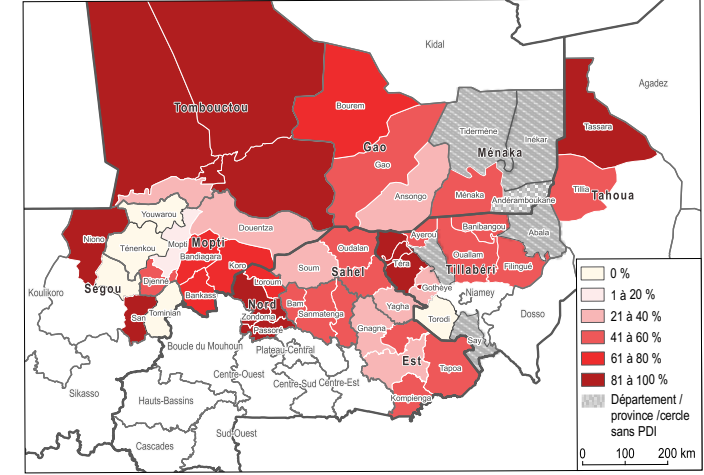


Table 6. % of localities where the majority of the non-displaced population did not have access to sufficient food⁸

	Burkina Faso					Tot BFA	Mali					Tot MLI	Niger			Tot NER	3 Borders
	Centre-Nord	Est	Nord	Sahel			Gao	Ménaka	Mopti	Ségou	Tombouctou		Tahoua	Tillabéri			
March	11%	18%	21%	48%	26%		18%	15%	9%	27%	18%	15%	64%	55%	56%		29%
May	18%	19%	25%	63%	32%		11%	20%	18%	13%	26%	16%	77%	58%	60%		30%
September	7%	37%	40%	7%	22%		5%	27%	18%	4%	25%	14%	65%	39%	42%		23%
Mean	12%	25%	29%	26%	27%		11%	21%	15%	15%	23%	15%	69%	51%	53%		27%

Although access to food remains a major issue in the Three Borders region, there was a general improvement between March and September 2023 (Maps 3, Table 6), due in particular to the first harvests. However, the security crisis remains a potential factor in the deterioration of food security in the area.

As for localities reporting a lack of access to sufficient food, the reasons highlighted by KIs would be the depletion of food stocks⁹, excessively high prices¹⁰ and lack of money¹¹ to buy food (for both displaced and non-displaced people). Good rainfall has enabled millet and cowpea crops to mature earlier than average, improving food availability for the population, particularly in Niger and Burkina Faso¹². In Mali, a seasonal improvement is expected from October onwards¹³.

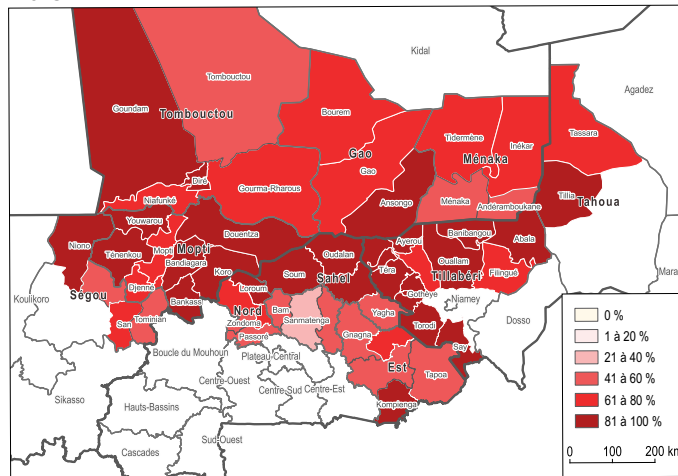
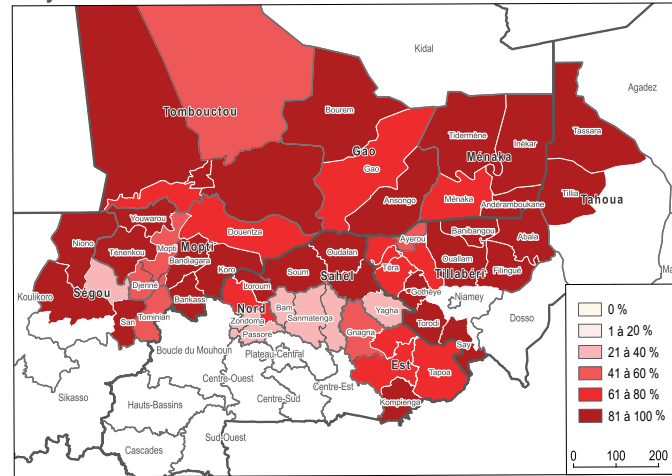
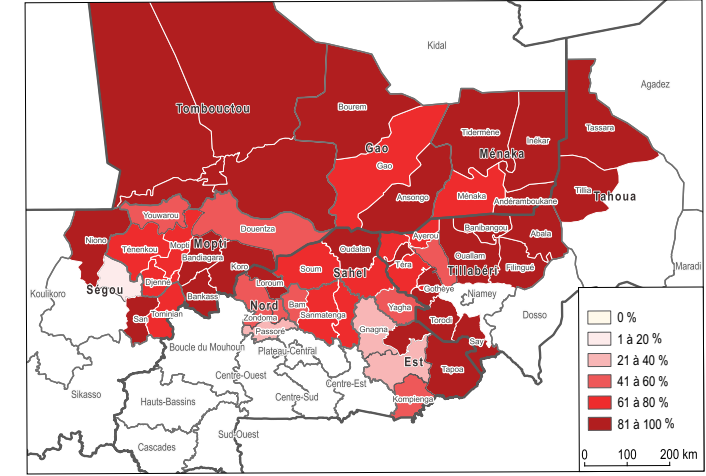
According to FewsNet's September reports, Burkina Faso's Centre-Nord, Nord, Est and Sahel regions are in a state of Crisis food insecurity (IPC Phase 3), with some com-

munes in the Sahel and Est regions being in an Emergency situation (IPC Phase 4). In fact, these regions face frequent shortages of basic foodstuffs, notably due to the activities of armed groups on the main roads, which prevent market supplies¹⁴. In Mali, the Gao, Mopti, Ségou and Timbuktu regions are between Stress (IPC Phase 2) and Crisis, particularly in the border circles with Niger and Burkina Faso, while the Ménaka region is in Emergency. This situation is due to an upsurge in security incidents causing unusual displacements of people, the imposition of blockades on the main roads and the ongoing disruption of economic activity¹⁵. In Niger, the regions of Tillabéri and north of Tahoua are facing Crisis food insecurity, due to a lack of population's resources to buy food, exacerbated by the lack of regular assistance in the area due to the effects of economic and trade sanctions on the implementation of food and humanitarian response plans¹⁶.



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Maps 4. % of localities where the majority of the population had no access to their livelihoods
March

May

September


The economic situation is very precarious in the Three Borders area, characterized by lack of access to livelihoods, high prices and poor access to economic infrastructure.

Lack of access to livelihoods is explained by lack of capital¹⁷, insecurity due to armed group assaults¹⁸, and labour shortages¹⁹. At the same time, between March and September, KIs reported an increase in cereal and livestock/meat prices in more than half of the localities assessed in the Three Borders area (Table 7). Furthermore, over the three data collection cycles, the KIs confirmed the absence of functional markets within walking distance within the localities evaluated in the border regions of Ménaka, in Mali, and Tahoua, in Niger (Table 8). The absence of functional markets in the two regions abovementioned has been detected and confirmed at each

data collection cycle since October 2022²⁰. The reasons reported by the KIs are the closure of markets by decision of the authorities²¹ and the chronic²² absence of a market in these areas.

Table 8. % of localities reporting the absence of functional markets, open at least one day a week, within walking distance

	Ménaka (Mali)	Tahoua (Niger)
March	41%	47%
May	57%	67%
September	41%	59%
Mean	46%	58%

Table 7. % of localities reporting an increase in cereal and livestock/meat prices

	Burkina Faso		Mali		Niger		3 Borders	
	Cereals	Livestock/meat	Cereals	Livestock/meat	Cereals	Livestock/meat	Cereals	Livestock/meat
March	83%	61%	67%	72%	72%	56%	73%	57%
May	75%	55%	64%	61%	64%	44%	67%	55%
September	69%	49%	79%	78%	57%	22%	71%	57%
Mean	76%	55%	70%	70%	64%	41%	70%	56%

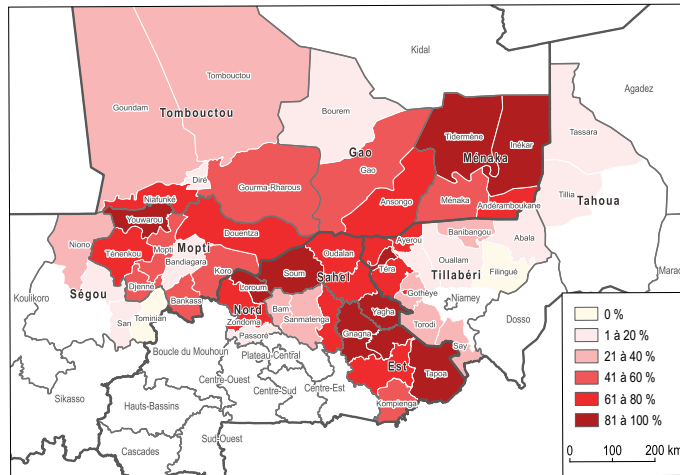

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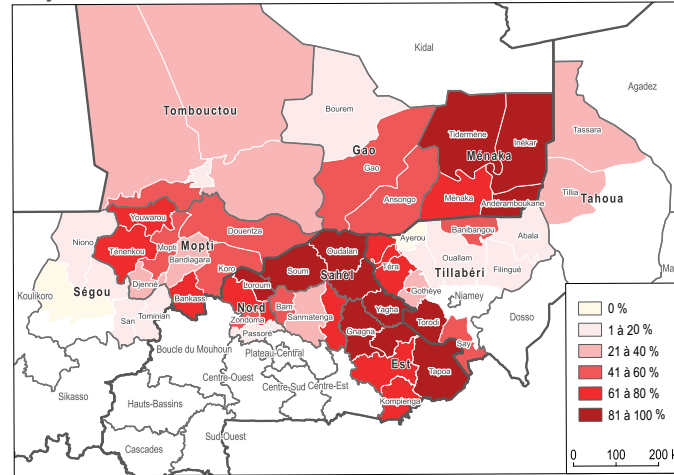
EDUCATION

Maps 5. % of localities where the majority of the non-displaced school-age population had no access to functional, formal education facilities or services within walking distance

March



May



September

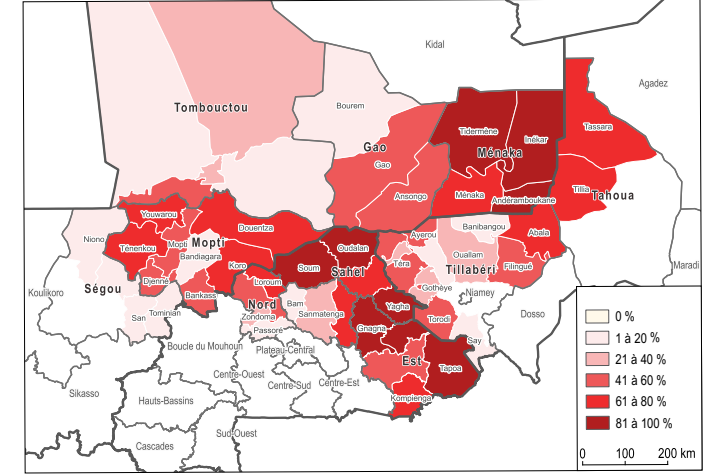


Table 9. % of localities where the majority of the displaced (IDPs, refugees and returnees) school-age population had no access to functional, formal education facilities or services within walking distance

	Burkina Faso					Tot BFA	Mali					Tot MLI	Niger		Tot NER	3 Borders
	Centre-Nord	Est	Nord	Sahel			Gao	Ménaka	Mopti	Ségou	Tombouctou		Tahoua	Tillabéri		
March	44%	71%	56%	87%	64%		52%	27%	43%	9%	24%	37%	18%	16%	16%	50%
May	56%	78%	57%	95%	70%		37%	25%	45%	0%	26%	35%	0%	15%	11%	55%
September	39%	75%	39%	88%	58%		43%	13%	43%	13%	10%	36%	64%	13%	33%	49%
Mean	46%	75%	51%	90%	64%		44%	32%	44%	7%	20%	35%	27%	15%	20%	51%

Population access to school services remains problematic in the Three Borders region (Maps 5, Table 9), where the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year was characterized by the closure or relocation of several schools. Faced with this situation, alternative learning strategies available to households are limited.

According to Niger's education cluster, a total of 921 schools, of which 891 elementary school, were closed in September in the Tillabéri region²³. Beyond this, it is also important to mention that heavy rains and flooding have impacted some schools, with the destruction of classrooms. According to the MAHGC, a total of 8 classrooms (7 and 1 respectively in the Tahoua and Tillabéri regions) were destroyed by floods²⁴. According to Burkina Faso's Ministry of Education, the beginning of October saw the closure of 37 schools in the Centre-Nord (34 elementary school) and Nord (3 post-primary

and secondary schools) regions, and the relocation of 443 schools in the Centre-Nord (130), Nord (100), Est (194) and Sahel (19)²⁵ regions. Finally, the United Nations reported that, in Mali, more than 1,500 schools were closed or not functioning in September, partly due to insecurity. In particular, in the Mopti region, nearly 25% of schools were closed²⁶.

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

In terms of sanitation and hygiene, the situation remains critical in the Three Borders region, with a high proportion of assessed localities reporting that the population did not use latrines (Table 10), and had no access to soap for hand washing.

During the month of September, KIs reported that the practice of open defecation was particularly widespread within the localities assessed in Burkina Faso, in the Centre-Nord (40%), East (54%), North (43%) and Sahel (63%) regions; in Mali in the Ménaka region (70%); and in Niger in the Tahoua (78%) and Tillabéri (74%) regions. At the same time, according to information gathered from KIs during the month of September, the majority of the population washed their hands only with water in 60% of localities assessed in the tri-border area (68% in Burkina Faso, 60% in Mali, and 49% in Niger). The reasons put forward by KIs were the high price of soap (72%) and the lack of awareness among the population of the need to use soap (40%).

Table 10. % of localities where the majority of the population did not use latrines

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	3 Borders
March	40%	31%	75%	45%
May	45%	25%	67%	39%
September	50%	22%	74%	41%
Mean	45%	26%	72%	42%

Table 11. % of localities where the majority of the population used an unimproved water source or surface water

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	3 Borders
March	17%	33%	39%	30%
May	18%	27%	30%	25%
September	19%	33%	28%	28%
Mean	18%	31%	32%	28%

Table 12. % of localities where the majority of the population did not have access to enough water to meet household needs

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	3 Borders
March	27%	20%	35%	25%
May	32%	23%	41%	29%
September	22%	15%	34%	21%
Mean	27%	19%	37%	25%

SHELTER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS

The rainy season and subsequent flooding have affected shelter and household livelihoods, particularly in Burkina Faso and Niger.

During the September collection round, KIs reported the destruction (partial or total) of a number of shelters in several localities assessed in the Centre-Nord (45%), Est (31%), Nord (45%) and Sahel (55%) regions of Burkina Faso, and in the Tahoua region (49%) of Niger. The reasons put forward by KIs are bad weather (in 77% of localities evaluated in Burkina Faso, and 79% of localities evaluated in Tahoua) and deterioration of housing (in 20% of localities evaluated in Burkina Faso, and 13% of localities evaluated in Tahoua).

According to OCHA's report on the impact of flooding, in September, over 1,500 houses collapsed in the Tahoua and Tillabéri regions in Niger, resulting in the loss of numerous head of livestock and the destruction of almost two thousand hectares of crops²⁷. A similar situation was reported in Burkina Faso, where torrential rains caused material damage, including the collapse of houses and the loss of people's livelihoods²⁸.

Table 13. % of localities where the majority of IDPs were living in a shelter without any occupation agreement

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	3 Borders
March	22%	16%	37%	20%
May	28%	21%	52%	26%
September	11%	21%	48%	16%
Mean	20%	19%	46%	21%

Table 14. % of localities by main problems related to housing conditions for the majority of the population (September)

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	3 Borders
Damaged shelter ²⁹	37%	14%	27%	24%
Insufficient space ³⁰	24%	27%	5%	21%
Inability to cook and/or store food	32%	22%	5%	21%
Unsafe shelter ³¹	30%	16%	4%	18%

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The methodology used for this monitoring is called «area of knowledge». The aim of this methodology is to collect, analyze and share up-to-date information on multi-sectoral humanitarian needs in the communes of interest in the border zone between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, including in hard-to-reach areas. Information is collected via key informants (KIs). These KIs were selected on the basis of their recent (less than one month old) and detailed knowledge of the localities. Information is reported when at least 5% of localities in administrative unit 3 (commune) have been assessed. This overview presents the data collected over the three periods of March, May and September 2023. The results presented below should be considered as indicative.

In Niger, the September data collection was carried out from the regional chief towns of Tillabéri (Tillabéri ville) and Tahoua (Tahoua ville), due to restrictions on access for humanitarian personnel imposed by the national authorities in certain areas of the country, including the regions of Tillabéri and Tahoua.

ENDNOTES

PAGE 1

¹ REACH - Termes de référence. Suivi humanitaire multisectoriel (HSM) dans la zone frontalière entre le Niger, le Mali et le Burkina Faso, Mars 2023.

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² OCHA, Burkina Faso, Mali and Western Niger, Humanitarian Snapshot, October 2023.

³ Harassment, extortion, looting, threats.

⁴ The risk for a household of having to marry off its child by force, without wanting to do so.

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⁵ UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Burkina Faso.

⁶ UNHCR, Mali, Situation of Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Returnees, September 2023.

⁷ UNHCR, Niger, Personnes relevant de la compétence du HCR, septembre 2023.

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⁸ The two options "largely insufficient" and "somewhat insufficient" were aggregated in the analysis.

⁹ Non-displaced: 63% (78% BFA, 59% MLI, 47% NER) ; Déplacés : 59% (75% BFA, 38% MLI, 29% NER).

¹⁰ Non-displaced: 55% (61% BFA, 50% MLI, 60% NER) ; Déplacés : 54% (56% BFA, 51% MLI, 82% NER).

¹¹ Non-displaced: 45% (52% BFA, 38% MLI, 49% NER) ; Déplacés : 55% (62% BFA, 46% MLI, 65% NER).

¹² [Fews Net, Burkina Faso, Une situation nutritionnelle préoccupante dans les zones sous-blocus ou d'accès limité septembre 2023](#) ; [Fews Net, Niger, Les prix élevés des denrées alimentaires limitent l'accès des ménages pauvres aux aliments de base septembre 2023](#).

¹³ [Fews Net, Mali, L'insécurité volatile en cours expose davantage les ménages à l'insécurité alimentaire,](#)

[septembre 2023.](#)

¹⁴ [Fews Net, Burkina Faso, Une situation nutritionnelle préoccupante dans les zones sous-blocus ou d'accès limité septembre 2023](#)

¹⁵ [Fews Net, Mali, L'insécurité volatile en cours expose davantage les ménages à l'insécurité alimentaire, septembre 2023.](#)

¹⁶ [Fews Net, Niger, Les prix élevés des denrées alimentaires limitent l'accès des ménages pauvres aux aliments de base septembre 2023.](#)

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¹⁷ 3B: 52% (32% BFA, 58% MLI, 59% NER).

¹⁸ 3B: 16% (36% BFA, 10% MLI, 8% NER).

¹⁹ 3B: 14% (9% BFA, 17% MLI, 10% NER).

²⁰ In October 2022, the absence of functional markets within walking distance was reported by KIs in 67% of localities assessed in the Ménaka cercle (Mali), and 56% of localities in the Tahoua département (Niger).

²¹ The closure of markets following a decision by the authorities was reported in Ménaka in 65% of localities in March, 60% of localities in May, and 47% of localities in September; and in Tahoua in 18% of localities assessed in March.

²² The chronic absence of a functional market within walking distance was reported in Ménaka in 24% of localities in March, 39% of localities in May, and 29% of localities in September; and in Tahoua in 82% of localities in March, 91% of localities in May, and 93% of localities in September.

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²³ Education Cluster, meeting report, September 28, 2023, consulted on October 13, 2023.

²⁴ Cluster Education - Niger, monthly meeting report of September 19, 2023, consulted on October 13, 2023; Discussions underway between MAHGC and DRENs on information to be forwarded to the flood data validation committee.

²⁵ [Burkina Faso, Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de l'alphabetisation et de la promotion des langues nationales, Rapport statistique de données de l'Éducation en situation d'Urgence du 31 octobre 2023.](#)

²⁶ [UNICEF, Mali, près de 1.500 écoles fermées ou non fonctionnelles à cause de l'insécurité septembre 2023.](#)

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²⁷ [OCHA, Niger, Chiffres-clés sur les inondations, septembre 2023](#) ; [OCHA, West and Central Africa : Weekly regional Humanitarian Snapshot, 27 septembre-4 octobre.](#)

²⁸ [OCHA, Burkina Faso, Aperçu de la situation humanitaire, septembre 2023.](#)

²⁹ Cracked roof/walls.

³⁰ Some people have to sleep outside or on the ground.

³¹ Impossible to lock the house safely.

ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT). For further information, please visit our website: www.reach-initiative.org



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