I. HIGHLIGHTS/KEY PRIORITIES

- At least 270,000 people have been displaced as a result of conflict in northern Mali since 17 January.
- According to UNHCR, 131,561 Malian refugees have been officially registered in Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Niger. At least 30,000 more are in Algeria according to the Algerian government.
- Limited humanitarian access in northern Mali remains a key concern and significantly complicates information gathering, needs assessments, and response.
- Considerable gaps remain in the funding and response to refugees and host communities.
- The conflict has exacerbated a larger food security and nutrition crisis affecting the entire Sahel region. Across the Sahel, over 15 million people – including 3.5 million Malians – could face severe food security this year, and over 1 million children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition.
- IDPs and refugees are arriving in severely drought-affected areas where food security forecasts are among the worst in the host countries.

II. Situation Overview

Fighting between the Malian army and armed groups erupted on 17 January in northern Mali. The clashes triggered a political crisis in the country and have displaced at least 270,000 people. Affected areas were already facing a food security and malnutrition crisis.

Recent political developments

Following several rounds of fighting since January, armed groups seized control of Tessalit locality and its airstrip on 12 March. On 22 March, a group of military officers staged a coup in Bamako, ostensibly to reassert Government control in the north. Amidst the subsequent confusion, armed groups took control of the northern cities of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu cities in armed campaigns from 30 March to 1 April. One group, the Mouvement national pour la libération de l’Azawad (MNLA) declared the “independence of Azawad” (northern Mali) on 6 April. The international community has unanimously rejected this claim.

On 8 April, coup leaders in Bamako agreed to hand power to constitutional civilian authorities. On 12 April, the President of the National Assembly, Dioncounda Traoré, was sworn in as President ad interim. On 17 April, he appointed Cheick Modibo Diarra to serve as Prime Minister, and the toppled president, Amadou Toumani Touré, formally resigned. The political and security situations have since remained fluid.

Refugees

The first refugees began arriving in Fassala at the Mauritanian border in January. Following demonstrations in Bamako and the neighbouring garrison city of Kati, numerous Tuaregs living in southern Mali also fled. Refugee flows continued to increase, peaking at the end of March after armed groups conquered the three...
main northern cities. As of 20 April, at least 270,000 people had fled their homes as a result of the conflict, including over 130,000 Malian refugees in neighbouring countries.

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<th>Malian refugees in neighbouring countries*</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
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<td>Burkina Faso</td>
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<td>Niger</td>
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<td>Algeria</td>
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<td>Guinea and Togo</td>
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Sources: UNHCR and Government of Algeria (for Algeria only)

**Internally displaced persons (IDPs)**
Estimating IDPs in Mali is difficult due to serious access constraints. On 12 March, WFP estimated over 107,000 IDPs, but this number has likely changed. On 13 April, the National Assembly of Mali cited an estimate of 200,000 IDPs, and WFP is using this figure for planning purposes. Based on reports from bus companies, an earlier WFP-Malian Civil Protection assessment indicated that 19,788 people had travelled from Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and Mopti to Bamako. These results are only a partial indication of displacement, however. WFP and several NGOs (Catholic Relief Service (CRS), Oxfam, CARE and Caritas) are currently assessing the IDPs situation in the Mopti area.

**Food security and nutrition crisis**
Assessments suggest that over 15 million people across the Sahel will be affected by a food and nutrition crisis this year. The insecurity in Mali is likely to exacerbate this crisis. IDPs and refugees are arriving in drought-affected areas where food security forecasts are among the worst in the countries they arrive in. The Sahel crisis is expected to peak in the coming months and run through at least August 2012. Initial estimates project that 3.5 million Malians will be affected by the food security and nutrition crisis, approximately 725,000 of whom are in northern Mali.

**Humanitarian access in northern Mali**
Improving access for assessments and service delivery remains a top priority. Humanitarian presence in northern Mali – a vast area with poor infrastructure and transportation – has been limited also before the current crisis, due to the presence of numerous armed groups. With the takeover of key cities by armed groups, several warehouses were looted, including those of WFP and the ICRC in Gao. ICRC announced the withdrawal of its international staff, but national staff are to remain in place. There is no UN presence in northern Mali, but several international NGOs continue to operate.

In the past week, commercial trucks have delivered humanitarian assistance to Gao and Timbuktu despite insecurity and banditry. People can move in and out, although vehicles are subject to search. On 19 April, the Malian Red Cross sent a small convoy (5 tons) of medical and food aid to Timbuktu, accompanied by the President of the Timbuktu regional assembly. Another small convoy organized by Gao residents displaced to Bamako was expected to leave this week carrying food and non-food aid.

The National Assembly of Mali adopted a resolution on 13 April requesting urgent access and called for “a large programme of humanitarian assistance.” Some armed groups have indicated a willingness to negotiate humanitarian access with the Malian Government. More information – including recommendations on how to improve access – are expected from a UNDSS, WFP, and OCHA security and access assessment mission to the Mopti and Segou regions, which started on 17 April.

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1 UNHCR has developed a specific Webportal on the Mali crisis giving overall as well as by country figures and information on refugees, needs and response. Figures include table showing distributed relief items as well as a distribution coverage graph showing item distributed, stocked, pipelined and the uncovered needs: [http://data.unhcr.org/MaliSituation/regional.php](http://data.unhcr.org/MaliSituation/regional.php)
III. Humanitarian Needs and Response

In addition to Food Security and Emergency Telecommunication, the following clusters have been activated in Mali.

**PROTECTION**
- Although difficult to verify due to access constraints, allegations of violations of human rights in the north have been reported, including rapes of women.
- Voluntary or forced enrolment of 54 children in armed groups was reported to Save the Children and partners in the Gao and Bourem circles (‘circles’ are administrative divisions). Following allegations of use of child soldiers by various actors to the conflict, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in armed conflict expressed concern and deplored that volatile security situation and limited access prevented UN to verify the alleged cases.
- About 50 families of Malian military men are allegedly stranded without assistance in the Algerian town of Borj, 60 km from the border with Mali.
- According to official sources in Bamako, two accidents of grenades exploding after being touched by children have been reported in Timbuktu over the past 10 days. Seriously wounded children were transferred to Timbuktu hospital. It is expected that additional unexploded ordnances (UXO) will pose a threat to civilians and children in particular in some parts of Timbuktu.
- HCR has consolidated information gathered by Save the Children and partners in Gao. It focuses on education and protection needs of people in the Gao and Bourem circles.
- The Protection Cluster has drafted a protection strategy and has circulated it to members.
- ICRC organized the transfer of wounded or sick persons to health centers or doctors, including the evacuation of a pregnant woman from Kidal to Niger.

**NUTRITION**
- The Nutrition Cluster ‘strategic advisory’ sub-group met with WFP and key partners on 13 April to identify priority nutrition response districts.
- Out of 60 health districts in Mali, 8 are in rank 1 (highest priority): 5 in Timbuktu, 2 in Gao and 1 in Koulikoro regions.

**HEALTH**
- The Health Cluster confirmed on 12 April that over three quarter of medical structures in the three northern regions are no longer operational. This is based on the results of a compilation by public health directors of northern regions of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu (in exile in Bamako).
- The Gao hospital was “completely looted” (ICRC). ICRC provided medical equipment to the Gao hospital on 12 April. It also provided fuel for the Hospital generator to produce electricity and potable water.
- Médecins Sans Frontière (MSF) mobile clinics have not yet resumed in Timbuktu. A small team is present in Timbuktu hospital, as well as the NGO ALIMA staff.
- Medical activities resumed in the main health center in Niafunké (Timbuktu region) after the arrival of a team of rescuers and a nurse from the Malian Red Cross (CRM)
- Médecins du Monde (MDM) remains present in Menaka and the Gao regions. MDM announced it would re-open a Community Health Center in Gao on 19 April. MDM and MSF plan a combined immunization campaign (whooping cough – measles - polio) in the Kidal region.

**LOGISTICS**
- The Logistics Cluster has been activated.
- UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) is ready to start its flights in Mali and the schedule has been shared by OCHA with all partners. The UNHAS plane should connect Niamey, Mopti, Bamako, Kayes and later Nouakchott. The first UNHAS Mali flight took place Thursday 19 April to Bamako and Kayes, and is expected to fly to Mopti this week.

**WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE**
- Due to the lack of electricity, the production of potable water in Gao may cease soon, leaving tens of thousands of inhabitants without potable water. In response to this, the ICRC provided 20,000 liters of fuel for the power plant on 8 April and plans to deliver 5,000 liters per day for a month as well as provide chlorine supplies.
- The Mali WASH Cluster has been activated and the first WASH Cluster meeting is scheduled to take place this week.
II. Response to refugee needs in neighbouring countries

Burkina Faso:

- As of 17 April, there were 46,354 refugees from Mali in Burkina Faso, a number that has more than doubled since 19 March. Most of the refugees were installed in camp sites in the provinces of Oudalan (34,026 refugees, five sites in Deou, Dibissi, Fereiro, Gandafabou and Gountoure Gnegne) and Soum (9,573 refugees, three sites: Damba, Djibo, Mentao). The other registered refugees were in the Kadiogo (1,425), Houet (995), Kossi (98) and Sourou (237) regions. The new planning figure of UNHCR is approximately 60,000 refugees by the end of April, but, in a worst case scenario, the numbers could be much higher. The current camps are already too small. The CONAREF (Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés) is currently recruiting staff for camp management.
- Most of the refugees have arrived in the Sahel region of Burkina Faso, where host communities are already highly vulnerable due to the food deficit. The refugee influx is putting additional pressure on very limited food, water and sanitation resources as well as on the weak capacities of basic social services. A majority of refugees are arriving with their livestock, further increasing the burden on host communities.
- Since January 2012, WFP has distributed 3,403 MT of food to beneficiaries. In March, WFP carried out a general food distribution to over 21,500 refugees and 6,100 host families. WFP plans to support up to 25,000 refugees for three months. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is currently concluding the distribution of 224 MT of food (rice, mil, vegetal oil and sugar) for 19,500 refugees in the five Oudalan refugee site.
- Response to the needs of refugee and host communities needs strengthening, and partners have limited capacity.
- The risk of water-borne diseases such as cholera epidemic, dysentery and poliomyelitis and the risk of outbreak of some infectious diseases such as meningitis and measles are very high among children in the refugee sites, due to the poor living and hygienic conditions (water shortage, lack of latrines, shelters, and food).
- The Government conducted immunization campaigns against meningitis in the refugee camps, as part of the response to the meningitis outbreak affecting several parts of the country. Immunization campaigns against measles and poliomyelitis in the refugee camps have also taken place.
- Mobile teams have been set-up in the refugee camps of Oudalan to manage health issues.
- In Oudalan and Soum, prevention activities (hygiene, good practices in health, limited distribution of long lasting impregnated nets) were conducted and drugs were provided to treat several common diseases.

Mauritania:

- The bulk of the refugees in Mauritania arrived in Fassala, where the first border crossings were signaled during the last week of January. UNHCR and the Government agreed to open a refugee camp in Mbera, around 50 Kilometers from the border, near Bassikounou. As of 18 March the transfer of all refugees to Mbera had been completed. Newly arrived refugees are immediately transferred to Mbera. Main needs and responses are related to the Mbera camp. The refugees are arriving in local communities deeply affected by the drought and food security and nutrition crisis.
- As of 17 April, the number of refugees officially registered by UNHCR was 56,167 in Mauritania. There is also an undetermined number of refugees who entered Mauritania through other entry points (including the Nouakchott airport) or who went through Fassala but moved to relatives or friends without registering. As of 20 March their number in Nouakchott alone was estimated at 1,000-1,500. Refugee arrivals continue, with an increase in daily arrivals in April. Up to 1,000 daily arrivals have been registered since the beginning of April, compared to an average of 200-500 per day in the second half of March.
- Many of the refugees are nomadic pastoralists who are not used to sedentarization. Some of them have brought livestock, which must be fed and watered.
- The Mbera Camp is under development, designed to accommodate up to 70,000 people. Out of the 450 hectares provided by the Government of Mauritania (GoM), 305 hectares have been developed so far. More than 6,000 family tents have been installed and a reception center and a distribution center have been established. The camp is managed by Lutheran World Federation (LWF) under a MoU signed with UNHCR. The NGO InterSOS is in charge of WASH and the Haut-Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire (CSA, national structure) ensures food distributions.
- Due to constant new arrivals, the access to potable water is far under minimal standards (at about 9 liters per day per person) despite progress in provision (520 cubic meters daily as of 15 April, as compared to 140 cubic meter per day in Mid-March). There is a necessity to provide at least 15 liters of potable water per person per day (825 cubic meter for 55,000 refugees to meet standards), and one latrine for 20
persons (2,750 for 55,000 persons). The number of latrines remains extremely low due to logistic constraints and lack of funding.

- In charge of WASH activities under MoU with UNHCR, SI provided 520 cubic meters of water daily as of 15 April (compared to 140 cubic meter per day in mid-March). Water storage, distribution points, and latrines were established in the camp and 192 taps are now being installed. Hygiene promotion activities are being organized by UNICEF, UNHCR, SI, the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and the Malian Red Cross (CRM).
- WFP has a total of 357 metric tons of food currently stocked in Bassikounou for its refugee operation and will cover the needs of 55,000 beneficiaries for a period of 4 weeks. Continued reception of locally procured cereals (700 mt of rice) is underway and will cover 2 months of food needs.
- WFP has warned that by 15 May 2012 there will be a 100% pipeline break for cereal and non-cereal commodities.

**Niger:**

- According to UNHCR, as of 17 April, there were 26,650 refugees from Mali in Niger, as well as 2,390 people who have settled in four “Départements” (administrative divisions): Ayorou (4,009), Ouallam (3,740), Abala (9,631) and Tillia (11,660). UNCHR and the Government are trying to reinstall them in a camp in Abala. As of 17 April, the Abala camp hosted 5,918 persons. Refugees were initially reluctant to move to the camp from their settlement and leave their current settlement, which is closer to the border.
- As in Burkina Faso and Mauritania, refugees coming to Niger are settling in areas already vulnerable to the food security and nutrition crisis.
- The humanitarian community, especially UNHCR and its various national and international partners, is supporting the government’s efforts to provide required assistance to refugees, returnees and local communities in all sectors.

**IV. Coordination**

A Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) has been established in Mali. Seven humanitarian clusters have been activated, including Food Security (WFP), Nutrition (UNICEF), Health (WHO), Protection (UNHCR), WASH (UNICEF), Logistics (WFP) and Telecommunications (WFP). OCHA will be opening a Country Office in Mali (based in Bamako) in support of the Resident Coordinator. There is also an active NGO consortium called ‘Forum des ONG internationales au Mali’ (FONGIM).

HCTs have also been established in Burkina Faso and Mauritania. The Logistics Cluster was just activated in Mauritania. There are also several sectoral working groups coordinating humanitarian assistance in Mauritania and Burkina Faso.

An HCT was already operational in Niger. OCHA has established a temporary field presence in Tillaberi and Ouallam to help address new coordination needs.

A Regional Humanitarian Coordinator has been appointed to oversee the humanitarian response to the crisis in the Sahel while recognizing UNHCR’s role as the coordinator of the refugee response.

**V. Funding**

An appeal process for Mali will be initiated shortly. National appeals are currently being prepared in Burkina Faso and Mauritania. They will include components for the refugees and host communities.

UNHCR launched an appeal on 23 February 2012 to cover the needs generated by the refugee crisis. The total appeal was US$35,818,886, including $25,267,458 for its West Africa office covering Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and the Regional Office in Senegal, and $10,551,238 for the UNHCR activities in Mauritania. As of 17 April, UNHCR appeal had received $12,662,257 million, from the CERF, Denmark, USA and private donors. The outstanding needs amount to $22,936,529 million. The appeal is currently being revised upwards based on new contingency figures and the additional displacements.

The Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) has allocated $1 million to WFP for UNHAS flights in Mali, $4 million for refugees and host communities in Burkina Faso, $5.5 million for refugees and host communities in Mauritania and $1.3 million for Malian refugees and Nigerien returnees from Mali in Niger with more projects...
under review. A CERF allocation for internally displaced people in Mali is also being prepared. Since November 2011, CERF has allocated $83.5 million for the Sahel region.

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