2021 saw a drastic increase in humanitarian needs in the Central Sahel, reaching **14.7 million people in need of life-saving assistance** early 2022.

In a highly complex and volatile context, violence is one of the key drivers of needs in the region. As the level of violence rises, the impact on people’s lives worsens.

Aid organizations are working across the region to respond to the most urgent needs of those affected. In 2021, thanks to generous donor contributions, the UN and humanitarian partners provided food aid, nutrition, emergency shelter, healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene, education and protection, reaching areas that were previously hard to access. The scaling up of the response, however, is hampered by lack of funding and the crisis is growing faster than the response.

Between 2020 and 2021, despite needs remaining unchanged, resources mobilized to support the response dropped by €200 million. **Only 41% of the funds required by the humanitarian community to respond to urgent needs in the Central Sahel were met. This is the lowest percentage since 2015.**

The humanitarian community calls for a renewed engagement by all contributors to ensure that no one is left behind.

**Crisis in CENTRAL SAHEL is outpacing humanitarian funding**

- **14.7M** people in need of assistance
- **1.6M** people displaced in Burkina Faso
- **65%** increase in people in need in Niger
- **+1.2M** people facing food insecurity in Mali

DONATE NOW
The crisis in Burkina Faso continues to deteriorate rapidly. Early 2022, the country’s displaced population surpassed the historic mark of 1.6 million people, making it the largest caseload in the Central Sahel. Despite this, funds did not match the increasing needs. Only €258 million of the €608 million requested under the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) were received.

Niger faces broad and complex humanitarian needs linked to escalating conflict, socioeconomic violence, and climate disasters. The number of people in need has increased by 65 per cent, from 2.3 million in 2019 to 3.8 million in 2021. Underfunding remains a major constraint for humanitarian operations, with the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) only 42 per cent funded.

In Mali, insecurity has forced 400,000 people to flee their homes. The food situation is particularly worrying and will be dramatic in the coming months. Currently, over 1.2 million people are facing food insecurity. This represents five per cent of the population, twice as much as two years ago. Despite the significant and continuing increase in needs throughout all sectors, the funds mobilized remained equal: too low to finance an adequate response, covering only 38% of the HRP.

WHAT DOES THIS TRANSLATE INTO?

Escalating food insecurity
Failure to respond to food needs has a severe impact on Sahelian lives. Affected households and individuals tend to adapt their feeding practices by reducing the number of meals per day or the amount consumed, exacerbating hunger and triggering physiological dysfunction, health vulnerabilities and malnutrition. Additionally, they adapt their livelihoods to cope with the food shortages, often resulting in an increase in seasonal and permanent migration or displacement, the development of illegal activities, and a reversion to extractive activities, with direct impact on available resources and environmental issues.

Year after year, the failure to respond to food needs in the region contributes directly to the continued deterioration of the food security situation.

Without a substantial scale up of the response, individuals, households and communities risk being locked in a vicious spiral of food insecurity and vulnerability, unable to recover.

Spiking protection needs
Violence has a disastrous effect on the Sahel. Frequent attacks have resulted in the closure of health centers and schools across the region, exposing children, particularly girls, to exploitation, abuse, early and forced marriage, and forced recruitment into armed groups.

Additionally, it means that individuals are unable to obtain life-saving medical services, as well as more routine health care services such as sexual and reproductive health. Inadequate provision of services to meet growing humanitarian needs exacerbates these conditions of violence, denial-of-rights, and coercion. More precisely, the lack of resources for protection-response has a disproportionate effect on gender-based violence response, mine action, education, and child protection. Vulnerable groups, such as women and children, people with disabilities, and displaced communities, are disproportionately affected, leading to negative and harmful coping strategies that have a direct impact on the effectiveness of the response to all other needs, resulting in dangerous ripple effects.

Increasing Gender Based Violence (GBV)
Women and children account for 70 per cent of people displaced by conflict, making them especially vulnerable to human rights violations, including gender-based violence, and often lacking access to GBV services. If we do not act now, thousands of girls will be married too young to compensate for food scarcity and lack of access to livelihoods for vulnerable families, and millions of the most vulnerable women will lose access to gender-based violence and mental health services, increasing their risk of life-threatening violence and exploitative survival practices.

Prioritizing the humanitarian response while ensuring long-term investments focused on need reduction is critical.