ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY OVERVIEW

In the Niger the number of people in Crisis or worse (CH Phase 3 or above) peaked at 1.4 million (7 percent of the population) in the October–December post‑harvest period (CILSS‑CH, November 2019). Of these 89 000 were classified in Emergency (CH Phase 4). Additionally, some 4.5 million people were in Stressed (CH Phase 2).

The vast majority of the acutely food‑insecure people were located in the four regions of Zinder (420 000), Tillabéri (355 000), Tahoua (262 000) and Maradi (214 000). Eight departments in those areas had more than 20 percent of their population in Crisis or worse (CH Phase 3 or above).

Acute food insecurity deteriorated between 2018 and 2019 and was particularly severe for displaced people and pastoralists. In 2019, the peak number of people in need of urgent humanitarian food assistance was 82 percent higher than the 2018 peak when 0.8 million were in Crisis or worse (CH Phase 3 or above) during the lean period. However, the situation was not as dire as the June–August 2014 lean season when 2.2 million in rural areas only were in need of urgent food assistance.

Throughout 2019, the population in need of food support steadily rose from 0.7 million in Crisis or worse (CH Phase 3 or above) in the March–May period to around 1.2 million during the June–August lean period and peaked at the end of the year.

Acute food insecurity among refugees

According to UNHCR, as of 31 October 2019, the Niger hosted a refugee population of 218 300, mostly from Nigeria and Mali. This includes 161 400 Nigerian refugees, who arrived since 2015, living in three camps and several other locations along the border with Nigeria and 56 500 Malian refugees, who arrived since 2012, living in four camps and among host communities in Tillabéri and Tahoua regions. Of the total number of Nigerian refugees, around 45 000 were recent arrivals, living along the border area in Maradi.

Refugees and host communities alike face factors that erode food security, such as demographic pressure (including high fertility rates), limited agricultural resources and deteriorating security in border areas where refugees are hosted, which further limits already scarce economic opportunities. Refugees especially have trouble accessing fertile land for farming.

An increasing number of Malian refugee households were now moderately or severely food insecure compared to 2017 (WFP, 2017 and 2019). Targeted food assistance introduced at the beginning of 2018 lowered refugees’ capacity for self‑sufficiency. The arrival of IDPs in the same regions further limited the prospect of the refugee population sustaining