

2024 HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP) WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

AMOUNT: EUR 202 109 415

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2024/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes¹ is to serve as a communication tool from DG ECHO² to its partners and assist them in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

0. MAJOR CHANGES SINCE PREVIOUS VERSION OF THE HIP

First modification as of 09/02/2024

According to the authorities of Mauritania and UNHCR, some 40,000 new refugees/returnees have arrived in Mauritania since September 2023. Taking into account the more than 100,000 people hosted in the saturated M'Bera camp, this brings the total number of Malian refugees to around 150,000 in a country of less than 5 million people. The pace of displacements is not expected to decline in the coming months, given the situation in Mali where violence and conflict continue unabated. The presence and regular arrival of refugees accompanied by their livestock as well as the impossibility of transhumance movements towards Mali exert additional pressure on the region – a region already affected by the overexploitation and scarcity of natural resources. Moreover, during the lean season, both the refugee and host communities will be affected by the food crisis.

This additional funding is needed for a life-saving response to the increased influx of refugees from Mali and to the acute needs these displacements create in the hosting areas in Mauritania. Funds will be used to improve vulnerable populations' immediate food security and nutrition status (through in kind/cash distributions) as well as to respond to other acute needs, including protection and animal health.

The total amount of this first modification is EUR 3 000 000.

1. CONTEXT

The West and Central Africa (WCA) region, one of the poorest and most fragile regions in the world, is affected by a multiplicity of humanitarian crises. Conflict, insecurity and climate change are the main drivers of these humanitarian crises, fuelling forced displacements, food insecurity, acute and chronic malnutrition, natural hazards and recurrent epidemics. The historically limited State presence adds to the complexity of these crises, undermining the local capacity to provide assistance, and to ensure access to social services. Widespread violence

¹ Technical annex and thematic policies annex

² Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

and violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) are among the other aggravating factors, reducing the space for principled humanitarian aid, disrupting livelihoods and triggering forced displacements. The main armed conflicts across the region are affecting Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger and spill-over to Coastal countries), the Lake Chad Basin (Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria), the Central African Republic (CAR) and neighbouring countries hosting CAR refugees, the North West/South West (NWSW) provinces of Cameroon, North Central/North West Nigeria (with displacements into Niger) and Eastern Chad as a consequence of the conflict in Sudan.

Different adverse trends involving political, security and humanitarian factors are contributing to the worsening of the crisis in **Central Sahel**. The 3 countries (Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso) have undergone recent coups and the current political context is characterised by a growing anti-Western narrative as well as tensions with regional organisation such as ECOWAS. The withdrawal of MINUSMA to be implemented by the end of 2023 is expected to render humanitarian operations more difficult in the North and Centre of Mali. This withdrawal could also create a vacuum in protection monitoring and security which could affect the 3-border area with Niger and Burkina Faso. The reprogramming of development aid due to the evolving political context at regional level is also changing the nexus dynamics, especially in the sectors of health, education, food security and disaster preparedness. These trends are reinforcing the risk of a spill-over of conflict and forced displacements from Central Sahel to the Coastal countries. In **Burkina Faso**, violence has spread across the Western, Northern and Eastern regions of the country. Due to the tactics used by the parties to the conflict, areas under blockade have multiplied, making not only access to livelihoods and social services but also the delivery of emergency assistance extremely difficult. These access restrictions are particularly challenging in a context where the needs for emergency assistance are considerable and growing: 20% (4.7 million people) of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has seen an almost 4-fold increase compared to 2019.

In **Mali**, the intensification of violence in the Centre and North, with operations by non-State armed groups (NSAGs) now moving toward the more densely populated South, has made another 1.3 million people dependent on emergency assistance. Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) interventions in the first half of 2023 have reached a record high for the last 5 years.

The strong footprint of NSAGs in Mali and Burkina Faso, especially near the borders, results in operations also in **Niger**, fuelling displacements in the Tillaberi and Tahoua regions. The aftermath of the coup on 26 July 2023 has brought imports into Niger to a halt, creating disruptions in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. These developments happened in a context of already high vulnerability, such as in particular in the Diffa region.

The spread of the conflict from Sahel to the South, in the Coastal countries – namely **Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Togo** - is also leading humanitarian partners to readapt. The number of violent incidents is on the rise especially in Benin, Ghana and Togo. In 2023, for the first time, EU humanitarian assistance funding supported an emergency response to address the needs of the most vulnerable people affected by the spread of the conflict – including the forcibly displaced - in Benin, Côte d’Ivoire and Togo. UNHCR estimates at over 76,000 the number of individuals who have found refuge in the four Coastal countries, with most of the refugees coming from Burkina Faso but with movements also among the Coastal countries. In addition, according to partners, Togo counts more than 18,000 IDPs.

Mauritania is experiencing recurrent food security crises with 10% of the population projected to face crisis conditions (phase 3+) during the peak of the 2023 lean season (Cadre Harmonisé, March 2023). Severe acute malnutrition remains an issue, with 44,384 severely acute malnourished under-5 children expected in 2023. Moreover, Mauritania has been hosting a significant number of refugees from Mali (now 104,000) for a decade already in and around the Mbera camp in the Hodh El Chargui region with new arrivals likely to come if the conflict in Mali further intensifies.

Nigeria – where presidential, legislative and local elections were held in 2023 - saw no major changes in the security context in the North-East, the main conflict and humanitarian crisis in the country, which remains also the epicentre of the Lake Chad regional crisis. Access and movement continue to be extremely difficult outside Maiduguri and so-called “garrison towns” in much of Borno State, where the needs for humanitarian assistance remain significant, with a recent surge in cases of severe acute malnutrition. Malnutrition is also a concern in the North-West, where the activity of criminal gangs and intercommunity violence are fuelling insecurity and displacement, keeping the local population vulnerable and in need of humanitarian aid. In addition to nutrition, the needs in the North-West are increasing also in the sectors of health and protection but access challenges limit the presence and action of humanitarian partners.

In **Cameroon**, the two main humanitarian crises, one around the Lake Chad Basin affecting the North and the Extreme North and the other in the North-West/South-West provinces, remain protection crises, involving a pattern of human rights violations by all parties.

In the **Central African Republic (CAR)**, the situation has slightly stabilised, with a decline in the number of IDPs and refugees between 2022 and mid 2023 (-16%, with 514,000 IDPs and 43,000 refugees). However, the context in CAR remains extremely volatile, with pockets of instability shifting quickly across the country, following clashes between the armed forces, backed by their foreign private military contractors, and NSAGs. A factor of instability gaining significance is the conduct of operations by NSAGs in border areas (next to Chad, Sudan and South Sudan), which triggers additional displacements.

The most notable change in Central Africa is the significant impact of the Sudan crisis in the East of **Chad**, which has reignited a humanitarian crisis in a region already hosting a community of 410,000 refugees who fled the previous crisis (2003) in neighbouring Darfur. By October 2023, 491,000 refugees and returnees had been counted in Eastern Chad. Considering the ongoing intercommunal conflicts in Sudan and the continuous arrival of new refugees and returnees, this number could reach 600,000 people by the end of the year. This sudden massive influx exacerbates the pressure on the environment and intensifies the competition for access to natural resources. It results in increased tensions between communities and heightened protection risks. Chad is home to other humanitarian crises, including in the Lake Province due to the conflicts in the Lake Chad basin.

Overall, the humanitarian and security situation in the region is worsening, with no prospect of improvement in the near future. This is backed up by the INFORM Risk Index, according to which 7 of the above-mentioned countries are classified as “high” (Nigeria) or “very high risk” (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Niger, Mali) in terms of humanitarian crises and disasters. The breakdown by indicator for both indexes is provided in the table below.

Partial information has been added concerning 4 Coastal countries (Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Benin, Togo). The values concerning the “lack of coping capacity” of these countries are in the

same range as the rest of the region, showing that national and local response mechanisms might be quickly overwhelmed in case of disaster.

	Burki-na Faso	Came-roon	CAR	Chad	Nigeria	Niger	Mali	Maurit ania	Côte d'Ivoire	Benin	Togo	Ghana
INFORM Risk Index 2023 (0-10) ³	7	6.5	8.5	7.9	6.4	7.5	6.9	4.9	4.5	3.8	4.1	3.5
Hazard and Exposure	7.1	7.1	8.1	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	3.2	2.5	1.7	1.8	2.2
Vulnerability	7.7	6.7	8.7	7.6	5.8	7.6	6.8	5.6	5.6	4.7	5	3.9
Lack of Coping Capacity	6.4	5.9	8.8	8.8	6.3	7.5	6.6	6.5	6.6	6.7	7.5	4.9
INFORM Severity Index June 2023 (0-5) ⁴	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.4	4.2	3.8	4.3	2.7	-	-	-	-
Impact of the crisis	4.2	4.1	4.3	4.0	4.5	3.9	4.5	2.7	-	-	-	-
Condition of people affected	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.8	4.0	4.1	4.5	3.1	-	-	-	-
Complexity of the crisis	3.6	3.6	4.0	3.9	4.4	3.2	3.9	2.2	-	-	-	-
People in Need	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.6	5.0	4.2	4.9	3.1	-	-	-	-
Human Development Index (0-1) ⁵	0.449 (Rank 184)	0.576 (Rank 151)	0.404 (Rank 188)	0.394 (Rank 190)	0.535 (Rank 164)	0.400 (Rank 189)	0.428 (Rank 186)	0.556 (Rank 158)	0.550 (Rank 159)	0.525 (Rank 166)	0.539 (Rank 162)	0.63 (Rank 133)
Total Population (in millions) ⁶	22.6	27.9	5.5	17.7	218.5	26.2	22.5	4.7	28.1	13.3	8.8	33.4

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

2.1 People in need of humanitarian assistance

The number of people in need of emergency assistance in the WCA region has moved further up by 11% to reach an estimated 50.4 million. In 5 countries of the region, the people in need represent more than one fifth of the population: Burkina Faso (20.7%), Mali and Chad (38.9%), Nigeria BAY States⁷ (55%), and CAR (60.9%). The number of people in need in the region comes close to the combined total populations of Chad and Niger. Food security, refugees and health/nutrition are the sectors with the largest needs for support⁸. This is in line with the main needs seen on the ground, related to forced displacement and the food and nutritional crisis.

³ Inform Risk Index (June 2023): [INFORM Risk \(europa.eu\)https://drmhc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile](https://drmhc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile)

⁴ INFORM Severity Index (June 2023): [Results and data \(europa.eu\)](https://drmhc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile)

⁵ Human Development Index, [Human Development Report 2021-22 | Human Development Reports \(undp.org\)](https://data.worldbank.org/indicators)

⁶ [Countries | Data \(worldbank.org\)](https://data.worldbank.org/indicators)

⁷ Borno, Adamawa, Yobe States in North East Nigeria

⁸ <https://response.reliefweb.int/west-and-central-africa/2023-regional-funding-status-humanitarian-response> (including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and DRC, with DRC being covered by another HIP)

Chad and Burkina Faso have seen the fastest rise in the number of people displaced: respectively reaching 1.2 million and 2.1 million people in 2023⁹.

Food insecurity has increased by 11% in the region, comparing the latest year-on-year Cadre Harmonisé figures for the lean season (March figures). The increase reflects mostly the changes in Nigeria, where an additional 5.4 million people are facing a severe food crisis (IPC 3+) in the 2023 lean season. Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) figures show a dramatic increase in Nigeria (+140% on 2022, to reach 2,369,000 children with SAM) i.e. 1,380,000 children more than last year. The figures for Chad, Mali, and Cameroon show about 900,000 children with SAM (+170,000). In total 4,850,190 children in West and Central Africa are not able to cover their individual nutritional needs and are at risk of developing medical complications because of their nutritional status.

COUNTRY	People in need (HRP)*			IDPs + refugees		
	2023	2022	2023 vs 2022	2023	2022	2023 vs 2022
Burkina Faso	4,700,000	4,900,000	-4.1%	2,100,560	1,844,747	13.9%
Cameroon	4,700,000	3,900,000	20.5%	1,541,983	1,475,088	4.5%
CAR	3,400,000	3,100,000	9.7%	536,457	665,771	-19.4%
Chad	6,900,000	6,100,000	13.1%	1,251,362	958,536	30.5%
Mali	8,800,000	7,500,000	17.3%	458,383	497,264	-7.8%
Mauritania	844,694	1,010,786	-16.4%	105,698	98,916	6.9%
Niger	4,300,000	3,700,000	16.2%	625,303	643,527	-2.8%
Nigeria	8,300,000	8,400,000	-1.2%	3,672,764	3,338,595	10.0%
Total	41,944,694	38,610,786	8.6%	10,292,510	9,522,444	8.1%
Benin	475,726	883,855	-46.2%	5,120	0	0.0%
Cote d'Ivoire	1,249,263	775,816	61.0%	27,582	0	0.0%
Ghana	1,542,913	279,160	452.7%	11,276	0	0.0%
Togo	569,661	389,040	46.4%	51,103	0	0.0%
Other coastal countries	4,598,862	4,473,120	2.8%	20,887	0	0.0%
Total West and Central Africa	50,381,119	45,411,777	10.9%	10,408,478	9,522,444	9.3%

* for countries not covered by an HRP, cumulated figures for food insecurity (3-5), SAM children and displacements are shown. Some data were not available, or criteria changed, so comparisons between 2023 and 2022 should be considered indicative.

⁹ In Chad, the number of displaced increased by 30% from end 2022 to November 2023. In Burkina Faso, it increased by 212 000 people (11%) from March 2022 to March 2023 (date of the last publication of IDP figures by authorities).

COUNTRY	Food insecurity (phase 3-5)			SAM cases (children 6-59 months)		
	2023 lean season	2022 lean season	2023 vs 2022	2023	2022	2023 vs 2022
Burkina Faso	3,351,048	3,453,510	-3%	172,124	179,252	-4%
Cameroon	2,357,305	2,413,288	-2%	111,127	64,407	73%
CAR	2,990,342	2,208,845	35%	20,437	44,352	-54%
Chad	1,864,299	2,098,861	-11%	414,140	348,160	19%
Mali	1,262,078	1,841,067	-31%	366,982	309,821	18%
Mauritania	472,275	878,921	-46%	44,384	32,949	35%
Niger	3,280,361	4,402,406	-25%	430,488	491,822	-12%
Nigeria	24,861,156	19,453,305	28%	2,369,328	988,642	140%
Total	40,438,864	36,750,203	10.0%	3,929,010	2,459,405	59.8%
Benin	412,140	830,150	-50%	58,466	53,705	9%
Cote d'Ivoire	1,017,799	662,002	54%	203,882	113,814	79%
Ghana	1,366,308	279,160	389%	165,329	-	-
Togo	487,319	389,040	25%	31,239	-	-
Other coastal countries	4,115,711	4,032,179	2%	462,264	440,941	5%
Total West and Central Africa	47,838,141	42,942,734	11.4%	4,850,190	3,067,865	58.1%

2.2 Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

Humanitarian Protection

The intensification of operations by NSAGs and the armed forces in Mali and Burkina Faso has led to cross-border movements spilling over in the Coastal countries. International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations were reported to be on the increase throughout 2023. Protection incidents faced by men, women, and children continue to rise. Arbitrary arrests, killing and maiming of civilians, extrajudicial executions, kidnapping of women and girls for sexual exploitation, forced and early marriages, as well as grave violations against children, remain frequent across the region.

The protection of civilians affected by violence and armed conflicts remains thus a priority. The delivery of humanitarian assistance continues to be under threat, with more frequent cases of denial of access to some affected areas (e.g. Mali, Burkina Faso, North-East Nigeria), and attacks against humanitarian workers and organisations (e.g. North-West/South-West Cameroon). As the armed conflicts have geographically spread, so have the affected civilian populations. Faced with increased threats of violence and insecurity and more uncertain political situations, populations continue to be forcibly displaced and, in some cases, forcibly returned to unsafe living areas (e.g. North-East Nigeria), with limited access to basic services and livelihood opportunities. The lack of rule of law in many areas also increases intra- and inter-community violence and perpetuates impunity. Surviving these conditions has also significantly affected the mental wellbeing of the affected populations. Mental health and psychosocial needs continue to be unaddressed and underreported. So are also gender based

violence incidents. Negative coping mechanisms, such as survival sex and the worst forms of child labour represent a high risk but remain inadequately analysed and tackled.

Food Assistance

An unprecedented number of more than 40 million people (+10% on 2022, and +87% over the last 5 years average) are in need of emergency food assistance (IPC 3+) in the 8 main target countries. With the additional Coastal countries impacted by the spill-over of the Central Sahel conflict, the number of people in IPC 3+ reaches 47.8 million people (+11% compared to 2022). Armed conflicts and forced displacements are considered as the main drivers of acute food insecurity, as livelihoods are deeply eroded by these adverse trends (access to land, pasture, production assets and inputs etc.). The population in extreme food insecurity areas (IPC4 and 5) is increasing. The conflict in Sudan is affecting trade flows and as such making access to food more difficult in parts of Chad and CAR. Climate change is also aggravating acute food insecurity as traditional ways of living are compromised by recurrent disasters caused by natural events. Prices remain well above the five-year average in many Sahel, Central African and Coastal countries. This concerns the price of food supplies but also that of agricultural inputs, namely fuel and fertilisers (+ 12% in March 2023 versus last year and +62% versus the last 5 years average). According to the WFP market functionality index, 77% of markets assessed between 2022 and 2023 are weakly to moderately functional, which amplifies the effects of the global shocks mentioned earlier on local prices and local access to food.

Nutrition

WCA countries are suffering from protracted and recurrent nutrition crises, which has seen little improvement over the last decade, outpaced as it is by population growth and insecurity. Death rates of children under 5 years are among the highest in the world and 45% of infant mortality is associated with undernutrition. Across the region, more than 3 million children, in the age group of 6-59 months, suffered from SAM in 2022 and the figure will reach 4.85 million in 2023. The traditional determinants of undernutrition in this region - extreme poverty and chronic food insecurity, poor infant feeding practices, infectious diseases and lack of access to healthcare - have been compounded in the last few years by widespread conflict and insecurity and inflation. As a consequence, critical levels of acute undernutrition, exceeding 15%, are reported in several areas of Chad, Mali and Niger. Serious levels (10-15% of global acute malnutrition) are recorded in most of the other areas covered by this HIP. Despite slow but steady improvements in the response capacity by health authorities to deliver the Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM), access issues, in particular in Burkina, Mali, and Nigeria, are depriving children of a life-saving service.

Health

The region is characterised by chronically underfunded health systems and other underlying structural problems, such as shortages of drugs, essential equipment, qualified staff, and a lack of stewardship and engagement of the health authorities. These issues are exacerbated by the direct and indirect effects of conflicts, including the exodus of human resources and looting of facilities, resulting in a generally underperforming and weak health system particularly exposed to epidemics (e.g. cholera, measles, and, more recently, haemorrhagic fevers). Access is undermined by insecurity, including attacks targeting health structures and health workers. The region has the lowest life expectancy at birth and the highest infant and under-five mortality rates in the world. Neonatal mortality remains especially high. The main killers (at

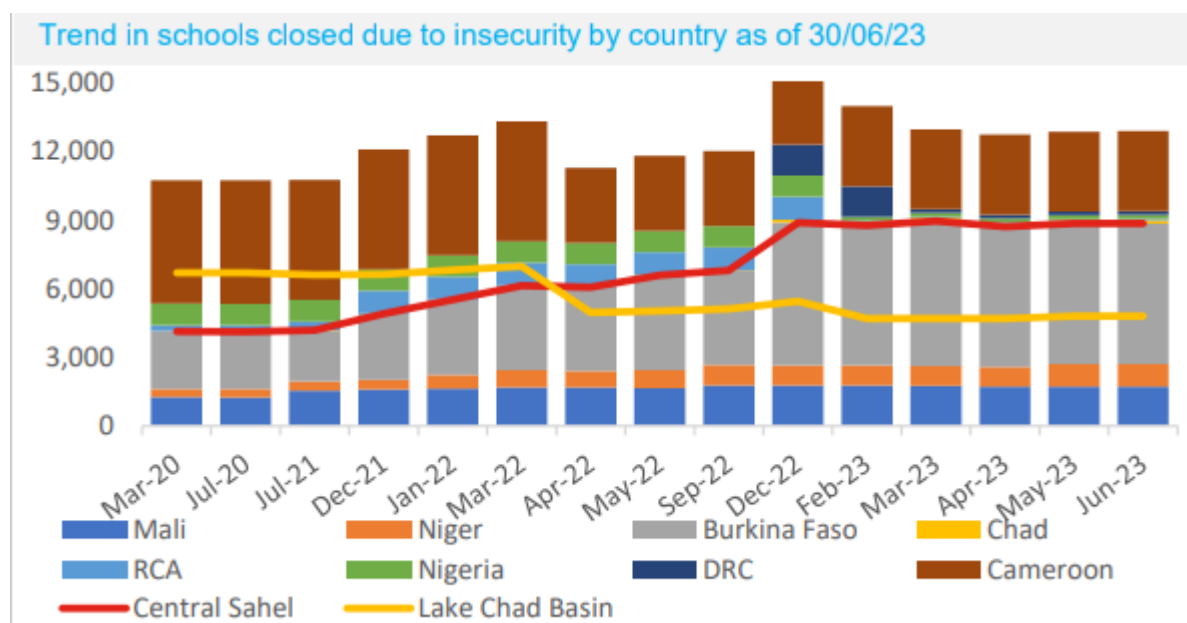
all ages) are lower respiratory tract infections, diarrhoea, and malaria. Non-communicable diseases are becoming more important causes of death and disability year after year.

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH), shelter and settlements

Regular and reliable access to safe water for drinking, sanitation and shelters continues to be a major challenge across the region. Areas plagued by conflicts and forced displacement, in particular IDP as well as refugee camps and settlements, are especially affected. These humanitarian settings are congested and overburdened by a growing demand for shelter, settlement and WASH services. An estimated 21.4 million people are in urgent need of access to WASH services and facilities and 14.2 million people are in urgent need of shelter and essential items in the countries covered by this regional HIP – 3.6 and 3.8 million more than in 2022 respectively.

Education in Emergencies (EiE)

2023 has not seen much improvement for the sector. In West and Central Africa, about 13,000 schools are closed due to insecurity, with a sharp increase in Burkina Faso in less than a year. Humanitarian access has significantly reduced, impeding efforts to reach the most vulnerable children. Implementation of classical EiE responses has become more and more challenging. In zones with a high concentration of displacement, increasingly, host communities are unable to deal with the influx of internally displaced children within the formal system. In Nigeria, access continues to be challenging and the fate of many children is unknown due to access restrictions. The accelerated basic education programme (ABEP) has provided an opportunity for many, but the national education system is lacking the capacity to ensure transition. Gains made in some areas of CAR have also been lost and in Chad, the Sudanese refugee crisis has added an additional weight on an almost inexistent education supply. In Cameroon, the situation in the Extreme North remains preoccupying, whereas in the North-West/South-West there have been very few inroads made to support the return of children to school. Across the region, food insecurity is having a detrimental effect on access to and retention in education. Thus, both supply and demand for education have waned and advances in enrolment, retention and transition have and are continuing to dwindle. Adolescent (over-age) boys and girls are also further victimised, often being excluded from education due to the absence of alternative and/or accelerated learning options.



Source: West and Central Africa¹⁰ - Education in Emergencies Working Group - Regional Situation – Q2 - 2023

Disaster Preparedness

Armed conflicts, forced displacement and increased vulnerabilities push more and more people into disaster-prone areas, further reducing their coping capacities. Chad and CAR are just after South Sudan the countries with the world’s lowest coping capacity index, and 7 of the 8 main countries covered by this HIP are classified as “very high risk” by INFORM¹¹. Climate change, environmental degradation, and rapid urbanisation contribute to eroding livelihoods and incomes, making local communities less resilient to shocks and more dependent on assistance. Over the past three years (from 2020 to June 2023) the region has registered more than 61 climate-related events and more than 57 million people have been directly impacted¹². 5 of the 10 countries with the lowest ND Gain (Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative) Country Index in the world are in the WCA region¹³ and these countries stand out with the highest vulnerability to climate impacts affecting life-supporting sectors, such as food, water and infrastructure.

Consequences of climate change, such as heavy rains and floods take a toll on human life, property, land, and livelihoods. In 2022, flooding affected over 5.8 million people in 20 countries of the region¹⁴. In 2023, 880,000 people were affected so far, and more than 1,000 people lost their lives as a result of heavy rains, particularly in Niger, Nigeria, the Gambia, and Guinea¹⁵.

¹⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/west-and-central-africa-education-emergencies-eie-q2-2023-regional-situation>

¹¹ INFORM Lack of Coping Capacity index mid 23 (v06.6)

¹² EM-DAT, CRED / UCLouvain, Brussels, Belgium, June 2023

¹³ July 2023- Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/> (score for 2021)

¹⁴ <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/west-central-africa/>

¹⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ghana/west-and-central-africa-humanitarian-impact-flooding-overview-1-september-30-october-2023>

3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

3.1 National / local response and involvement

Burkina Faso is implementing formal preparedness and response plans, early warning systems, and shock-responsive safety nets programmes but lacks capacity and access to address the overwhelming humanitarian needs as conflict escalated and expanded. The national committee for emergency assistance and recovery (CONASUR) local branches only assist in areas controlled by the transitional authorities. The food insecurity national response plan (PRSPV) is not implemented in the most severely food insecure zones while an estimated 1.2 million vulnerable people (in IPC3+) have been deprived of assistance following a government ban on the use of cash transfers in conflict-affected regions. The two successive coups (respectively in January and September 2022) contributed to making dialogue on key humanitarian issues even more challenging as the fight against terrorism is subduing any other consideration. High-level officials have publicly challenged humanitarian principles and stoked suspicion toward humanitarian actors. Local responders play a central and increasing role in addressing humanitarian needs in hard-to-reach areas. Development civil society organisations swiftly adapted to respond to the needs of the complex crisis with sheer dedication but limited capacity and a very diverse understanding of humanitarian principles.

In **Cameroon**, the Government's focus is on the Presidential Plan for Reconstruction and Development for the North-West and South-West regions (NWSW) launched in 2020 and under implementation by UNDP and local organisations. In the Far North and East regions, the government is more involved in the response, playing a leading role in sector coordination with the technical support of international organisations. A few Government development programmes with World Bank including grants and loans are ongoing in these crisis-affected areas. National and local organisations play a key role in the humanitarian response in crisis-affected regions in Cameroon and are partners to many international actors operating in the country. The Coordination of Humanitarian International NGOs (CHINGO) supports the localisation agenda through capacity building of local organisations on priority needs and the provision of financial support for the participation of local organisations in strategic fora. Existing Tripartite Agreements for Nigerian and CAR refugees in Cameroon still guide the voluntary repatriation of refugees to these two countries. Strengthening the civil protection system is part of Cameroon's 2020 - 2030 National Development Strategy (NDS 2030). The directorate of civil protection currently under the umbrella of the Ministry of territorial administration is in the process of becoming an autonomous institution with more capacity in preparedness and rapid response.

In **CAR**, the capacity of the authorities to contribute tangibly to the humanitarian response remains limited due to insufficient budgetary resources. The volatile context is limiting the deployment of the administration and public officers for rehabilitation and reconstruction initiatives. A large part of the offer for basic services remains therefore in the hands of international partners. In 2023, the humanitarian community and OCHA developed a localisation strategy with dedicated resources aiming at increasing the direct contracting of local NGOs. Interactions with the authorities to ensure access to the population for humanitarian aid is taking place without major difficulties. Technical dialogue at central level varies among the different line ministries. So far NGOs have been able to operate in the country

without many constraints (except security), but they may face administrative delays and obstacles because of insufficient capacities within the concerned governmental bodies. The role of the government remains intermittent and limited in the coordination of humanitarian assistance. Bridges between the latter and the development coordination structures are insufficient. A national development plan (RCPCA) from 2016 remains the agreed framework for aid harmonisation. In 2023, UNDP and the government launched a stabilisation programme targeting 3 regions in the country. While a National Strategy for Disaster Preparedness and Response was drawn up in 2022, the capacities of the authorities to prevent and manage natural disasters (floods, fires essentially) remain very limited.

In **Chad**, the government's main priorities remain focused on the political transition and the security situation. Chad's governance is characterised by a very high degree of centralisation which constrains effectiveness in the delivery of basic social services, particularly in the peripheral regions of the country that are home to its poorest populations. The Chadian government does not minimise the importance of crises in the country, as demonstrated in 2022 by its two consecutive declarations of emergency linked to the food crisis (June 2022) and floods (October 2022) and as evidenced by its management of the more recent Sudanese refugee crisis. It allowed people fleeing the conflict in Sudan to enter the country, despite the official border closure, and granted them asylum. Nevertheless, most of the humanitarian response is conducted by the international community who rely on national institutions that themselves depend on external funding to operate (for example the National Commission for the Reception and Reintegration of Refugees and Returnees/CNARR). At decentralised level, the governance of aid revolves around a pyramid of Action Committees (provincial, departmental, local levels) with weak capacities. It is noteworthy that despite the weak state capacity to implement disaster risk reduction and prevention approaches, Chad has acquired, over the years, a multi-layered policy framework for disaster management with a National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and its action plan (December 2020) which is supported by multi-risk contingency plans at regional level.

All **Coastal countries** are concerned about the security threat in the Northern parts of their countries, and the possible infiltration of insurgents in population influx. They all recognised these challenges at the International Conference on the Accra Initiative, held in Accra in November 2022. States are all keen to provide a coherent response which enhances security and long-term development interventions aimed at addressing governance deficits in affected and at-risk areas. Côte d'Ivoire for instance supported vast programs to increase its footprint in the North (through infrastructure and social protection) and built "transit sites" for Burkinabe refugees. Nevertheless, Governments are very reluctant to communicate on both security incidents and humanitarian needs generated by the Sahel spill-over. No country has formally asked for help from the international community to meet the resulting humanitarian needs. Most countries have however requested some support from UNHCR to register refugees. Partners are also being called upon, especially at local level, to help cover urgent needs, particularly those of forcibly displaced populations. This lack of assessment and data is a challenge for the humanitarian response. Countries exercise strong control over what happens in the North and the implementation of humanitarian principles remains a challenge. State willingness and capacities to respond are much better than in other countries in the region, but their institutions face challenges to respond to emergency needs. Several partners are present

on cooperation and development grounds but still poorly prepared to cope with emergency responses.

In **Mali**, insecurity and armed operations, through NSAG attacks and military counter-offensives, have intensified and spread, with a high impact on civil population. This results in more complex and shrinking humanitarian access with an increase of areas under blockade (e.g. Timbuktu in August 2023). National government and local authorities seek to increase their grip on all aid-related activities, including humanitarian response and disaster preparedness. The delivery of relief to vulnerable people has become politically sensitive, in particular when related to natural disasters but also to cope with populations displacements. At national level, the CREDD (Strategic Framework for the Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development) is the main strategic document to drive development initiatives, with strategic pillars on basic social services. In its current last year of implementation, the CREDD will undergo a revision process. In 2022, the Malian government also approved a stabilisation strategy for the Central regions, inspired by the CREDD vision, which includes an axis on humanitarian response and economic recovery. Although a coordination setup was initiated in 2021 around durable solutions (including disaster preparedness in fragile and conflict affected settings), it has been quite inactive over the last 18 months. Preparedness strategies and contingency plans exist at central and decentralised levels, but like the rest of the humanitarian response they suffer from inadequate resources and a lack of updates.

Since 2021, the government in **Mauritania** has demonstrated increased efforts and willingness to respond to emergency needs of both the internal population and the Malian refugees. The government has carried out significant reforms, as illustrated by the increase in scope of the adaptive shock-responsive social protection programme (“Taazour”), and other measures taken to cope with its worst food crisis in 2022. Both “Taazour” and the Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire (CSA) are gaining momentum in the response to the food and nutrition crisis and other shocks such as floods. The introduction of health insurance for the poorest households and the extension of the government’s regular safety net programmes to cover the most vulnerable refugee households in the Mberra camp since 2023 are also positive developments. One key challenge remains the capacity of the Government to stay true to its commitment to fully take over the procurement of nutritional inputs from 2023, and to ensure the full supply chain covering the last mile delivery.

In **Niger**, the main national actor in charge of humanitarian affairs is the Ministry of Humanitarian Action and Crisis Management (MAH/GC), which leads the coordination of humanitarian action throughout the country. The *Dispositif National de Prévention et Gestion des Crises Alimentaires* (DNP-GCA), under the direct authority of the Prime Minister, designs a yearly Support Plan to cover the needs of people in nutritional and food insecurity and ensure its implementation in coordination with the international humanitarian community. The humanitarian strategy and its implementation plan are based both on the Support Plan of DNP-GCA and on the UN-led Humanitarian Response Plan, jointly presented and approved by the government of Niger. The capacity of the state to provide basic social services, including education, health, nutrition, social safety nets and seasonal food assistance, remains low, particularly in areas most affected by conflict dynamics. This capacity is expected to further decline as a result of the current political situation and of the reliance of these departments on

support by development programs which may be affected by aid suspension decisions following the coup.

In **Nigeria**, the main national actors at federal level are the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, in charge of coordinating development investment and international NGO registration, and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation. The office was created in 2019 during the former President Buhari administration to coordinate all humanitarian affairs in Nigeria. Under the current administration, the Ministry also coordinates the management of the National Social Register (NSR) keeping data about 15 million poor and vulnerable households in the country. However, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is placed now under the supervision of the Office of the Vice President. This willingness of the Nigerian authorities to lead the relief response is also felt at the sub-federal level. For instance, in Borno State, a 2019 law created the Agency for Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Response to coordinate and support the provision of aid. However, this law might also delay the delivery of humanitarian assistance and undermine humanitarian principles, due to some of its restrictive provisions, if fully applied.

3.2 International Humanitarian Response

In **Burkina Faso**, the humanitarian coordination response is hampered by the politicisation of aid, rejection of IHL and general defiance toward the international community and humanitarian actors. There has been a critical gap in humanitarian leadership, since the expulsion of the Humanitarian Co-ordinator/Resident Co-ordinator in December 2022. A replacement is expected in early 2024. The humanitarian coordination architecture includes representatives of state social services and of CONASUR. Clusters have been operational since 2019 and decentralised at regional level since 2022 but they remain only partly effective as underlined by the latest peer-to-peer mission review. Access analysis, civil-military coordination, rapid response coordination, IHL safeguarding and accountability to affected population remain of particular concern. As of October 2023, only 32.8% of the funding needs of the current HRP (USD 876 million) were covered. The main donors are the US, followed by the EU, Germany and the Central Emergency Fund (CERF).

In **Cameroon**, international humanitarian assistance plays a vital role in the response to the ongoing crises in the Far North, NWSW regions and the Eastern part of the country affected by the CAR crisis. OCHA's role on countrywide coordination is essential in a complex context with a cluster system in the NWSW and sector systems in the Far North and CAR crisis-affected regions. As of October 2023, only 26.5% of the funding needs of the current HRP (USD 407 million) were covered. The main humanitarian donors are the US Government followed by the EU, Sweden, Germany, Japan, Norway, France, Canada, and Switzerland.

In **CAR**, the integrated UN mission, MINUSCA has been present since 2014. The mandate of the mission, which includes the protection of the civil population and support for the secured delivery of humanitarian assistance, was extended for another year until 2024. The MINUSCA forces are also implementing quick impact projects. The humanitarian sector is under the lead of a Deputy Special/Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator who can rely on a solid coordination architecture (full spectrum of clusters), with decentralised offices. There is a common CAR Humanitarian Fund in place, managed by the Humanitarian Coordinator with the support of OCHA. The HRP's funding needs have been well covered in the past years (close

to 90% in 2022). As of October 2023, only 45.5% of the 2023 HRP (USD 533 million) was funded. The three top main humanitarian donors are the US, the EU and Germany. Other contributing donors are Sweden, France, Norway, Switzerland, Canada, and the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). France, the US, Switzerland and the EU are the only donors with humanitarian advisors posted in the country and coordinate regularly, ensuring common advocacy and coherent programming.

In **Chad**, the humanitarian architecture is under the lead of the Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator (HC/RC). A Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for Darfur has been appointed and coordinates also cross-borders operations. The CERF (the UN-led Central Emergency Response Fund) is regularly activated in Chad. The new refugee crisis in the East has prompted the arrival of new international NGOs in Chad. The Humanitarian Response Plan has been increased from USD 674 million to USD 920 million. As of October 2023, it was funded at 26.5%, which is consistent with the underfunding of the HRP in the previous years (49% average coverage rate of HRP funding over the last 5 years). The revision of the Regional Response Plan 2023 raised the requirements of the plan in September 2023 from USD 556 million to USD 1.005 billion, and it was funded at 27% (25% for the Chad component)¹⁶. The main humanitarian donors beside the EU are the US. Other significant contributors are Germany, Sweden, Canada, France, Japan, Italy, Switzerland, France and Italy.

Coastal countries are not covered by any humanitarian architecture. Informal coordination is being started both at capital and local levels. National coordination mechanisms were decided by Governments for security purposes, still lacking the involvement of all stakeholders to enable a coherent response, be it for emergency response or development cooperation. In most countries, national security councils (CNS in Côte d'Ivoire) are in charge of the management of population influx with the support of civil protection institution (in both Togo and Benin) and/or local prefects who are given the responsibility of coordinating responses. Most partners (UN agencies and NGOs) who are present in Coastal countries have started to strengthen their teams to provide an emergency response, with some internal resources to cope with urgent needs. Some donors have started limited support (US, China, France). The EU has been among the first donors to fund the increased footprint of humanitarian partners in the Northern parts of coastal countries for emergency response. According to the Financial Tracking System (FTS), about USD 25 million have been allocated so far by international donors to Coastal countries in 2023.

In **Mali**, the humanitarian architecture is under the lead of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator in Mali (DSRSG /HC/RC), who was seconded by a Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator until December 2022. The withdrawal of MINUSMA is affecting specific operations needed to preserve the space for humanitarian action, such as demining as well as activities related to data gathering and needs assessments. The longer-term consequences of the MINUSMA withdrawal on humanitarian operations are still unclear, but major concerns remain regarding the security of camps hosting forcibly displaced people, aid distribution sites, and landing strips for access by air. Further involvement of the Malian military in civil-military coordination will be key after MINUSMA's withdrawal. The EU is part of the Good Humanitarian Donorship group, which

¹⁶ [Sudan Conflict: Regional Humanitarian Needs and Requirements \(As of 19 September 2023\) - Sudan | ReliefWeb](#)

coordinates with the GEC (Groupe Exécutif de Coordination), gathering all technical and financial partners in Mali and liaising with the government. There is no specific donor coordination setup on disaster preparedness. As of October 2023, only 23.7% of the HRP funding needs (USD 751 million) were covered. The main humanitarian donors beside the EU are the US, Germany, Sweden and the UK.

Mauritania is not covered by a humanitarian response plan. Humanitarian food and nutrition needs are regularly monitored and addressed by a range of partners (UN agencies, NGOs and Red Cross movement). In 2023, UN peace building and UN multi-partner trust funds were mobilised for USD 1.1 million. In the absence of a cluster architecture, Government-led coordination is progressively starting, notably for food and nutrition under the umbrella of the national framework for prevention and response to food and nutrition crisis (DCAN). As humanitarian donors are progressively phasing out, longer-term investments are required to cope with the recurrent and structural needs of the most vulnerable. According to OCHA, humanitarian funding has significantly decreased, from USD 118 million in 2021 to USD 29.4 million in 2023. Food and early recovery constitute the main priorities of the key donors in the country (US, EU, Japan, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Canada).

At the national level in **Niger**, the standard humanitarian architecture, led by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), is in place with clusters and inter-cluster coordination as well as a humanitarian civil-military coordination group and an operational and strategic group of a Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM). The same architecture is being decentralised at regional level. On 10 October the UN RC/HC was asked to leave Niger within 72 hours. 41.6% of the funding needs of the HRP (USD 583 million) were covered as of October 2023. The US, followed by the EU, are the main contributor to the HRP. Other relevant international donors are Germany, Canada, Sweden and FCDO. Due to the current political situation, several countries have announced the suspension of development aid which, if prolonged, could significantly reshape the context for resilience and local response in Niger.

In **Nigeria**, the current international humanitarian response is primarily targeting the North East crisis, which is driven by a non-international conflict between non-state armed groups and the Nigerian armed forces. The North-West is not yet covered by the 2023 HRP, but given the increasing needs an operational response plan was issued in 2023. The OCHA office in Maiduguri is central to ensuring coordination in the North East, including civil-military coordination. In-country humanitarian coordination arrangements with the traditional UN-INGOs-NGO humanitarian coordination system are in place in the North-East through dedicated fora (UNCT, HCT in Abuja), sectors, and working groups including the international NGO Forum. The crisis in the North-East is underfunded – only 36.5% of the HRP needs (USD 1.3 billion) were covered as of October 2023. The main humanitarian donors are the US, the EU, Germany, as well as the UK.

3.3 Operational constraints in terms of:

i) access/humanitarian space:

Security threats

Conflict-affected areas are characterised by a multiplication of non-state armed groups, a volatile security situation and growing blatant violations of IHL, including exactions on civilians by all parties to the conflict (Lake Chad basin, Central Sahel, North-West South-West Cameroon). Humanitarian organisations are also increasingly affected by criminality in areas with low or no state presence (CAR, Mali, North-West Nigeria).

Non respect of humanitarian principles

In Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria, blockades of villages hinder access to services, livelihoods and assistance, and contravene the obligation of the parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need. Similarly, national and local legislations restrict access significantly. In North-East Nigeria, the obligation for humanitarian actors to work only in zones controlled by the military is a breach of the principle of neutrality and impartiality. In the same vein, several Governments in the region (such as Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria) are either formally prohibiting or not clearly authorising the dialogue with NSAGs, as part of their counter terrorism measures, thus obstructing the delivery of assistance in areas under the control of these actors. In Chad, the anti-terror law includes an exemption for humanitarian actors to guarantee their access to those in need in areas where NSAGs are operating. The African Union has also developed such a model law with a similar exemption for humanitarian actors. In Nigeria and Niger, the imposition of armed escorts on all international organisations undermines the capacity to provide neutral humanitarian relief and limits the access of humanitarian organisations in areas with a presence of NSAGs.

Blurring of lines

It is crucial to preserve the humanitarian space and prevent the blurring of lines between humanitarian and military, security, stabilisation or political agendas. Therefore, a functional civil-military coordination platform is essential to enhance the mutual understanding of roles and mandates and preserve the space for principled humanitarian action. Practices such as the use of armed escorts by humanitarian actors or the implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) implemented by national and international armed forces to "win the hearts and minds" of populations create a risk of confusion between humanitarian and military activities. Clarity on the respective mandates of the actors implementing the triple nexus agenda is necessary to ultimately ensure compliance with the humanitarian principles in the delivery of emergency assistance.

Stabilisation strategies and Do no Harm

Stabilisation programmes are targeting / being implemented in areas that are still too fragile from a security point of view (e.g. in parts of Borno State, North-East Nigeria, Liptako-Gourma region). As a result, the return of populations, strongly encouraged and sometimes even imposed by the authorities, puts the civilian population at risk, raising significant protection risks. In these contexts, the Do No Harm approach must prevail throughout the whole lifetime of a stabilisation programme. Shared context and risk analyses between humanitarian and

stabilisation actors are useful to ensure that the protection of civilians remains at the centre of stabilisation programmes from the design phase.

ii) partners (presence, capacity), including absorption capacity on the ground:

Partners' implementation capacities are stretched in areas newly affected by insecurity. Options for international actors to work with local implementing partners exist in the region and DG ECHO encourages the identification of opportunities for a locally-based response built on fair partnership which ensures that any transfer of risk to local responders includes appropriate mitigating measures (e.g. capacity building on security).

There is currently no use of the remote management modality recorded in the region. DG ECHO supports humanitarian organisations which seek to build, maintain or regain acceptance from local communities. This means all their staff are granted free and safe access to people in need by the responsible *de jure* or *de facto* authorities. Where this is not possible, partners are expected to inform DG ECHO without delay of any change which would significantly impact the conditions for implementation, monitoring and reporting and lead to the use of remote management, for part or the totality of the action. In this case, specific reporting requirements will come into effect, and will be communicated by ECHO to its partners in line with the instruction note Ares(2015)2085466 of 19/05/2015.

iii) other:

Logistical challenges are often hampering the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the region. The poor quality of infrastructure, notably roads and airstrips, affects the rollout of humanitarian aid. In addition, the closure of roads due to floods and/or insecurity restricts the movement of humanitarian actors and prevents the affected populations from accessing humanitarian services. Transportation to secondary locations, if they are in hard-to-reach areas, requires complex operations and limits the capacity of the humanitarian community to ensure last-mile delivery. Such logistical issues require coordinated efforts with suppliers and transportation partners.

The growing insecurity and complexity of access require adequate and specific means which have a bearing on the cost of operations. Besides dedicated means in individual actions, DG ECHO will consider funding mutualised services supporting the safeguarding of humanitarian space and access, such as coordination services including the ones under OCHA's mandate, international NGO forums, as well as security and logistics services. To remain effective and efficient, DG ECHO expects its partners to make the best use of existing mutualised services and to ensure that new initiatives in this respect are strongly coordinated with them.

4. HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

In **Burkina Faso**, the resilience to shocks - notably related to food security and nutrition - of the already fragile population is declining further. A triple nexus approach appears essential to mitigate the consequences of the protracted crisis, address the root causes of this crisis and provide durable solutions for people displaced by conflict. However, political instability and its consequences on international cooperation combined with the expanding insecurity and growing administrative impediments (access constraints, cash-transfer ban) considerably constrain nexus opportunities. Still, it is worth noting that the national authorities at technical

level have jointly defined with development and humanitarian actors 4 common strategic outcomes to be attained by 2025 for the advancement of this approach:

1. Peacebuilding and social cohesion are strengthened through inclusive and participatory local governance.
2. Food and nutrition security is sustainably improved
3. People's access to quality basic social services is improved.
4. People benefit equitably from inclusive and quality social protection.

In **Cameroon**, since the endorsement of the Nexus Task Force's collective outcomes by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in October 2019, the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus approach has been integrated into successive Humanitarian Response Plans, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026. The HDP collective outcomes are also linked to the World Bank Country Partnership Framework (CPF). There is a country-specific nexus roadmap as well as convergence areas identified in the Far North and East regions for piloting the nexus approach. The EU has created nexus opportunities through the recent programming of development funds to address food insecurity and support civil society. The first allocation aims at improving food security and at promoting the agro-ecological transition, especially in the Northern regions of the country. The second envelope will assist civil society organisations, such as women associations, which are striving to restore peace, economic stability and social cohesion in the security-strapped regions of the NWSW and the Far North. Nexus opportunities also arise from global tools such as the Education Cannot Wait initiative.

Historically, the operationalisation of nexus in **CAR** gathered momentum after the launch in 2013 of the EU trust fund, the Fonds Békou. Its implementation period finished in 2021, although some residual funding underpins the continuation of several projects, mostly in the health sector. In the same sector, DG ECHO partners are also linking with projects for the revitalization of public health services in the country, which are financed by the World Bank (SENI+) and French cooperation (AFD). Other than health, opportunities for the nexus are also expected in 1) the education sector, combining DG ECHO EiE actions in 'hot-spot' areas with an on-going EUR 30 million EU education program (started in April 2023), 2) in the gender/protection sector subject to further programming, and, 3) in the food security sector, after the launch, in June 2023, of a EUR 22 million EU agricultural and livestock support project. As regards durable solutions for displaced people, an EU regional program (EUR 18 million) is ongoing in the areas along the border between Cameroon and CAR (refugees and IDPs return/integration) and implemented by a consortium of international NGOs. Finally, several initiatives funded by the Foreign Policy Instruments service (FPI) offer opportunities in areas where humanitarian aid is being provided, especially in relation to social cohesion, mediation and conflict mitigation.

Chad is one of the 6 pilot countries chosen for the implementation of the EU triple nexus approach. The Nexus Task Force created in 2020 brings together the main donors and development banks, whilst at the same time enlarging the coordination framework to EU Member States, other like-minded donors, and the World Bank. Based on a joint analysis of needs and risks, a 'Nexus/Territorial Approach' group bringing together members of the Task Force and the main implementing partners including WFP and FAO, seeks to harmonise strategic food security and nutrition decisions. Joint inter-donor missions for needs assessments

are organised regularly. The EU, together with others like AFD, have also joined forces to better address the mixed situation of forced displacement in the country where protracted displacement coexists with new influx of populations fleeing violence and conflicts. In 2023, a new 4-year project co-funded by the EU and AFD and focusing on the resilience and self-reliance of the protracted Sudanese refugees and their host population in the East was signed. Humanitarian and development programming continue building synergies in the Lake Province.

Whilst contexts differ from one country to another, the Northern parts of the **Coastal countries** present a 'buffer zone' with pre-existing structural fragilities, which is adjacent to conflict-affected areas and where security incidents targeting both regular armed forces and civil populations keep increasing. The nexus approach is necessary to avoid a rapid increase in humanitarian and development needs in these fragile Northern areas which are still accessible.

The current political and security crisis in **Mali** has considerably weakened the momentum for the nexus approach with EU cooperation funding difficult to implement. The focus of the EU will be on confirmed nexus gains, such as on food security, social protection and safety nets, health result-based funding, but also on existing opportunities on education and protection. Recently, several development donors, including the EU, have reoriented their implementation modality and their funding support to the South of the country. However, climate change and disaster preparedness in urban settings could also offer scope to operationalize synergies and joint efforts beyond the South.

In **Mauritania**, strengthening preparedness and response through early warning and social protection systems is key to reducing the humanitarian burden. The World Bank and AFD are both supporting the “*Dispositif National de prevention et de response au crises alimentaires et nutritionnelles*” (DCAN). This mechanism bolsters the Government in expanding its shock responsive social safety nets for the most vulnerable thus reducing the humanitarian burden. Both the WB and the EU are reinforcing health systems. Particular attention is needed to advocate for increased shared responsibility with development actors in building up the self-reliance of Malian refugees living in the Hodh El Chargui willaya since 2012, boosting economic opportunities for both refugees and local populations, and supporting climate change adaptation. Development donors and the Government are currently paying attention to the gradual integration of refugee children into the Mauritanian education system. A “development cell” is set up in Hodh El Chargui to promote a needs-based nexus implementation, including durable solutions for the education of forcibly displaced children.

In **Niger**, the institutional nexus framework, led by the Ministry of Humanitarian Action and Crisis Management (through the *Comité Technique Tripartite Nexus Urgence Développement*), has been seeking to strengthen the capacity at decentralised level to ensure coherence and coordination between short-term emergency actions and longer-term programmes. In 2023, the committee adopted a durable solution strategy. The new political situation and rescaling of funding are likely to delay the start of implementation of this strategy. Within the framework of disaster preparedness projects, DG ECHO contributes to strengthening the capacities of local authorities hosting displaced populations for prevention, preparedness and response to shocks. These local authorities are enabled to plan local responses according to the RRM (rapid response mechanism) model and pre-identify sites for the reception of displaced populations and the development and servicing of these sites through the support of technical services.

The EU has been operationalising the Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework in **Nigeria** since 2015 and the country has been one of the six countries identified by the EU in 2017 to pilot the implementation of the triple nexus approach. In the North-East, the main opportunities for nexus advancement are in the areas with lower level of hostilities and better presence of State services such as Adamawa and Yobe in the sectors of health, education and social protection. In the North-West and the North-Centre, there are nexus opportunities in particular in the sectors of disaster preparedness and shock-responsive social protection. In areas of high levels of hostilities and growing mistrust towards the work of the humanitarian aid actors (the majority of the State of Borno), putting in place concrete humanitarian-development-peace actions could blur the lines between humanitarian and other objectives, which could limit even more the humanitarian access to the people in need. In such contexts, advocacy on the protection of civilians, adherence to IHL and preservation of the core humanitarian principles remain key aspects of the peace component of the nexus approach. Implementing the peace component implies also a consistent and well-coordinated position on the stabilisation agenda in North-East Nigeria but also in the broader Lake Chad region. Further contributions to this strategy must remain in line with IHL and the Kampala convention.

5. ENVISAGED DG ECHO RESPONSE STRATEGY AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF HUMANITARIAN AID INTERVENTIONS

5.1.1 Priorities

The following sections present operational priorities for DG ECHO in WCA and 2024, broken down by sector of intervention. Geographical priorities as well as considerations for possible support to multi-country and regional operations are presented in the Technical Annexes to this HIP.

In general terms, the needs have further increased in the region, and the outlook in the short-to medium-term is negative, especially in the Sahel region. The reoccurrence of the refugee crisis in the East of Chad due to the situation in Sudan, and the subsequent scaling up of the humanitarian response in this area, are adding additional pressure on a humanitarian response which is facing major financial constraints among key donors, including the EU. This means that donors such as the EU will need to do more with less and will have to conduct an even more stringent selection process than in the past during the implementation of this HIP.

Humanitarian Protection

Preventing and responding to threats and strengthening individual and communities' capacities to mitigate protection vulnerabilities remains one of DG ECHO's core priorities. To achieve this, DG ECHO will support a range of activities identified following an area-based approach, which includes case management services for all victims of human rights violations, including SGBV (sexual and gender-based violence) survivors and children affected by armed conflicts. The mobile approach to cover hard-to reach areas will be highly valued especially, but not only, in the case of rapid protection assistance. All protection responses need to attain a clear protection outcome and to rely on a sound risk analysis. Complementarity and integration with other sector interventions (health, food, nutrition, education etc) will be particularly welcome. Community-based protection interventions will be highly prioritized when aimed at preventing or reducing protection risks, mitigating and addressing the consequences of violence, coercion,

and deprivation, and building community resilience and preparedness through enhanced capacity and the effective use of local resources. Psychological first aid should be mainstreamed into all responses, while Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services will be needs-based and context appropriate. Activities seeking to monitor and promote compliance with IHL, International Human Rights Law, and Refugee law will be promoted, as are actions seeking to strengthen risk management capacities and the duty of care to better protect and safeguard humanitarian workers. Additionally, activities to prevent and respond to the recruitment and use of children, as well as child protection rapid responses (including for Unaccompanied and Separated Children - UASC) supplying dignified, safe and protective environments will be considered important. Protection monitoring activities should always be complemented with the provision of appropriate individual protection assistance. Any data collection effort should be integrated into a clear and well-defined advocacy strategy.

Food Assistance

The most acute food needs of conflict-affected households and communities should be addressed as rapidly as possible, irrespective of their status. The humanitarian food assistance response should be aligned with entry criteria as expressed in the DG ECHO Food Assistance thematic policy¹⁷. It should address the most acute food needs not covered otherwise (national responses), in priority in IPC/CH Phase 3+ (and, where relevant, in IPC/CH Phase 4) areas and where food gaps not captured by IPC/CH are identified (hard-to-reach/under blockade areas). First, DG ECHO will prioritise rapid food assistance to new IDPs by multisector Rapid Response Mechanisms (RRM) to forcibly displaced people and post-RRM assistance based on a vulnerability analysis. Post-RRM assistance should include the poorest households of the host population in IPC4 (or more) areas. Secondly, DG ECHO will prioritise support for the lean season response (not for Coastal countries) during the post-RRM phase and, depending on resources, in other IPC/CH 3+ areas with aggravating factors such as conflict, blockade and lack of national systems and actors. Thirdly, DG ECHO will consider food assistance to protracted forcibly displaced populations (IDPs or Refugees) only based on a robust context and vulnerability analysis and where it is clearly established that food insecurity is time-bound and not structural and in line with the other food security priorities listed here.

In protracted crises, DG ECHO will support food assistance in the seasons of greatest needs, and not on an annual basis (except if strongly justified by the context - areas under blockade, for example). Finally, based on a strong justification and if local conditions allow, DG ECHO might consider funding emergency livelihood recovery actions with a clear focus on rapidly increasing direct food consumption for the most crisis-affected in the timeframe of the project. In relevant contexts, co-financing is expected to complement the ration with livelihood support. However, livelihood activities possibly supported should be adapted to the local social and environmental contexts. In particular, these should not lead to the over-exploitation of local natural resources and should consider the environmental impact of the support provided to the local economy. Synergies with other longer-term programmes are also expected in order to concretely operationalize the triple nexus.

¹⁷ DG ECHO Thematic Policy Document n° 1 “Humanitarian Food Assistance From Food Aid to Food Assistance”, November 2013
https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/food_assistance/them_policy_doc_foodassistance_en.pdf

Targeting should be based on the severity of food needs¹⁸ and should demonstrate how the poorest who have not yet been assisted (national safety net included) will be reached¹⁹. While the household targeting process might contribute to the establishment of national social registries, these should not necessarily be used as the main entry points for targeting. The response will support food assistance based on a sound risk analysis including protection and conflict sensitivity and will, whenever possible, promote rapid and anticipatory actions. DG ECHO endeavours to promote the use of cash transfers, when appropriate, in the interest of the affected populations and for the purposes of cost-efficiency and better effectiveness regarding food expected results. The analysis of food gaps at household level will be considered to determine the size of the food basket, so as to enable vulnerable households to reach 2,100 Kcal/p/day for at least three consecutive months with an acceptable diet in quality and quantity, and according to their level of vulnerability. It will be adapted to the household size with a maximum size and solid and reported verification mechanisms. It will also consider enriched flour for 6-23 months. When possible, clean energy for cooking needs should be foreseen to limit deforestation, and, when possible, the environmental (energy) impact of different food options should also be taken into account.

Nutrition

The severe undernutrition treatment program, which should constitute the core component of the DG ECHO nutrition response, should be integrated into health assistance, where possible. Partners are requested to ensure that the needs of both sectors are systematically addressed when either is concerned. The nutrition-specific response will focus on the screening and treatment of severe acute undernutrition among children under 5 in areas where the humanitarian needs exceed the national response capacity. Conflict-affected and forcibly displaced populations are expected to be the main target populations for nutrition assistance as they face high malnutrition rates and poor access to public services. Partners should also ensure adequate performance and free treatment for the beneficiaries. When integration into a public healthcare system is not possible, partners are expected to develop appropriate strategies to maintain access to services (i.e., external human resources, mobile setup, etc.), and to submit and work toward an exit strategy. While responding to humanitarian nutrition needs, DG ECHO partners are also expected to empower local actors (community health workers, qualified healthcare staff, district officials, etc.) to become effective and independent in screening undernutrition, monitoring the nutrition situation and the CMAM (Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition) performance, anticipating and addressing peaks, managing supplies, treating children, and counselling caretakers e.g. for infant and child feeding.

The nutrition response can be integrated into RRM to provide quick and short-term assistance²⁵ in case of sudden onset crises involving a limited number of people. One-off nutrition assessments, including SMART (Standardises Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions) surveys, can be supported to quickly measure the prevalence of undernutrition and other indicators of humanitarian relevance in areas which are likely to face an acute crisis and in view of a possible scaling up of the response, and not for routine statistical purposes.

¹⁸ Through the HEA principles: Household Economy Approach

¹⁹ Exceptions can be considered if sound verification processes are established to eliminate inclusion errors and if partners can identify people in acute needs who are excluded from national registries.

Coordination mechanisms for enhanced preparedness and response, contributing to strengthening local capacities with a clear humanitarian focus, can be considered for funding. As part of the efforts towards environmentally sustainable management of aid-related waste, the adequate waste management of nutrition product packaging should be considered.

Health

Priority will be given to health activities with the highest prospect of saving lives, with a focus on supporting areas where access to health care is compromised or non-existent. Support provided to existing health facilities or mobile clinics must ensure access to comprehensive primary healthcare and facilitate referral capacities to ensure continuity of care. Health operations will systematically integrate case management of acute malnutrition (see above), including when mobile clinics are deployed, rather than stand-alone nutrition interventions and facilities. Health and nutrition interventions will consistently incorporate appropriate linkages with the protection sector and prioritise care for victims of gender-based violence. Operations should take a patient-centred approach and address identified humanitarian needs for all population groups, ages, and gender. Furthermore, health care projects should meet the specific needs of women and girls by offering comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care services, as well as mental health services. Given the high occurrence of epidemics in the region, a timely response to epidemics remains a regional priority. Partners must also indicate their capacity to intervene in the event of an epidemic. Environmentally sustainable management of healthcare waste should be ensured, to the extent possible.

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH), shelter and settlements

There is a need to increase and improve access to safe water and adequate sanitation, and to upgrade WASH facilities/services, their management and sustainability, including environmental sustainability, notably by promoting self-reliance while ensuring access to the most vulnerable ones. Depending on the magnitude of the needs, standalone WASH and shelter projects can be considered where relevant. Priority in all interventions will be given to displaced population sites, host communities burdened with significant caseloads of forcibly displaced populations, with high human concentrations, rendering them prone to the spread of epidemics. In a fragile environmental context such as the Sahel or the Lake Chad regions, the completion of new water supply facilities should integrate their possible negative impact on the local environment in line with existing good practices and assessment tools: e.g. solar pumping equipped boreholes should be fitted with a manual pump and the number of manual pumps installed in a borehole should be commensurate with the needs and the expected yields. Work on water supply solutions in agro-pastoral contexts should include good practices related to these specific contexts. The creation of new water points should be seen as the last resort solution, resting on the do-no-harm approach as well as social and environmental impact assessments. Support to short-term water solutions such as water trucking should be justified and can be foreseen only on the condition of a reasonable exit strategy. Safer, smarter and more environmentally-friendly shelters are also elements to be considered, including for returnee households. Camp/site coordination and camp management (CCCM) need to be reinforced, evidence-based, and better covered to actually target and reach humanitarian guidelines.

Education in Emergencies

The primary target of EiE projects is conflict-affected, hard to reach, forcibly displaced, out-of-school children (IDPs, refugees, returnees) in camps and in host communities. In the Central

Sahel, DG ECHO wishes to concentrate interventions in hard-to-reach zones, rather than in the urban, displacement sites where the needs exceed DG ECHO's resources, and where development donors can intervene with more consequent investments. DG ECHO's funding cannot focus on repairing the structural deficiencies of the system but can act as a catalyst to work in complementarity with development donors to build the nexus bridge, notably with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the World Bank and the Agence française de développement (AFD).

When planning the response, a thorough analysis of the context is essential, not only from a political and security perspective but also in terms of what educational services are on offer and what is considered 'acceptable' or not – especially in a context where education is under attack. Continued advocacy and implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) is paramount. Within this framework, DG ECHO considers that there are clear links to be made with larger DP (disaster preparedness) initiatives, where the school contingency planning is a leverage for integrated community level SSD and DP implementation. Environmental awareness and greening initiatives should also be included as much as possible. Furthermore, it is crucial that partners identify and analyse the multiple barriers to education (social, cultural, economic, gender, linguistic, status, geographic, etc.). Understanding that many of the solutions to the barriers are to be found beyond the education sector means that integrated and multisectoral responses (child protection, food security, health, WASH and shelter) will be the most effective. Partners will be requested to define their actions as part of an area-based approach.

With regards to the choice of the most appropriate education response, partners must undertake a thorough profiling of children (age, gender, time out of school, never been to school, etc.) and continue testing, piloting and innovating, providing the entire range of accelerated education options as well as other alternative programmes to increase access to learning. In some contexts, it may be necessary to envisage informal education responses. Expanding rapid EiE responses will be necessary and recommended.

Disaster Preparedness

DG ECHO's approach to preparedness is multi-hazard/threat i.e. it addresses natural and biological hazards as well as human-induced threats such as conflict/violence. Furthermore, in view of the increasing impact of climate change and environmental degradation, DG ECHO's approach also specifically accounts for these factors and their interaction with situations of conflict and fragility, to help at-risk people and communities and systems to adapt and boost their resilience.

Targeted stand-alone DP actions will be supported under the dedicated DP budget line in 3 countries under this HIP: Cameroon, Niger and Mali. Where possible and relevant, support to DRM (Disaster Risk Management) authorities, and disaster preparedness system-based approach will be considered. In addition to community-based interventions. The contribution in this sector must allow the development of approaches which integrate a better preparation to act upstream of the deterioration of shocks and crises and should consider gaps identified

from recent disaster management responses. Strengthened collaboration with development actors will be encouraged. Four priorities are identified²⁰:

1. Risk- and forecast-based anticipatory actions such as strengthening early warning systems that will incorporate the following key elements: i) Risk knowledge; ii) Monitoring and warning; iii) Alert dissemination and communication; and iv) Response capability.
2. Preparedness in conflict and fragile settings to build capacity for surveillance, warning, and protection as well as for integrating conflict sensitivity into contingency planning. Contribution to contingency plan will have to consider: i) scenarios; ii) existing coordination mechanism; iii) strengthening or development of emergency tools and resources; and iv) involvement and empowerment of first responders.
3. Climate and environmental resilience to address specific climate-related challenges (e.g., displacement) and preparedness for an environmentally-sustainable response through environmentally friendly solutions; action such as strengthening shock readiness system that will consider contribution to improve the: i) information management, ii) targeting process, iii) delivery capacity, and iv) coordination mechanism; and
4. Urban preparedness to target specific challenges of crises in urban contexts.

5.1.2. Programmatic Partnerships

Programmatic partnerships are already ongoing in the region in the sectors of coordination, disaster preparedness and response, IHL, protection, nutrition, education in emergency and logistics.

New PPs could be envisaged in the sectors listed under *5.1.1 priorities*.

Please see the HIPTA for operational, technical and administrative details, and more specifically section 4.2 on country priorities.

5.1.3. Multi-Year Funding

Multi-year funding is an option for actions in all sectors of humanitarian assistance supported by DG ECHO, although the final decision on the duration of DG ECHO funding will also need to take into account the opportunity cost of longer funding, when assessed against possible staged approaches, and/or shorter and equally needed interventions.

Education in Emergency proposals are expected to be of a minimum initial duration of 2 years, in order to ensure the delivery of effective and comprehensive educational solutions for children affected by humanitarian crises.

Disaster preparedness is another sector where multi-year funding is particularly relevant, given the strong component of capacity building of local and national actors that these actions usually entail.

Please refer to HIPTA sections 3.g and 4.d for technical and administrative details.

²⁰ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/document/download/13015e8b-acaf-4d8a-b665-d2aab142c97b_en

Other DG ECHO interventions

The Emergency Toolbox HIP may be drawn upon for the prevention of, and response to, outbreaks of Epidemics. Under the Emergency Toolbox HIP, the Small-Scale Response, Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT) and Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) instruments may also provide funding options.

Activities under this HIP might be complemented by the activation of the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC). The EHRC is a DG ECHO led global initiative, aiming at supporting humanitarian partners for the delivery of humanitarian assistance with a gap-filling approach. Under the EHRC the Commission has at its disposal several tools that can be activated in case of sudden onset disasters, e.g., a series of Common Logistics Services (including air operations, warehousing services, last-mile ground transportation, etc.), a stockpile of emergency items, and deployment of humanitarian expertise.