

18 million people in the Sahel face severe hunger over the next three months

UN releases an additional US\$30 million to urgently ramp up humanitarian response in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger

NEW YORK/GENEVA, 20 May 2022 – Up to 18 million people in Africa’s Sahel region will face severe food insecurity over the next three months, the highest number since 2014, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) warned today.

In the Sahel, 7.7 million children under age 5 are expected to suffer from malnutrition, of whom 1.8 million are severely malnourished. If aid operations are not scaled up, this number could reach 2.4 million by the year’s end.

“Entire families in the Sahel are on the brink of starvation,” said Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. “A combination of violence, insecurity, deep poverty and record-high food prices is exacerbating malnutrition and driving millions to the fringes of survival. The recent spike in food prices driven by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine is threatening to turn a food security crisis into a humanitarian disaster. If we don’t act now, people will perish.”

The situation has reached alarming levels in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger, where almost 1.7 million people will experience emergency levels of food insecurity during the lean season between June and August. The emergency level – technically referred to as IPC phase 4 – describes a situation where households experience “large gaps” in food consumption and high levels of acute malnutrition and associated deaths, and where families are forced to sell, for example, their farm tools and other assets they need to sustain their lives and livelihoods.

To help meet people’s most urgent food security and nutrition needs, OCHA has released \$30 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for the four countries, including \$6 million for Burkina Faso and \$8 million each for Chad, Mali and Niger. CERF is a mechanism through which donors pool their contributions in advance, allowing humanitarian agencies to provide initial, life-saving assistance wherever crises strike while they await additional funding.

This latest contribution brings to almost \$95 million the funding amount channelled through CERF to the Sahel since the beginning of the year, including recent allocations for Mauritania (\$4 million) and Nigeria (\$15 million).

“There is no time to lose,” said Griffiths. “Lives are at stake. This injection of cash will help agencies on the ground scale up the emergency response to help avoid a catastrophe. It is no substitute, however, for the more substantial donor contributions we need to maintain our response and help build resilient communities.”

Earlier this year, the humanitarian community launched six humanitarian appeals in the Sahel for a total of \$3.8 billion to provide aid throughout the region for 2022. However, halfway through the year, the appeals are less than 12 per cent funded.

Note to editors

For technical definitions of the different levels of food insecurity visit <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ch>

Photos are available [here](#)

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