



World Food Programme

WFP Regional Bureau for West Africa

COVID-19 Situation Report #3

5 August 2020



Students line-up to receive their take-home rations. WFP/Guinea Bissau

Highlights

- A number of important assessments were published by WFP and partners recently on the food and nutrition security situation in the world and in the region, including the [study on how conflict has resulted in loss of arable lands and food insecurity in the Liptako Gourma region](#), [early warning analysis of acute food insecurity hotspots](#), and [SOFI Report 2020](#).
- Budget revisions are ongoing in the region to adapt to increasing needs. The total 2020 needs-based plan for the region consequently increased from USD 1.15 billion in June to **USD 1.79 billion in July**, with the six months net funding requirements (August 2020-January 2021) amounting USD 532.9 million or 53 percent of requirements.
- Due to the higher urban nature of the COVID-19 response, it is expected that at least 14 country offices in the region will engage in or increase urban programming including both general distributions and nutrition activities. WFP is also stepping up support to strengthen the Government's social protection systems in the region, including in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal and Niger.
- Critical relief food assistance to COVID-19 affected populations and food insecure populations is ongoing, through in-kind and cash-based transfers (CBTs) modalities. Of WFP's additional requirements for direct food assistance, more than half were in the form of CBTs in early July, linked in part to the increasing needs in urban settings amid COVID-19.

Regional Overview

- The total number of COVID-19 cases in the Regional Bureau Dakar (RBD) region increased exponentially since the first reported cases (first recorded in Nigeria on 27 February). As of [5 August](#), **the region had 2,652 deaths and 160,512 confirmed cases**, with Nigeria and Ghana making up over half of this figure. Despite the rising number of COVID-19 cases, most countries in the region are further easing restriction measures imposed since March, including relaxing of movement restrictions and **opening of air borders** for gradual resumption of commercial flights.

- As the lean season has begun in the region since June 2020, the significant lingering impacts of response measures to COVID-19 risk is **exacerbating existing vulnerabilities**, especially across the Sahel region, in the form of delayed ability (or inability) to source sufficient inputs for the agricultural season, restrictions on movement of labour for agricultural but also for seasonal remittances, lost income for petty trade, food vending and other informal activities.
- Moreover, heavy rainfalls and floods are affecting road access, as well as refugees' and internally displaced persons' (IDPs) hosting areas, especially in the Sahel and in Nigeria. In the latter, heavy rains on 2 August destroyed more than 2,500 shelters in an IDP camp, affecting an estimated 1,880 households.
- The [UNSG's Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and Beyond](#) released on 4 August warns the pandemic has created "the largest disruption of education systems in history", affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in all countries and all continent. In the region, as of [early August](#), the **impact of COVID-19 on the education system** (pre-primary, primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary levels of education as well as tertiary education levels) was localized in most of the countries. In CAR, Chad, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, the impact is reported to be nation-wide, and in Niger, schools at all levels are fully open.
- The destabilizing effect of the pandemic also results in an **increase in civil unrest and the activity of non-state armed groups**, which continue to threaten the safety of the populations and the humanitarian staff, as well as the continuity of humanitarian operations. Since the beginning of July, security incidents were reported in the Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger), Cameroon, CAR, Guinea and Nigeria, including attacks on civilians, security forces, WFP's sites of assistance, camps of IDPs and humanitarian workers; looting of food convoys; and anti-government protests (which turned violent in Mali).
- As a substantial part of the population in the region depends on the agricultural work done during the rainy season to sustain their livelihood, the continuation of attacks at this period could prevent farmers to cultivate their fields, exacerbating economic hardships.

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Further information: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/covid-19-situation-reports>

Monitoring of food security situation

- The [2020 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World \(SOFI\) report](#) has been launched on 13 July, highlighting that 690 million people went hungry in 2019, up by 10 million in 2018 and by nearly 60 million in five years. Africa has the second highest number of people going hungry (250 million) after Asia, is expected to **become home to more than half of the world's chronically hungry on current trends**. The report also forecasts that the economic recession triggered by COVID-19 pandemic could tip as many as 132 million people into chronic hunger by the end of 2020.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and WFP have released an [early warning analysis of acute food insecurity hotspots](#), showing that people in some 25 countries are set to face devastating levels of hunger in coming months due to the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, with the greatest concentration of needs being in Africa. From the RBD region, the **hotspot countries** include CAR, Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger), Cameroon, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.
- The [study on how conflict has resulted in loss of arable lands and food insecurity](#) carried out by WFP and the Liptako Gourma Development Authority highlights that the **impact on agricultural activities and livestock** is immediate, with significant cropland losses, further contributing to deterioration of food security. As a result of COVID-19, by the end of 2020, 12.9 million people are estimated to be food insecure in the three countries, the equivalent of 22 percent of the 57.6 million people expected to be food insecure in RBD region.
- An estimated **15.4 million cases of acute malnutrition** in children aged 6-59 months are expected in 2020 in the region, representing a 20 percent increase from earlier estimates. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WFP issued a [joint press release](#) on 17 July alerting the situation and calling for adequate measures to be put in place.
- Latest seasonal weathering monitoring in the region indicates that much better rains since early July have **relieved the rainfall deficits** experienced since the early stages of the season in West Africa region, with vegetation cover expected to improve.
- To contribute to strengthening data collection to help Governments and partners make informed decisions, WFP has stepped up remote monitoring of prices, markets and food security, to inform responses real-time. **Mobile vulnerability assessment mapping (mVAM) activities** have expanded to 13 countries. In the first seven pilot countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Mali, Niger and Nigeria), the first phase has been completed, while the second phase has started and is expected to last until the end of the year. In the six remaining countries (Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Mauritania, Liberia, and Guinea), the first phase is ongoing.
- Based on the latest [West and Central Africa Market Update for Agricultural and food products](#) prepared jointly with

FAO, the markets in the RBD region were marked by a **relative stability in prices of basic foodstuffs** in June compared to the previous month. Price variations hardly exceeded 5 percent in the region's markets, with the exception of Nigeria where an increase of 15 percent was recorded in some markets. Nonetheless, compared to the same period last year (June 2019) or to the five-year average, price increases of more than 25 percent were recorded in some countries. Various factors such as decline in agricultural production, reduction in cross-border and internal flows, high inflation and persistence of civil insecurity, are reported to be driving food prices up.

Resource Mobilization and Partnerships

- The **Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP)** has been [updated in July 2020](#). The biggest appeal launched by the UN, the GHRP is targeting nearly 250 million people with COVID-19 assistance. For the 11 countries from the RBD region part of the plan (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo), the total adjusted humanitarian requirements (including COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 needs) increased slightly from USD 4.1 billion in May 2020 to **USD 4.3 billion in July 2020**, out of which USD 1.02 billion is for COVID-19 response.
- In parallel to ongoing budget revisions in the region, the total 2020 needs-based plan further increased from USD 1.15 billion in June to **USD 1.79 billion in July**, with the six months net funding requirements (August 2020-January 2021) amounting USD 532.9 million or 53 percent of requirements.¹ Funding deficits are hampering WFP's ability to implement activities at planned scale in the region and in CAR, due to this gap coupled with lack of food-in country, there has been a significant reduction in food rations. In July, the food rations distributed covered only 56 percent of the daily energy requirements.
- In a [joint statement](#) by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and WFP, the two agencies have warned that severe underfunding, conflict and disasters, as well as supply chain challenges, rising food prices and loss of income due to COVID-19 **threaten to leave millions of refugees across Africa without food, around half of which are children**. Urgent support from partners was called upon, including USD 694 million net funding requirements (July-December 2020) for operations supporting refugees in Africa by WFP. In the Sahel region alone, assistance for more than 1.2 million refugees in the region needs to be sustained. Due to funding gaps, in Cameroon, WFP was forced to reduce its assistance to refugees from CAR and Nigeria.²
- COVID-19 related **budget revisions** are still ongoing in a number of countries in the region, with the biggest budgetary increase being for crisis response, followed by resilience building and root causes. It was expected that the crisis response focus area would make up 73 percent of country portfolios compared to 58 percent before the

¹ Status as of 28 July.

² By 50 percent for refugees from CAR (from May), with risk to stop cash assistance

entirely from October. Rations to Nigerian refugees were also cut down to 70 percent from July, while assistance is at stake from September

outset of COVID-19.³ In response to requests received from Government and partners, WFP is also ramping up service provision in support of the overall health response.



Beneficiaries at a distribution point with social distancing measures in place. WFP/Chad

WFP Operations

- With 57.6 million people estimated to be in need of food assistance by the end of 2020, an increase of 135 percent compared to pre-COVID estimates, many operations in the region have **increased their planning for 2020**. Eight country offices expect to at least double planned assistance for 2020 because of COVID-19.
- Moreover, due to the higher urban nature of the COVID-19 response, at least 14 country offices in the region will engage in or increase urban programming including both general distributions and nutrition activities. WFP country offices such as **Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mauritania** and **Sierra Leone** are carrying out vulnerability analyses in urban and peri-urban to reach households at risk of becoming food insecure due to COVID-19 measures.
- WFP is also stepping up support to strengthen the Government's **social protection** systems in the region. At country level, social protection systems are already part of WFP's response in **Mauritania, Mali** and **Niger**, which will implement a EUR 44 million social protection response focused on cash-delivery and systems strengthening in collaboration with UNICEF. In **Burkina Faso** and in **Liberia**, WFP plans to support the Government's social protection response in collaboration with the World Bank.
- Critical **relief food assistance** to COVID-19 affected populations and food insecure populations is ongoing, through in-kind and cash-based transfers (CBTs) modalities. Of WFP's additional requirements for direct food assistance, more than half were in the form of CBTs in early July, linked in part to the urban nature of the COVID-19 response.
- In **CAR, Guinea** and **Sierra Leone**, WFP is providing food assistance to COVID-19 patients, people in quarantine and food insecure people affected by the pandemic. In **Guinea**, this assistance is in line with the national strategy "STOP

COVID-19 in 60 days" launched in June and targeting 3,000 households affected by COVID-19 in Conakry, and WFP is also preparing another emergency food assistance targeting 20,000 households in Conakry. In **Liberia**, WFP continues to support the Government's COVID-19 Household Food Support Programme (COHFSP) started in late May, by distributing 30 days food ration to up to 2.5 million vulnerable and food insecure people and frontline workers. Meanwhile in **The Gambia**, support to the Government's one-time COVID-19 food distribution started in late May continues, targeting 733,000 food insecure people for two months. In **Nigeria**, distribution of food assistance through in-kind and CBTs in urban areas started in July, while the COVID-19 scale up plan in the North-East targeting 1.9 million people is also being planned.

- In parallel to COVID-19 related food assistance, country offices have initiated lean season responses, such as in **Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger**, and **Senegal**. In **Guinea**, the country office launched on 15 July a 16 months long project targeting 100,000 food insecure people (20,000 households) over a three-month period starting mid-August in response to the lean season and socio-economic consequences of COVID-19. In **Guinea Bissau** as well, WFP is preparing for the implementation of social protection cash transfer to approximately 1,500 vulnerable households to counter against the lean season for three months (August-October).
- Resilience activities which were suspended since March-April due to COVID-19 containment measures imposed resumed in numerous between June and July, including in **CAR** and in **Cameroon**, where selected food assistance for assets activities resumed in the Far North region (of Cameroon) and additional projects are planned to resume in August.
- Following the development of the joint [framework for reopening schools](#), RBD is joining initiatives with other Regional Bureaus, and WFP's Centres of Excellence in Brazil and Cote d'Ivoire aimed at promoting documentation of good practices and experiences sharing among country offices in Africa in the context of COVID-19 crisis. From the region, two country offices will be identified to take part in this South-South cooperation pilot for schools reopening.
- WFP has maintained support to learners through the COVID-19 outbreak and school-closure in the majority of the countries in the region though alternative transfer modalities, mainly in the form of dry take-home rations or CBTs. Provision of these alternatives to school meals ended in June in **Chad** and in **Cameroon**, while they continued to be provided in July in **The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger** and **Senegal**.
- Schools throughout the region are expected to reopen mostly in September or in October for the 2020-2021 school year, during which WFP plans to support 2.8 million school children in 15 countries with a total budget of USD 126 million. Country offices may consider supporting more

³ This figures may change, as this was the status as of early July.

children than initially in the programme as a result of the COVID-19 impact. Discussions are ongoing with host Governments and partners to plan for the safe reopening of schools, as well as on the distribution plans. In **Chad**, a reframing of the Scaling Up Resilience Initiative is underway to integrate smallholder agriculture market support (SAMS) activities in the supply of schools and thus, increase to 50 percent local supply for school canteens.

- WFP also continues to support countries to work towards **local food-based solutions** to prevent acute malnutrition in children and women as part of the broader approach to improve complementary feeding practices. WFP is working with all six countries in the Sahel to ensure additional strategies are in place and that rely on local supply of nutritious foods. This approach uses CBT/voucher modalities to prevent wasting and has thus far been introduced in **Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger** and **Senegal**.

Service Provision

- Critical technical support to host Governments and partners in providing essential cargo and passenger transport, as well as procurement services and logistics assets is ongoing in the region, through WFP's air passenger service as part of the GHRP and existing support mechanisms, such as the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD), UN Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) and bilateral service provision.
- Between 29 June and 27 July, as part of free-to-user services, several critical COVID-19 cargo of oxygen concentrators and various other medical equipment departed from the Humanitarian Response hubs and regional hubs in Accra, Liege, Dubai and Guangzhou to all 19 countries in the region, on behalf of numerous humanitarian partners including UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Alliance for International Medical Action (ALIMA), Doctors with Africa CUAMM, International Medical Corps, etc.
- In **CAR**, the COVID-19 call centre set up by the ETC at the request of the Ministry of Health was officially opened in July to provide support and guidance to callers. Plans are underway to install a call centre management system, and the ETC in CAR is also planning to roll out the chatbot solution to facilitate communication between health partners and humanitarian organizations on fact-based and country-specific information.
- In **Guinea Bissau**, 100 oxygen cylinders for which WFP has been organizing the procurement, importation and transportation from Senegal were received and distributed in July to three COVID-19 hospitals. UNICEF has started the procurement process of a second batch of 100 cylinders to maintain the oxygen pipeline.

Inter-Agency Coordination

- WFP continues to collaborate and cooperate closely with UN partners both at regional and country office levels, as part of its response to the crisis in the education, food

security, social protection and nutrition space.

- At regional level, WFP is finalizing with UNICEF a joint position paper on social protection which will target the Sahelian countries, to consolidate and operationalise the two agencies' Global Partnership Agreement. A joint initiative is also under discussion in the Sahel with IFAD, while with FAO, joint market and food security monitoring continues to enable informed decision making.
- With UNICEF, WFP is also promoting remote learning and planning for safe reopening of schools. In **Senegal**, WFP and UNICEF are supporting the Government in developing "catch-up plan" that will help school children recover educational gains lost following COVID-19 declaration.
- With WHO and other partners, support to the Government to provide an integrated COVID-19 response is ongoing. In July, the WFP-UNICEF-WHO joint intervention in **Guinea** targeting people in the most affected regions to help mitigate the immediate socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations was launched at the Ministry of Social Affairs.
- With UNFPA, country offices are working closely on gender issues particularly for adolescent girls, as is the case in **The Gambia**, while support to refugees and internally displaced persons continues to be provided in collaboration with UNHCR.



A volunteer serves beneficiaries at a WFP food distribution site. WFP/Cameroon.

Latest regional situation reports

[WFP Regional Bureau for West Africa COVID-19 Situation Report #1, 28 May 2020](#)

[WFP Regional Bureau for West Africa COVID-19 Situation Report #2, 30 June 2020](#)