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Overview and Background

Located in Sahel region of Burkina Faso, Soum is the largest of four provinces in the region. The province has been affected by rapidly deteriorating security since the end of 2016, due to successive terrorist threats perpetrated by non-state armed actors. The most affected communes are bordering the northern Mali and are in the rural areas, including the districts of Nassoumbou, Diguel, Baraboulé, Koutougou and Tongomayel. These terrorist threats or attacks targeting schools and security posts (gendarme and police) have caused a widespread fear among population, and the closure of over an estimated 500 schools in the region.

Meanwhile, two Malian refugee camps of Goudebou (in Seno province) and Mentao (in Soum province) in the region have not been targeted nor affected by the insecurity. The host communities, on the other hand, are more and more affected by insecurity, particularly in terms of their limited access to social services (education, health, nutrition, protection).

Access to Education: Despite the terrorist attack on 16 December 2016 in Nassoumbou on the military detachment, in which at least 12 soldiers were killed, the situation in Soum appeared to be under control and the second quarter of the school year was underway. However, on 26 January 2017, non-state armed actors threatened teachers in three schools ordering them to teach Koranic education, prohibiting education in French. In Nassoumbou commune, primary schools were targeted by repeated terrorist attacks (Source: Ministry of Education). On 4 March, a teacher along with a civilian were murdered by the same group in Kourfayel, a village close to the Soum, capital city of Djibo.

Situation



45,386 population (8569 children under 5 years and 2179 pregnant women) deprived of health care services in Sahel region. (UNHCR, December 2016)



72,584 children's education (including 33,997 girls) discontinued due to closure of around **500** schools in Soum and Oudalan.

Response Plan



4,432 teachers in Soum province will develop capacity in psycho social services, peace education and education in emergency.



A joint mission to Soum is planned for a rapid needs assessment (Education, Nutrition, Health, WASH and protection)

Initial funding needs: 1,075,000 USD



On 14 March, unidentified individuals burnt a primary school Baraboulé B in Soum, which is a school under a straw hut and had already been closed due to the terrorist threats. At this point it is not clear if this incident is linked to the terrorist group and an investigation is ongoing. Repeated terrorist attacks and threats have created a wide spread fear (and possible trauma) among teachers, children and the population. As a result:

- Many teachers now fear terrorist attacks to their schools along with the deteriorating insecurity and have temporarily displaced to other regions or Ouagadougou. Initially, four schools in Soum had remained closed since the winter vacation due to the insecurity concerns, affecting the education of 154 students including 78 girls. As of this writing, 100% of 374 schools in Soum province are now closed, affecting a total of 54,672 students including 25,953 girls (Ministry of Education).
- The fear has also spread to neighbouring provinces in Sahel region; an estimated 70-75% of schools are closed in Oudalan province, affecting the continuation of education of around 17,912 students, including 8,044 girls.
- Although the exact scale is not known, many children and their families are now displaced to other provinces or other regions due to the insecurity concerns. Special attention should be paid to these children as they need to be identified and receive necessary protection support, particularly psycho-social support services and education.

The impact of the crisis in the remaining two provinces (Seno and Yagha) in the region is yet to be known by Ministry of Education. The following table shows the situation in numbers of classes per schools (public and private) and the number of students and teachers by gender and province. Out of 133,466 registered primary school students in Sahel region (including 63,321 girls), 54,672 (41%) are registered in Soum, and out of 4,432 primary teachers in 1,008 Sahel primary schools (including 1,810 female teachers) and 374 (37%) in Soum.

Province	Schools			Classes			Teachers			Students		
	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private	Total	Males	Females	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Oudalan	184	7	191	627	26	653	531	331	842	13157	10725	23882
Seno	235	6	241	982	35	1017	589	604	1193	18018	16926	34944
Soum	306	68	374	1178	214	1392	970	647	1617	28719	25953	54672
Yagha	201	1	202	658	3	671	552	228	780	10251	9717	19968
Region	926	82	1008	3455	278	3733	2642	1810	4432	70145	63321	133466

Source: Data at the beginning of the 2016/2017 school year, DRENA (Regional Director for National Education)

Access to Health: The terrorist attack on the military detachment on 16 December 2016 resulted in disruption of service provision in the Nassoumbou health center which remained closed for more than a week as of this writing, obliging more than 6,701 people including 1,298 children under 5 years old to walk for over 15 km to get a medical service. Following the terrorist attacks early March 2017, Diguel, Tongomayel and Gasseltepaoua health centers in the province of Soum are closed, depriving 38,685 people of basic health services, including 7,271 children under 5 and 2,179 pregnant women. The situation also affects health centers neighboring those rural districts, as witnessed in Seno province where in Gorgadji (a rural district in Seno province) a health center was closed due to the fact that it located next to a police station (a target by the terrorist group).

Access to Water, Hygiene and Sanitation: Since the resurgence of these attacks, scheduled constructions/rehabilitations of wells or latrines supported by UNICEF in schools, villages or health centres in Sahel region are being jeopardized. In particular, the contractors are already requesting a change of initially identified sites to another, due to security incidents in Soum. Threat still persists in some areas and contractors are especially worried about the construction of wells for schools in Baraboulé and Koutougou and construction of school latrines in Nassoumbou and Baraboulé.

Access to child protection: The movement of populations of certain border villages into the interior of the provinces of Soum and Oudalan and the closure of schools are leading to increased needs for child protection especially for psycho-social services. Some children, especially those of the school of Kourfayel witnessed the murder of their teacher by armed men. Prior to this, the social services already did not cover all the municipalities in Sahel region. With the terrorist threat and population movement, it could further hamper the quality and access to child protection care especially, for those with special needs.

UNICEF's Response Plan

- A joint mission to Soum province for a rapid assessment - week of 20 March 2017
- Monitoring and reporting of the situation of child rights in the affected zones (especially in Education) and advocacy at national and international levels to secure the peace immediately and condemn terrorist threats or attacks to the schools.
- Based on the request from Ministry of Education, UNICEF is preparing a rapid response in education. The support will consist of developing a professional network of psychologists in the region and provide psycho-social supports to teachers based on the individual needs, as well as capacity development of teachers in Sahel region (with focus on those in affected areas) on psycho-social services and education in emergency including safe school and peace building. Since the situation of insecurity in Soum continues to be tense, practical and logistical aspect of "how to" of these supports are being discussed with Ministry of Education and NGO partners which are active in the Sahel region and specialized in these programme areas.
- Promote dialogue between the authorities, religious leaders and local communities to come up with temporary solutions to ensure the safety of teachers, students and schools.

Initial funding needs: to reach 4,432 teachers in Soum with training on psycho-social services and peace building, estimated budget is **1,075,000 USD**.

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