West Africa and the Sahel

2024 GLOBAL REPORT ON FOOD CRISES
JOINT ANALYSIS FOR BETTER DECISIONS

Escalating conflicts mostly in Sahelian countries together with economic shocks sustained high levels of acute food insecurity in 2023.

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Chad, Liberia and Senegal experienced worsening acute food insecurity since 2022, while other countries, such as Mauritania and Guinea, saw significant improvements, thanks to favourable agricultural outputs and the impacts of humanitarian assistance.

. . . .

Populations in severely conflict-affected areas of Burkina Faso and Mali faced Catastrophe (CH Phase 5).

. . . .

The region experienced a major displacement crisis driven by worsening conflicts, with hundreds of thousands of refugees arriving in eastern Chad from the Sudan.

. . . .

The region is facing a worrying child and maternal nutrition situation, fuelled by food insecurity, limited access to basic services and poor nutritional practices.

West Africa and the Sahel

Escalating conflicts in West Africa and the Sahel and neighbouring the Sudan have sustained high levels of acute food insecurity in 2023. Weather extremes also remained significant drivers of food crises in many countries.

High levels of displacement and acute malnutrition heighten the complexity of the food crises. In some countries, favourable agricultural outputs led to improvements, tempering the negative effects of sustained inflation, market disruptions and livelihood losses.

44.3M 👨‍👩‍👧‍👦

people or 11% of the analysed population faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2023 in 14 countries.
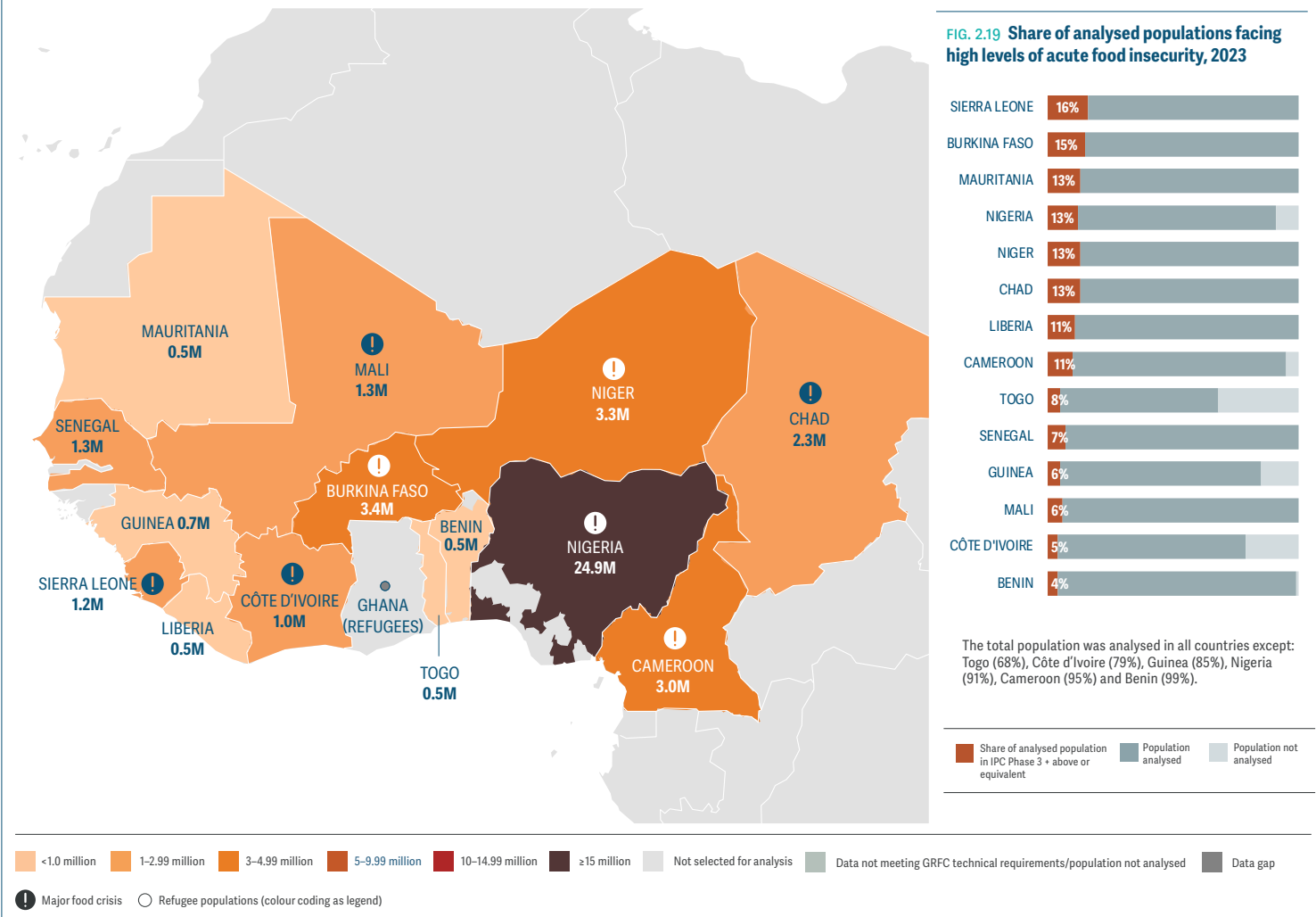
9.7M 🏃‍➡️

forcibly displaced people in 13 food-crisis countries in 2023 – consisting of 7.5 million IDPs and 2.2 million refugees and asylum-seekers.

14.0M 👩‍👧‍👦

acutely malnourished children in 14 food-crisis countries with 3.9 million of them suffering the most severe form of wasting.

Benin | Burkina Faso | Cameroon | Chad | Côte d'Ivoire | Guinea | Liberia | Mali | Mauritania | Niger | Nigeria | Senegal | Sierra Leone | Togo

MAP 2.6 **Number of people and share of analysed populations facing high levels of acute food insecurity in 14 countries in 2023**

FIG. 2.19 **Share of analysed populations facing high levels of acute food insecurity, 2023**

Country	Share
SIERRA LEONE	16%
BURKINA FASO	15%
MAURITANIA	13%
NIGERIA	13%
NIGER	13%
CHAD	13%
LIBERIA	11%
CAMEROON	11%
TOGO	8%
SENEGAL	7%
GUINEA	6%
MALI	6%
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	5%
BENIN	4%

The total population was analysed in all countries except: Togo (68%), Côte d'Ivoire (79%), Guinea (85%), Nigeria (91%), Cameroon (95%) and Benin (99%).

■ Share of analysed population in IPC Phase 3 + above or equivalent
■ Population analysed
■ Population not analysed

Map legend:
■ <1.0 million   ■ 1–2.99 million   ■ 3–4.99 million   ■ 5–9.99 million   ■ 10–14.99 million   ■ ≥15 million   ■ Not selected for analysis   ■ Data not meeting GRFC technical requirements/population not analysed   ■ Data gap
⊗ Major food crisis   ○ Refugee populations (colour coding as legend)

Source: Cadre Harmonisé, 2023.

The discrepancy between the number of people facing acute food insecurity in West Africa and the Sahel, as reported by CILSS in March 2023 for June–August 2023, and the GRFC estimates arises because not all countries with Cadre Harmonisé (CH) data were classified as facing food crises. This includes Cabo Verde, Ghana, Guinea Bissau and the Gambia. Additionally, Benin and Cameroon had their peak estimates in March–June 2023, whereas the peak for the other 12 countries was during June–August 2023.

How have the food crises in this region changed since 2022?

Escalating conflict/insecurity, mostly in Sahelian countries, coupled with persisting economic shocks that have affected countries across the region, were the primary drivers sustaining high levels of acute food insecurity.

The overall share of population facing high levels of acute food insecurity decreased slightly since 2022 when it was the highest in CH history, at 12.5 percent of the population analysed.

Expanded analysis coverage largely explain the increases in the number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity since 2022 in two countries: in Chad, coverage expanded from 94 percent to 100 percent of the population, while in Nigeria it increased from 72 percent to 91 percent. Worsening insecurity conditions and economic shocks also contributed to increases in Chad, Liberia and Senegal.

Conversely, Mauritania and Guinea saw over 40 percent reductions in the number of highly acutely food-insecure people, followed by Mali, Sierra Leone, the Niger and Cameroon, mostly due to overall favourable crop and pastoral production. Burkina Faso and Togo saw marginal year-on-year improvements but maintained high levels of acute food insecurity. Year-on-year comparisons were not feasible in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire, as neither country was included in the GRFC 2023, as well as in Chad due to an increase in the population analysed with the notable inclusion of the capital city in the analysis in July 2023.

Nine countries were classified as major food crises, with Nigeria having by far the largest population facing high acute food insecurity, followed by Burkina Faso, the Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Senegal, Mali, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, each surpassing 1 million people in these phases.

FIG. 2.20 **Share of analysed populations by phase of acute food insecurity, 2023 peak**
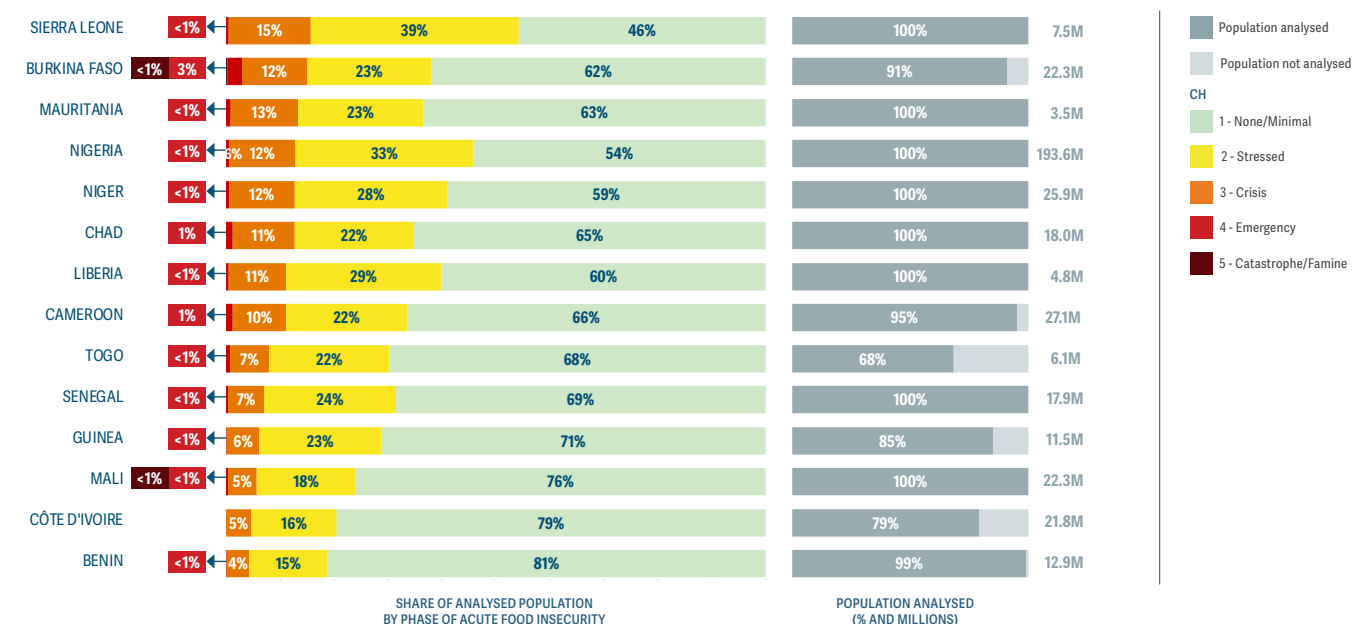
Source: Cadre Harmonisé, 2023.

Severity of acute food insecurity

All 14 food crises in the region had CH analyses with data disaggregated by phase of acute food insecurity.

45 200 people in Catastrophe (CH Phase 5) across two countries

Around 42 700 of them were in the Sahel and Boucle du Mouhoun regions in Burkina Faso between June and August 2023, where worsening conflict and insecurity severely impeded the functioning of markets and prevented populations from adequately accessing basic foods, with some areas under security blockade.

This number of people in Catastrophe (CH Phase 5) represented the highest on record for the CH in Burkina Faso, nearly doubling from 22 500 people during March–May 2023.

The remaining 2 500 people in Catastrophe (CH Phase 5) were in the Ménaka region in Mali during June–August 2023, with conflict and high population displacement at the root of these conditions. This represents the first time in CH history that people have faced this most severe form of acute food insecurity in Mali.

Compared with 2022, this situation marks an improvement in Nigeria, from 3 000 people estimated in this phase in October–December 2022 to none in 2023.

### 2.7 million people in Emergency (CH Phase 4) across 13 countries

Out of the 14 countries with disaggregated data, all had populations in CH Phase 4 except Côte d'Ivoire. The severity of acute food insecurity was higher among Sahelian countries such as Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Mali, reflecting the effects of protracted conflict/insecurity. Nigeria had the largest number of people in CH Phase 4, mostly in northern states, while Burkina Faso had the highest share of people in this phase at nearly 3 percent.

Cameroon, Chad, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo experienced increases in the number of people in CH Phase 4 since 2022, indicating more severe conditions. Conversely, Guinea, Mauritania and the Niger saw significant reductions, suggesting improvements in food access and availability, particularly in remote conflict-affected areas.

In Burkina Faso and Mali, a reduction in the population in CH Phase 4 occurred in tandem with increases in the population in Catastrophe (CH Phase 5) – indicating a deterioration in severity for populations in areas severely affected by conflicts.

FIG. 2.21 **Numbers of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity, 2016–2023**
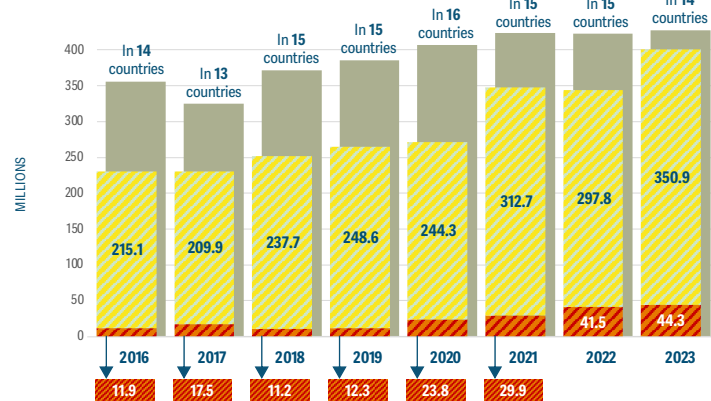
Source: Cadre Harmonisé.

■ 1+2 - None/Minimal and Stressed   ▨ Phase 3+ - Crisis or worse   ■ Total population

41.5 million people in Crisis (CH Phase 3) across all 14 countries

In most conflict-affected countries with high numbers of displaced people – Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and the Niger – 10–12 percent of the analysed population were in Crisis (CH Phase 3), while in Mali the prevalence of people in this phase stood at 5 percent. Among countries mostly affected by economic shocks, Sierra Leone had the highest prevalence (15 percent) followed by Mauritania and Liberia. Since 2022, the share of analysed population in Crisis (CH Phase 3) slightly increased from 10 to 11 percent.

109.4 million people in Stressed (CH Phase 2) across all 14 countries

Compared with 2022, the number of people in Stressed (CH Phase 2) significantly increased in the region. This reflected worsening conditions as the increasing share of population in this phase (up from 26 percent to 29 percent) corresponded to a decrease in the share of population in Minimal (CH Phase 1), from 62 percent to 59 percent.

Acute food insecurity since 2016

The number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity in the region has increased almost every year since 2016, except for 2018.

Between 2016 and 2023, it almost quadrupled from around 11.6 million to 44.3 million. The prevalence of acute food insecurity grew from 5 percent in 2016, peaked at 12.5 percent in 2022, and remained at 11 percent in 2023.

The overall increase in the absolute numbers partly reflects an expansion of the coverage of CH analyses. The population analysed in the region saw a 30 percent increase from 2016 to 2022, with Nigeria contributing significantly to this rise since 2021.

The population analysed in Nigeria increased from 49 percent in 2020 to 91 percent in 2023, expanding from 16 states in 2020, to 21 states in 2021 and reaching 26 states in 2023, in addition to the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Out of the 14 countries selected in the GRFC 2024, 11 are protracted food crises, having been consistently identified as food crises since 2016, and four are protracted major food crises: Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria (in 2017, 2018 and 2019, they were included as part of the Lake Chad Basin regional crisis). Other countries in the region move in and out of food crisis as they face varying shocks.

Outlook for 2024

Persistent conflicts, with further associated displacement movements, and lingering economic shocks are expected to maintain high levels of acute food insecurity in 2024.

This situation is likely to be exacerbated by localized climate shocks during the 2023 agricultural season in certain countries, despite average seasonal rainfall leading to overall favourable agricultural and pastoral conditions (PREGEC, November 2023).

All the selected 14 countries except Liberia have projections for the period June–August 2024 from the CH analysis cycle of November 2023.[1] At the regional level, the number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity is projected at 44.4 million in the 13 countries with CH data in both 2023 and 2024, which represents an additional 670 000 people compared with 2023.

This increase is largely attributable to increased analysis coverage. The population analysed increased by 18 million people in 12 out of the 13 countries with data for 2023 (mostly in Nigeria, Guinea and Mauritania). This includes about 2 million people in Emergency, a significant decline compared with 2.7 million in 2023.

As of the January cut-off date for data inclusion, no populations were projected to face Catastrophe (CH Phase 5). This implied a decline in severity based on increased humanitarian assistance and assumptions of slightly improved security conditions in some heavily conflict-affected areas for the projected period. However, the CH analyses of March 2024 updated several projections for the June–August 2024 lean season and estimated 2 600 people would be in Catastrophe (CH Phase 5) in Mali (CH, March 2024).

At the country level, the share of population facing high levels of acute food insecurity was projected to increase in Chad (4 percentage points), Sierra Leone (3 percentage points) and to a lesser extent Mali (0.3 percentage points). For Chad, this reflected ongoing displacement from the Sudan, conflicts in western border areas and reduced cereal production. In Sierra Leone, this mostly reflected rampant inflation.

The other ten countries were projected to experience decreases in the number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity, mostly based on improved food supplies from favourable 2023 season outputs and subdued inflation. The prevalence in Nigeria is projected to marginally decline from 12.8 percent to 12.6 percent of the analysed population. However, the number of people projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity is expected to increase.

## Drivers of the food crises, 2023–2024

Conflict/insecurity were the primary driver in six countries where a total of 38 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity

Conflict and civil insecurity, identified as the primary drivers of acute food insecurity, significantly impacted six countries, affecting 38 million people. In regions with long-standing issues, such as the Liptako–Gourma area, the Lake Chad Basin and parts of Cameroon, these conditions persisted and even intensified in 2023.

The resulting insecurity led to widespread internal and cross-border displacements, disrupting traditional agricultural practices, pastoral transhumance, and the functioning of markets

1 Since the cut-off date for data inclusion in the GRFC 2024 was 7 January 2024, this analysis did not take into account the CH estimates released in March 2024. The updated projections from the March 2024 CH analyses will be included in the forthcoming FSIN CILSS report to be published in June 2024.
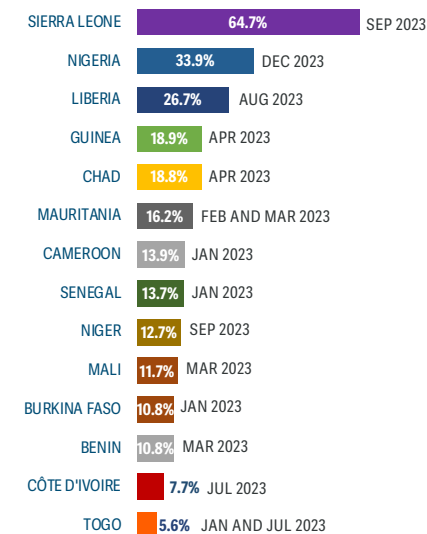
FIG. 2.22 **Very high food inflation throughout 2023 in several coastal countries of the region**
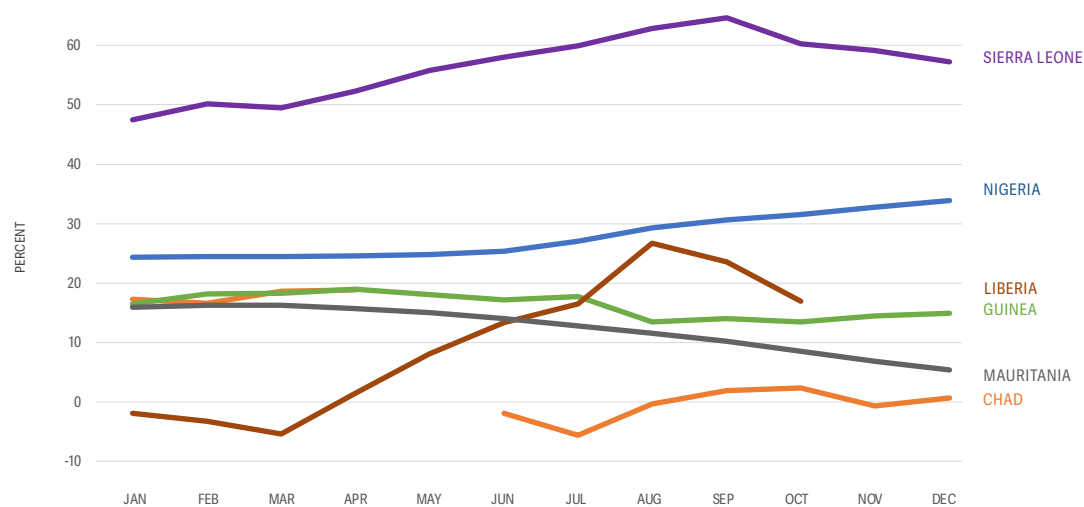
This graph only includes countries where food inflation peaked at over 15 percent in 2023.
Source: Trading Economics, 2024.

FIG. 2.23 **Highest annual food inflation rate by country, 2023**

Country	Rate	Month
SIERRA LEONE	64.7%	SEP 2023
NIGERIA	33.9%	DEC 2023
LIBERIA	26.7%	AUG 2023
GUINEA	18.9%	APR 2023
CHAD	18.8%	APR 2023
MAURITANIA	16.2%	FEB AND MAR 2023
CAMEROON	13.9%	JAN 2023
SENEGAL	13.7%	JAN 2023
NIGER	12.7%	SEP 2023
MALI	11.7%	MAR 2023
BURKINA FASO	10.8%	JAN 2023
BENIN	10.8%	MAR 2023
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	7.7%	JUL 2023
TOGO	5.6%	JAN AND JUL 2023

Source: Trading Economics, 2024.

and trade. The countries most affected included Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria, encompassing 26 states and the FCT.

As 2023 progressed, the number of violent incidents generally increased in these countries, with Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Mali experiencing a significant increase in instability, as reported by ACLED in November 2023. Escalating insecurity was a key factor in driving populations in Burkina Faso and Mali towards Catastrophe (CH Phase 5). Communities in these areas faced extreme challenges in accessing markets, maintaining their livelihoods, and receiving humanitarian aid.

Furthermore, the insecurity crisis in the Central Sahel continued to spread to northern regions of coastal countries such as Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo. Previously considered a risk, this expansion had an increasingly adverse effect on food security due to cross-border population movements and the deterioration of local economic activities.

In Chad, the continuous influx of refugees and returnees fleeing the Sudan compounded acute food insecurity challenges in the eastern border regions, with the arrival of 0.7 million people by the end of 2023. Meanwhile, ongoing conflict and insecurity in western Cameroon and northern Nigeria persistently disrupted market activities and livelihoods, exacerbating the food security situation.

The situation led to a significant increase in regional displacement, with 9.7 million people displaced by mid-2023. This figure included 7.5 million IDPs and 2.2 million refugees and asylum-seekers (UNHCR, December 2023; GRFC Displacement TWG, 2024). The extensive displacement, coupled with the severe disruption of agricultural and pastoral activities and trade, underlined the critical and interconnected nature of the food security and displacement crises in these regions.

Economic shocks were the primary driver in eight countries where 6.2 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity.

Unsustainable debt and slow growth, amid uncertainty due to rising geopolitical tensions and the lingering effects of COVID-19, contributed to currency depreciation, high inflation, reduced fiscal capacity to provide assistance as well as low income-generating opportunities for households. Economic and political sanctions in certain countries of the region, spurred by coups d'état, contributed to market disruptions, resulting in shortages of goods, adding inflationary pressure to food prices and the cost of humanitarian assistance as well as restricting mobility of people and pastoral transhumance (PREGEC, November 2023).

Coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea were the most affected by economic shocks, but conflict-

affected countries were also impacted. Inflation was persistently high in several countries in the region, notably in Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Guinea, underpinned by significant depreciation of national currencies against the US dollar, elevated prices of fertilizers and a high dependency on imports of essential goods. The unification of the exchange rates and the removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria in mid-June further drove inflation beyond its borders, as the country is a key supplier of essential commodities in the region, including fuel and food (Trading Economics, 2024).

Weather extremes were not the primary driver in any country but still impacted food security in certain areas.

Although weather conditions were favourable in most parts of the region, localized erratic rains, floods and cumulative rainfall deficits affected crops in certain countries, notably in Chad, the Niger and Nigeria. These weather extremes also

affected pastoral resource availability, resulting in an early start to the pastoral lean season. Floods impacted several countries of the region, including Chad, Nigeria and Mali. In Nigeria, the largest affected area was registered peaking at nearly 1.5 million hectares of land, including over 400 000 hectares of croplands (FAO, November 2023). Elsewhere in the region, weather conditions were conducive for agricultural production, boosting food access and availability.

Structural vulnerabilities underlie the region's food insecurity crises

Structural inequalities and vulnerabilities in West Africa have been exacerbated by multiple crises in recent years.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and the war in Ukraine have led to a reversal of years of growth and development progress, including in key areas such as poverty eradication, nutrition, health, education and gender equality.

As these countries try to get back on track, 11 out of the 14 West African countries selected for inclusion in the GRFC (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo) are currently considered Least Developed Countries by the United Nations (UN, January 2024).

Many countries are resource-rich and export commodities such as oil (Nigeria), cocoa (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana) and cotton (Benin, Burkina Faso).

The agriculture and food sector remains central to most countries' economies (WB, January 2024), with agriculture providing between 22 and 73 percent of employment in each country in 2021. In total, around 67 million people were employed in agriculture, fishing and forestry across the 14 countries (FAO, 2023).

In 2023, growth was uneven, with countries in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU – Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Benin, Togo, Mali and the Niger) set to grow

TABLE 2.3 Structural vulnerabilities indicators

	Cereal import dependency weighted by caloric relevance (%)	Share of agricultural, forestry and fishery employment (%)	Crop growing period affected by drought condition (%)	Rangeland growing period affected by drought condition (%)	INFORM Risk Index (0–10)	HDI global ranking (1–192)
BURKINA FASO	6.4	15.8	15.8	17.1	7	184th
CAMEROON	31.4	9.6	9.6	4.9	6.6	151st
CHAD	3.8	14.8	14.8	21.4	7.8	190th
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	45.0	10.2	10.2	10.0	4.6	159th
GHANA	36.2	12.3	12.3	12.0	3.5	133rd
GUINEA	25.5	5.7	5.7	5.1	4.5	182nd
LIBERIA	60.7	10.3	10.3	4.1	4.5	178th
MALI	4.3	10.5	10.5	15.0	6.8	186th
MAURITANIA	58.6	14.2	14.2	20.1	4.3	158th
NIGER	13.7	18.5	18.5	15.8	6.6	189th
NIGERIA	17.6	15.6	15.6	18.9	6.6	163rd
SENEGAL	43.3	N/A	N/A	7.1	4.2	170th
SIERRA LEONE	N/A	19.1	19.1	21.5	4.1	181st
TOGO	21.2	11.9	11.9	N/A	4.3	162nd

Source: FAO (Cereal import dependency weighted by caloric relevance); FAO (Share of agricultural, forestry and fishery employment); EC-JRC (Crop growing period affected by drought condition); EC-JRC (Rangeland growing period affected by drought condition); EC-JRC (INFORM Risk Index); UNDP (HDI Global Index).

by 5.1 percent while those in the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC – Cameroon and Chad) and Nigeria underperformed (WB, October 2023). Chad and Ghana initiated debt restructuring efforts in 2023.

Rapid population growth and urbanization pose a challenge to improving socioeconomic indicators. The population is mostly concentrated in coastal areas, while landlocked countries generally experience lower density (WB, January 2024). The Niger's population is rising at the fastest rate of the 14 countries. There is a mix of HDI ratings throughout with Cameroon being classified

as a medium development country based on having scores above 0.55, while the remaining countries are all considered to have low human development.

Chad, Guinea, Mali and the Niger are among the lowest ten countries in the HDI rankings.

DISPLACEMENT | The situation of displaced populations in West Africa and the Sahel has been increasingly challenging due to escalating conflict, deteriorating security and environmental factors, including climate change.

This fragile context was compounded by deteriorating political, security and economic conditions, characterized by coups d'état, armed conflict, increased criminality and extreme poverty in 2023.

Insecurity crises continued to be concentrated in border areas, notably the Central Sahel (or Liptako–Gourma region), the Lake Chad Basin, northwestern and north-central Nigeria, and western Cameroon (PREGEC, November 2023; ACLED, 2023). New areas of concern due to conflicts in neighbouring countries were the northern borders of coastal countries, notably Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin and Togo, and the eastern border of Chad.

The region faced a growing internal displacement crisis with 7.5 million IDPs in seven countries by mid-2023, about half a million more than by the end of 2022, mostly due to conflict and insecurity in the Central Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin (UNHCR, December 2023). The biggest increases were in northern Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Cameroon. Together these three countries had about 86 percent of the region's IDPs (GRFC Displacement TWG, 2024). In Togo, about 18 000 new IDPs were reported.

Out of the 2.2 million refugees and asylum-seekers in the region, about 80 percent were hosted in Chad (primarily from the Sudan, and to a lesser extent from Central African Republic), Cameroon (mainly from Central African Republic, Nigeria and Chad) and the Niger (mainly from Nigeria and Mali). Countries with long-term refugee populations include Cameroon, Chad, Mauritania

FIG. 2.24 Numbers of IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers in the region, 2023

7.5M IDPs in 7 countries

9.7M displaced people

2.2M refugees and asylum-seekers in 13 countries
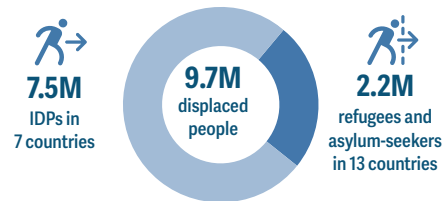
Source: UNHCR, IOM, OCHA, December 2023.

and the Niger, reflecting lack of opportunities to return to their countries of origin (GRFC Displacement TWG, 2024).

Food insecurity among displaced populations

Analyses on the acute food insecurity situation were available for IDPs in Burkina Faso and Nigeria and for refugees in Chad and Mauritania. An assessment in the Niger covered both IDPs and refugees in parts of the country.

According to CH analyses, across the Sahel, Est and Centre-Nord regions of Burkina Faso, 60 percent of IDPs (about 0.6 million people) faced high levels of acute food insecurity in June–August, including 0.2 million in Emergency (CH Phase 4) and 28 000 in Catastrophe (CH Phase 5).

In Nigeria's northern Sokoto and Zamfara states, nearly 18 000 IDPs or 30 percent of the analysed IDP population were estimated to face high levels of acute food insecurity during the peak period of June–August. A later CH analysis outside of the 2023 peak, covering October–December, and also covering Borno State, where 1.4 million IDPs were analysed, indicated that about 0.4 million IDPs or 28 percent of the analysed population faced high levels of acute food insecurity, including 86 000 people facing Emergency (CH Phase 4) (CILSS, CH March 2023; CILSS, CH November 2023).

A CH special protocol was activated to assess the acute food insecurity situation of refugees

and returnees fleeing the conflict in the Sudan in eastern areas of Chad. About 74 000 or 24 percent of nearly 315 000 refugees analysed in two eastern provinces, Sila and Wadi Fira, were estimated to face high levels of acute food insecurity during October–December 2023, including 28 000 in Emergency (CH Phase 4).

In Mauritania, in October 2023, Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) was carried out among 105 000 Malian refugees primarily located in M'bera camp, where they are heavily dependent on WFP food aid. About 54 percent of households did not have an income-generating activity while 7 percent engaged in daily labour or petty trade, and the rest were involved in livestock, domestic work or handicraft production (WFP, July 2023).

In the Niger, a joint assessment by WFP and UNHCR indicated significant food security challenges among refugees, IDPs and host populations. Based on the FCS indicator, around 16 percent of refugees, 17 percent of IDPs and 10 percent of host communities had unacceptable food consumption.
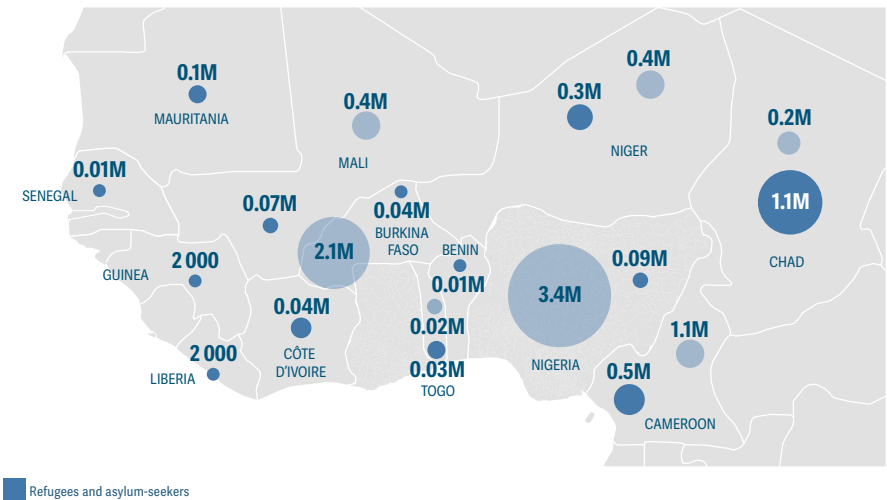
Significant variations in unacceptable food consumption levels were observed among refugees, with those in Tillabéri's urban and non-urban areas experiencing higher rates (42 percent and 33 percent respectively) compared with 5 percent in Tahoua's non-urban areas and 8 percent in Diffa's non-camp areas. Some 47 percent of refugees and 41 percent of IDPs

FIG. 2.25 Numbers of forcibly displaced people in the region 2013–2023
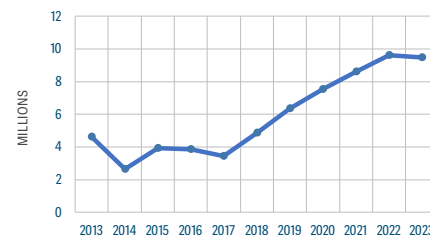
Sources: 2013-2022, UNHCR, IDMC, UNRWA; 2023, UNHCR nowcasted estimates December 2023, IOM.

MAP 2.7 Numbers of IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers by country, 2023

0.1M MAURITANIA
0.01M SENEGAL
0.07M
2 000 GUINEA
2 000 LIBERIA
0.04M CÔTE D'IVOIRE
2.1M
0.4M MALI
0.04M BURKINA FASO
0.01M
0.02M
0.03M TOGO
BENIN
0.3M
0.4M
0.2M
NIGER
1.1M CHAD
3.4M NIGERIA
0.09M
1.1M
0.5M CAMEROON

■ IDPs   ■ Refugees and asylum-seekers

Source: UNHCR, IOM, December 2023.

have a very low capacity to meet their essential needs, compared with 27 percent of hosts (WFP-UNHCR, 2023).

Malnutrition among refugee populations

Data from UNHCR Standardised Expanded Nutrition Surveys (SENS) were available from 34 refugee sites in Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria.

In Cameroon, the prevalence of GAM among children aged under 5 years ranged from Medium to High in five out of six sites, with the highest prevalence observed in sites hosting Central African Republic refugees in Adamaoua and Est regions. Chronic malnutrition prevalence was over 40 percent in all sites, ranking as Very High. Acute malnutrition among pregnant and breastfeeding women (PBW), based on MUAC measurements, was particularly high, at over 27 percent in sites in the Adamaoua and Est regions (UNHCR, 2023).

In Chad, the GAM prevalence was Very High in ten sites, High in eight and Medium in one. Stunting

levels were also very high, indicating long-term nutritional deficits. Anaemia levels among children under 5 and PBW were mostly Medium to High (UNHCR, 2023).

In the Niger, Medium to High GAM levels across the five sites analysed indicated concerning levels of acute malnutrition in refugee children, notably in the Abala and Ayerou sites. Stunting rates were Very High in all sites while the prevalence of anaemia among children aged under 5 years and among women were mostly High, underscoring widespread acute and chronic malnutrition challenges (UNHCR, 2023).

In five refugee sites in Nigeria, acute malnutrition was classified as Low while stunting prevalence was Very High. Household food consumption scores across all five sites ranked as unacceptable, demonstrating low quality diets (UNHCR, 2023).
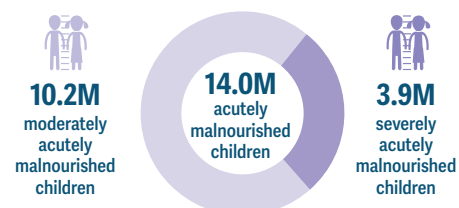
ACUTE MALNUTRITION | The nutritional situation is precarious across food crises in the region and has deteriorated in a number of countries, especially in the Sahel where worsening conflicts have disrupted services or even led to the closure of health centres and nutritional care facilities.

All countries affected by food crises in the region had recent (2021–2023) estimates of the number of acutely malnourished children.

Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, the Niger and (northern) Nigeria had IPC AMN analyses. While Cameroon, Guinea, Mauritania and Sierra Leone had recent prevalence data, the remaining five countries lacked data, partly reflecting better-off nutritional outcomes as the latest data indicated a prevalence below the Low WHO threshold. However, concerns remain, mostly in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, amid increasing acute food insecurity levels.
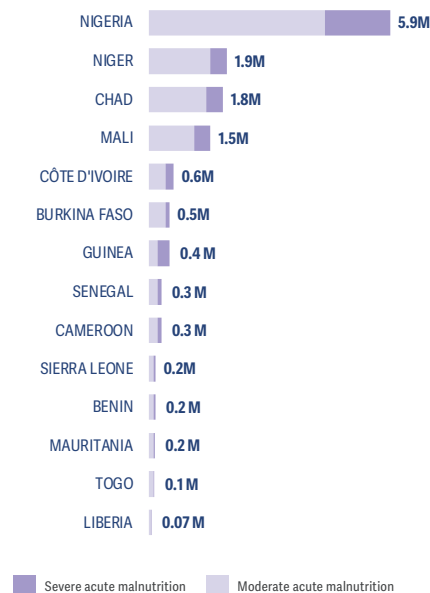
Data collection was hampered by insecurity preventing regular nutrition surveys in some areas, such as in Burkina Faso, where the nutritional surveys of 2021 and 2022 only covered 11 out of 13 regions. Some countries have reduced the geographical coverage of their nutrition surveys and/or their frequency because of reduced humanitarian funding.

FIG. 2.26 **Number of children under 5 years old with acute malnutrition, in 14 food crises, 2023**

10.2M moderately acutely malnourished children

14.0M acutely malnourished children

3.9M severely acutely malnourished children

Source: GRFC Nutrition TWG, 2024.

FIG.. 2.27 **Number of children under 5 years old with acute malnutrition by country, 2023**

Country	Value
NIGERIA	5.9M
NIGER	1.9M
CHAD	1.8M
MALI	1.5M
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	0.6M
BURKINA FASO	0.5M
GUINEA	0.4 M
SENEGAL	0.3 M
CAMEROON	0.3 M
SIERRA LEONE	0.2 M
BENIN	0.2 M
MAURITANIA	0.2 M
TOGO	0.1 M
LIBERIA	0.07 M

■ Severe acute malnutrition   ■ Moderate acute malnutrition

Sources: Burkina Faso IPC TWG, January 2024; Chad IPC TWG, February 2023; Mali IPC TWG, November 2022; Niger IPC TWG, March 2023; Nigeria IPC TWG, November 2022; WCARO Database 2023 (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Togo), WFP Food Security and Nutrition Hotspot Analysis, April 2023 (Mauritania, Senegal); UNICEF 2023 (Cameroon, Guinea, Sierra Leone).

A high burden of acute malnutrition among children and pregnant women

In the 14 food-crisis countries in 2023, about 14 million children under 5 years old were estimated to suffer from acute malnutrition, with 3.9 million of them severely malnourished. Sahelian countries severely affected by conflicts were at the forefront of this crisis, with Nigeria's northeastern and northwestern states accounting for nearly 6 million acutely malnourished children, of whom over 1.6 million were severely affected.

Data for acute malnutrition among pregnant and breastfeeding women were only available for seven out of 14 countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone – where a total of 1.5 million PBW were acutely malnourished.

Severity of the nutrition crises

IPC AMN analyses reported a concerning nutrition situation across conflict-affected areas of Sahelian countries. Chad, Mali, the Niger, and northeast and northwest Nigeria all had areas classified in Critical (IPC AMN Phase 4), with 15–30 percent of children under 5 years old acutely malnourished. According to recent nutritional surveys, Mauritania had High levels of acute malnutrition (13.5 percent), while levels were lower in Cameroon's Extrême-Nord (8 percent), Adamaoua (7 percent), Nord (6 percent) and Est (4 percent) regions (SMART, December 2022). The conflict-affected Nord-Ouest and Sud-Ouest regions did not have recent data. The national prevalence was Medium in Guinea at 6.7 percent (SMART, 2022) and Sierra Leone at 5 percent (SLNNS, 2021).
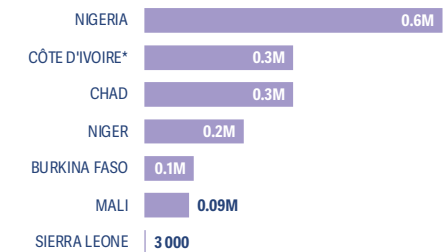
Drivers of acute malnutrition

🌾 **Lack of food** Increasing levels of acute food insecurity were primary contributors, mostly linked to the escalation of conflicts in border areas in the Sahel and high food prices across the region. In zones where humanitarian access was limited and in those seeing major influxes of displaced populations, children and women experienced limited nutrient intake while loss of livelihoods, reduced income-generating opportunities and high food prices made basic foods inaccessible for vulnerable populations.

A nutritious and healthy diet was about three times more expensive than a calorie-sufficient diet, making it unaffordable for more than half of the households in the region, particularly in nine countries that conducted cost of diet analyses between 2019 and 2022 (Bouscarat, Heinrigs and Zougbédé, 2023).

➕ **Inadequate services** Access to health care and nutrition interventions is limited, especially in conflict-affected areas/countries. Many health centres in rural areas are no longer functional or operate at a minimum. In Burkina Faso, about 500 health facilities in provinces with limited humanitarian access have been closed. Massive population displacements have put

FIG. 2.28 **Number of pregnant and breastfeeding women with acute malnutrition, 2023**

Country	Value
NIGERIA	0.6M
CÔTE D'IVOIRE*	0.3M
CHAD	0.3M
NIGER	0.2M
BURKINA FASO	0.1M
MALI	0.09M
SIERRA LEONE	3 000

* Data covering 2022.

Sources: Burkina Faso IPC TWG, January 2024; Chad IPC TWG, February 2023; Mali IPC TWG, November 2023; Niger IPC TWG, March 2023; Nigeria IPC TWG, October 2023; UNICEF 2023 (Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone).

pressure on the provision of health care in accessible areas (IPC, January 2024). In Mali, coverage of integrated child disease management programmes was low in all regions classified in IPC AMN Phase 3 or above, except in Taoudéni (IPC, November 2022).

According to IPC AMN analyses, poor access to WASH services and a high prevalence of infectious diseases such as diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections, malaria, fever and measles were a major driver of acute malnutrition in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria.

🤱 **Inadequate practices** Some areas had Extremely Critical levels of children receiving a Minimally Acceptable Diet (MAD), including the northeastern states of Nigeria, where fewer than 10 percent of children received an MAD (IPC AMN, November 2022). Other countries with critically low levels were the Niger at 7 percent, Sierra Leone at 4.9 percent, Mali at 4.2 percent, and Guinea at 4 percent.

Inadequate feeding practices were mirrored in the high rates of anaemia in the region, with Mali and Burkina Faso recording anaemia in over 75 percent of children under 5 years old and in more than 50 percent of women of reproductive age.

Global Network Against Food Crises
INTEGRATED ACTIONS FOR LASTING SOLUTIONS

Founded by the European Union, FAO and WFP in 2016, the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) is an alliance of humanitarian and development actors committed to addressing the root causes of food crises and finding lasting solutions to them, through shared analysis and knowledge, strengthened coordination in evidence-based responses and collective efforts across the humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) nexus.

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FSIN Food Security Information Network
Joint analysis for better decisions

The Food Security Information Network (FSIN) is a technical global platform for the exchange of expertise, knowledge and best practices on food security and nutrition analysis. Its purpose is to promote timely, independent and consensus-based information about food crises, while also highlighting and addressing critical data gaps. As a key partner of the GNAFC, FSIN coordinates the publication of the *Global Report on Food Crises*.

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