

BURKINA FASO

Conflict-induced displacement

CRISIS OVERVIEW

- The security situation in Burkina Faso is deteriorating, with increased activity from armed groups. As at 31 January 2023, there were more than 1.9 million IDPs in the country, a 3% increase compared to 31 December 2022 (UNHCR 15/03/2023). From January–December 2022, more than 300,000 people were additionally displaced in the country (ECHO 08/02/2023).
- Conflict and climatic shocks, such as longer-than-average dry seasons, high temperatures, and flooding, combined with socioeconomic inequalities, have aggravated the access of affected people to food, water, and essential services (UNHCR accessed 19/03/2023). 14 out of 45 provinces in Burkina Faso were in a state of emergency as at December 2022 (ECHO accessed 05/04/2023; ECHO 08/02/2023).
- An estimated 4.7 million people are expected to need humanitarian assistance in 2023. Approximately 3.53 million people will need emergency food assistance during the 2023 lean season (June–August), a 333% increase compared to the 2015–2020 average (ECHO 08/02/2023; WFP 09/03/2023).
- More than 179,000 malnourished children required life-saving treatment in 2022 (ECHO 08/02/2023).
- As at 31 January 2023, about 35,806 refugees and asylum seekers had requested international protection in Burkina Faso, mainly from Mali (ECHO 08/02/2023). These newly displaced people are already in need of humanitarian assistance and are also likely to be affected by the insecurity crisis in Burkina Faso (UNHCR 15/03/2023). In 2023, about 4.7 million people were estimated to need humanitarian assistance (WFP 09/03/2023). Over 3.5 million are estimated to be food-insecure in 2023 (FAO 2023).

DRIVER OF THE CRISIS

Non-state armed groups

Burkina Faso is located in the Central Sahel region of West Africa, which is becoming the epicentre of the violence from non-state armed groups that spilled over from Mali (ACAPS 03/03/2023; R2P 28/02/2023). From 2016–2019, several armed groups carried out attacks in Burkina Faso (ICG 05/03/2018). In 2019, these groups began fighting for the territorial control of several regions of the country, mainly along the border with Niger and Mali and in Sahel and Est regions (KAS 2021). Since 2021, there has been an increase in attacks by non-state armed groups against civilians and in clashes between the Burkinabe army (with support from its civilian auxiliaries) and armed groups. The number of reported deaths from political violence in the country increased by 77% in 2022 (ACLEDD accessed 03/04/2023).

As at February 2023, about 40% of the country, including Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-Nord, Est, Nord, and Sahel regions, were under the control of armed groups (Le Monde 22/02/2023). According to Al Jazeera, al-Qaeda-affiliated Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) have caused deep tensions among communities by controlling economic activities and triggering political instability (Al Jazeera 11/03/2022).

Violence from armed groups have triggered displacement, particularly in rural areas (UNICEF 21/07/2022; R2P 28/02/2023). As at January 2023, almost 1.9 million people were internally displaced in Burkina Faso, representing an increase of more than 25% in comparison to January 2022 (UNHCR accessed 03/04/2023). As at January 2023, most of the displacement was occurring in Nayala province, in Boucle de Mouhoun region, and people were fleeing not just from their homes but also from places where they had previously taken refuge (OCHA 22/02/2023; NRC 05/09/2022). Multiple displacements resulting from violence have become more frequent and have led to the displacement crisis in Burkina Faso becoming one of the fastest-growing displacement crises in the world (NRC 05/09/2022 and 28/01/2020; UNHCR 29/11/2022).

State security forces and pro-government militias

Since 2016, when non-state armed groups began carrying out attacks in Burkina Faso, the State's response has been essentially military. Burkina Faso's army has hardly been trained for such threats, which, combined with political instability, has led to a number of abuses by security forces, including the killing of civilians, gender-based violence (GBV), and forced displacements (HRW accessed 05/04/2023; HRW 17/03/2023). Armed groups have taken advantage of this situation to recruit civilians, increasing their operational capacity (ICG 28/01/2022; ISS 09/01/2023).

Since 2019, with non-state armed groups growing much stronger, the Government has deepened its support for pro-government militias. This support includes their sponsorship and legalisation in 2020 through the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland legal framework, which the parliament approved in January 2020 (Accord 15/03/2022). These militias have been involved in various acts of violence against civilians, including massacres and forced disappearances, and armed groups also attack civilians upon suspected involvement in the State's military campaign (Le Monde 03/01/2023; Watchlist accessed 05/04/2023; HRW 16/05/2022).

Stigmatisation of civilians and lack of accountability

The Government's use of civilian militias to combat non-state armed groups affects civilians in at least three ways. First, it increases their risk of forced recruitment. Several NGOs have reported that people are being forcibly recruited into militias (Africanews 29/03/2023). At the same time, in the face of reported abuses by security forces and militias, armed groups have also been able to recruit more civilians (Counter Extremism Project accessed 05/04/2023).

Second, the increased involvement of civilians has led to their stigmatisation. On the one hand, armed groups have increased their acts of indiscriminate violence, as they understand that in communities where militias are stronger, civilians are their enemies (The Jamestown Foundation 03/03/2023). On the other hand, non-state armed groups have also carried out trials punishing civilians for collaborating with the State, limiting civilians' access to aid that involves the State as an intermediary (ICG 26/01/2023).

Finally, the responsibility of militias vis-à-vis civilians is blurred. These forces, not having received adequate training, have been responsible for a number of abuses against civilians (VOA 06/07/2021). It is unclear how the State will punish those responsible. In fact, in 2019, a law was passed criminalising some aspects of reporting on security force operations, including pro-government militias (HRW accessed 05/04/2023). Subsequently, several reporters have said that they are refraining from publishing about the conflicts to avoid government reprimands

(VOA 29/03/2023 and 17/06/2021). In 2021, the Burkina Faso Government also issued a decree granting immunity to members of counterterrorism security forces for acts committed in the course of their duties (European Parliament 17/02/2022). This lack of accountability has led to further abuses against civilians by both Burkina Faso's security forces and pro-government militias (HRW 16/05/2022; TNH 09/03/2020).

ANTICIPATED SCALE AND SCOPE

- French military forces deployed in Burkina Faso leveraged the country's security for several years. In January 2023, the Burkina Faso military government ordered them to leave the country; in February, they officially ceased (Counter Extremism Project accessed 05/04/2023; France 24 20/02/2023). To meet the demand for manpower, the military junta is looking to recruit more than 50,000 civilians to fight non-state armed groups (Africanews 26/10/2022; ISS 09/01/2023). This new wave of recruitment may increase tensions between armed groups, militias, state security forces, and the civilian population. This means that further attacks on civilians and abuses by state and non-state armed groups are likely in the coming months (The Jamestown Foundation 03/03/2023). Bordering areas in the north and east of Burkina Faso are the most affected by the conflict. Conflict is also intensifying in the western and southern regions of the country (UNHCR 15/03/2023).
- Refugees regularly come to Burkina Faso because of conflict in the bordering areas of Niger and Mali. As at 28 February 2023, Burkina Faso hosted more than 35,000 refugees, the majority of whom were in Sahel and Centre-Nord regions. This figure represents an increase of more than 65% compared to January 2021 (UNHCR accessed 04/04/2023). The security crisis in Mali has deteriorated rapidly over the past few years (UN HRC 31/03/2023). In March 2023, new attacks were reported in the country (OCHA 28/03/2023). The arrival of Russian mercenaries has also increased tensions, as they have been accused of committing attacks against civilians (NYT 31/01/2023). Given that these crises in neighbouring countries are likely to be sustained over time, the number of refugees in Burkina Faso is also likely to be sustained or to even increase over time. Bordering areas of Burkina Faso, like Seytenga and Dori, have already become overburdened since the crisis started. The increasing number of refugees overstretching the humanitarian response (NRC 05/09/2023; Haavik et al. 05/10/2022).

HUMANITARIAN CONSTRAINTS

- Because of the current conflict, the authorities have imposed movement restrictions in several areas of Burkina Faso, affecting the movement of the population and the access of humanitarian responders (ECHO 08/02/2023; The Borgen Project 28/11/2022). Ten municipalities remain blocked in the regions of Est, Nord, and Sahel (FEWS NET 10/03/2023).
- Conflict often destroys communication facilities (ECHO 08/02/2023).
- Violence and insecurity continue to challenge the access of humanitarian responders to the affected areas. Reaching people who need humanitarian assistance is a major challenge for humanitarian responders given limited access resulting from the presence of explosive devices, contested control of some roads by different armed groups, and attacks on vital infrastructure, such as water points (ECHO 08/02/2023; ECHO accessed 05/04/2023).
- Many roads are damaged and not suitable for trucks transporting food for people and to sustain livestock (IPS 14/03/2023). Humanitarian responders can only reach some areas via helicopter (FEWS NET 10/03/2023).
- The Government has banned the foreign media outlet RFI from broadcasting in the country, and the military has interrogated and forced two journalists to leave the country (Publicnow 03/04/2023; The Guardian 02/04/2023; Reuters 04/12/2022).
- Counterterrorism legislation in Sahel region prohibits cash transfers, hampering the humanitarian response to vulnerable and remotely located populations (ECHO 08/02/2023; The Borgen Project 28/11/2022; OCHA 27/06/2022).
- Some aid workers have been killed in Burkina Faso (AP 08/02/2023). Humanitarian vehicles have also been targeted (HumAngle Media 09/02/2023).
- Community members have assisted people in need of humanitarian assistance in some registration processes, but there are reports of some of these community members demanding sex or money in exchange for assistance (TNH 26/07/2021). This limits access to humanitarian assistance for many populations. IDP camps also have limited access for outsiders. In particular, journalists have been banned from accessing these spaces (Al Jazeera 25/05/2021).

PRIORITY NEEDS

Displacement

Displacement sites in some areas are not secure, meaning IDPs seeking shelter in those areas may be displaced again because of insecurity. There is a lack of granular information regarding IDP sites. IDPs are gathering in Centre-Nord, Est, Nord, and Sahel areas, comprising more than 70% of the total number of IDPs in the country (WFP 09/03/2023; UNHCR accessed 04/04/2023).

As at 24 October 2022, about 73% of IDP households had been displaced for over one year, and 34% for over two years (IOM 28/12/2022). Conflict has displaced about one in ten people in Burkina Faso (NRC 05/09/2022; MSF 11/06/2021). As most of the displacement sites are in urban areas with enough facilities and safety compared to their places of origin, most of the IDPs have reported wanting to stay in the host location instead of returning to their places of origin (IOM 28/12/2022; OXFAM 27/05/2020). Even with host communities also supporting the displaced population as their capacity allows, humanitarian support is still a dire need of the rapidly increasing displaced population (NRC 05/09/2022).

For the massive number of displaced people, shelter support is largely required, as, according to the Council for Emergency Relief and Recovery, among the displaced population in Burkina Faso, about 65% of IDPs were adult women. It is likely that many men have been forced to join armed groups, because of which they have been unable to accompany their female partners upon fleeing (IDMC 05/03/2020). To protect women from GBV and children from abuse, safe and secure shelter arrangements need to be ensured in displacement sites (IOM 28/12/2022; WFP 09/03/2023; IDMC 05/03/2020).

Food security and livelihoods

As at February 2023, parts of Sahel and Nord regions were facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity levels, particularly in areas where armed groups have restrained the mobility of communities and humanitarian response is not accessible. Food insecurity is forecasted in the upcoming months, specifically IPC 4 in Sahel and Nord regions and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels in Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-Nord, Est, and Nord regions (FAO 2023; FEWS NET 10/03/2023). Over 3.5 million people are projected to be facing high levels of acute food insecurity (FAO 2023).

Food insecurity has increased because of conflict, movement restrictions, extreme climate events, and price hikes, leading to further displacement (UNICEF 21/07/2022 and 15/03/2023; NRC 05/09/2022). IDP adults have reported taking only one meal per day to be able to feed their

children twice a day (UNICEF 21/07/2022; NRC 05/09/2022). Compared to the lean season (June–August) of 2021, the rate of severe food insecurity doubled during the lean season of 2022, with over 600,000 people experiencing emergency hunger levels (NRC 05/09/2022). People forced to move have had to leave their farms, land, and livestock behind, affecting their source of food, meat, and milk (WFP 09/03/2023). Access to farmland, agricultural land, and markets is challenging, increasing people’s dependency on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs. As at December 2022, violence had affected roughly 40% of land in Burkina Faso that used to accommodate income-generating activities (ECHO accessed 05/04/2023).

Nutrition

Between August 2022 and July 2023, an estimated 400,000 children under the age of five will likely suffer from acute malnutrition at the national level. Among them, nearly a quarter are likely to experience severe acute malnutrition. 80,000 pregnant and lactating women are likely to be acutely malnourished in the same period (IPC 17/01/2023; ECHO 08/02/2023). Nutrition treatment for 6–59-month-aged children is required to prevent malnutrition, as many cases of nutrition deficiency have been recorded across the country, especially in conflict-affected areas (UNICEF 07/03/2023).

Health

As at January 2023, over 2.4 million people were facing problems in accessing health facilities in Burkina Faso (ECHO 08/02/2023). Conflict has affected more than 600 health facilities, among which 211 were fully closed and about 408 were operating at the minimum level. Functional health facilities have limited medical supplies and ambulances from responding to emergency calls in conflict-affected areas (ECHO 08/02/2023; UNICEF 07/03/2023). Because of poor access to WASH facilities and the unhealthy environment in displacement sites of Burkina Faso, cholera and meningitis outbreaks have become regular health phenomena in conflict-affected areas of the country (ECHO 08/02/2023 and 13/01/2023; UNICEF 07/03/2023 and 21/07/2022). Conflict-affected people require primary healthcare services. Pregnant and nursing women are also in need of medical attention, and children are in need of vaccination (UNICEF 07/03/2023). Mental health support, particularly for IDPs, is highly needed (NRC 05/09/2022; UNICEF 07/03/2023).

Protection

There are regular reports of the abduction or targeting of women, girls, and children for GBV or child abuse (UNHCR 15/03/2023). The availability of protection services is decreasing for civilians, as humanitarian workers face challenges to accessing affected communities

because of insecurity and the presence of non-state armed groups, combined with physical access constraints. As a result, protection incidents are likely higher in affected areas (UNHCR 15/03/2023; MSF 11/06/2021).

WASH

During conflict, the use of volatile devices to attack water points has made the existing water crisis in Burkina Faso more severe. The conflict is also hampering access to essential water and sanitation services for host communities already experiencing a lack of WASH services (ECHO 08/02/2023). The arrival of newly displaced people from different parts of the affected areas to displacement sites have made the host areas vulnerable to resource scarcity and an imbalance in the running system of food and water. Extreme heat and climate change have also led to about 60% of the water from specific dams to evaporate (UNICEF USA 21/07/2022; OXFAM accessed 02/04/2023). Many families are struggling to fetch water for their daily basic needs (MSF 11/06/2021; NRC 05/09/2022). Villages tend to be close to waterways, but because of insecurity, displaced populations are moving to areas where they are deprived of water sources (IPS 14/03/2023).

Communication and transportation

Armed groups have isolated many communities by blocking main roads, affecting the local population’s access to basic services. Government authorities have also restricted access to some conflict-affected areas to keep the general population safe from armed groups. To do that, they have established checkpoints and blockades along transportation routes, hindering people’s mobility (UNICEF 07/03/2023; NRC 05/09/2022). The Government has also suspended the broadcast of France’s RFI radio because of supposed interviews with armed groups (Reuters 04/12/2022).

Education

Attacks against schools have severely affected educational facilities in the country. As at the end of February 2023, nearly 10,000 were closed because of violence and the overall security crisis, a 44% (4,258) increase since May 2022 (NRC 21/03/2023; NRC accessed 05/04/2023; R2P 28/02/2023). The increase represents 24% of all academic structures in the country (NRC 21/03/2023). As at February 2023, over one million students were out of school because of school shutdowns, and 31,077 teachers were without employment. Among the students who were out of school, about 262,388 have started school again in a formal classroom, as at 7 March (UNICEF 07/03/2023). School-going children who become displaced and who have to leave their education and home behind to survive will likely have long-term mental health and psychosocial support needs (NRC 05/09/2022).

AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Competition over valuable resources

Burkina Faso is rich in mineral resources, like gold, zinc, copper, manganese, phosphate, and limestone. The country also has unexploited diamond, bauxite, nickel, and vanadium resources (EITI accessed 21/03/2023). The country has gold mines as well, and every year, the Burkina Faso Government generates millions of dollars from using these resources. Armed groups and different entities seek control of these gold mines and the economic trade route (Al Jazeera 11/03/2023).

The surrounding areas of Burkina Faso comprise regional economic hubs, seaports, and coastal trade areas, which the Government and non-state armed groups fight over the control of. Interest in grabbing resources and benefits and holding power over territories further fuels conflict, leaving civilians affected and displaced as a result (Al Jazeera 11/03/2023; NRC 05/09/2022; ACLED accessed 19/03/2023).

Climate change impacts

Climate change and extreme heat have had an impact on people's lives and livelihoods in Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso has a long record of climate change vulnerability, and it is prone to prolonged drought, flood, and epidemics followed by several seasonal events (WB accessed 21/03/2023; IOM 28/12/2022; GFDRR/WB 18/06/2011). In recent years, heavy flooding, long dry seasons, low rainfall, and extreme weather events have led to increased displacement and damage to available resources. Climate change has also greatly affected the agricultural sector of the country, with climatic events and hazards aggravating the competition over natural resources (IOM 28/12/2022). Flooding and drought have greatly affected livelihoods and food security especially for the crisis-affected population. Extreme heat is evaporating water from reserved sources, creating water scarcity throughout the country (OXFAM accessed 02/04/2023). Children and older people face health-related issues because of extreme heat, water scarcity, and dehydration (UNICEF 21/07/2022).

Poverty

About 40% of people live under the poverty line in the country (WB accessed 19/03/2023). Burkina Faso is among the ten poorest countries in the world (USA Today 07/07/2019; ECHO accessed 05/04/2023). Subsistence farming and traditional livestock farming are the main sources of income for the majority of the Burkinabe (ILO 03/2007). Some farmers also produce cash crops like cotton, but revenue from this product is uncertain because of international

market conditions. People struggle to meet their basic needs amid this level of poverty. As at February 2023, Burkina Faso's inflation rate was 6.1%, raising the prices of essential products and reducing people's purchasing capacity (UNICEF 21/07/2022; TE accessed 19/03/2023). The collective impact of poverty, price hikes, conflict, and uncertain market conditions have made people vulnerable. On the other hand, displaced populations are gathering in comparatively better areas, creating competition for resources with and aggravating the needs of host communities (IOM 28/12/2022; WFP 09/03/2023).

Political instability

Political instability mostly increased after the regime of Blaise Compaoré ended on 31 October 2014. He took over the country in late 1987 and served as president for 27 years. Compaoré's regime was considered semi-authoritarian, as he allowed press and opposition party politics (Peace Insight 04/02/2015; ACLED accessed 19/03/2023). There was a debate between Compaoré and the opposition party to change the constitution for re-election in 2015. On 31 October 2014, Compaoré announced that he had left the presidency because of the intra-country protests of the opposition creating a power vacuum. The complicated and troublesome political transition started upon his exit, making the country insecure. The stepping down of Compaoré affected the formal and informal networks of security provision and economic, business, and diplomatic relations in the country (Haavik et al. 05/10/2022). Compaoré's regime was also marked with many administrative flaws, along with human rights violations, but he ensured Burkina Faso's domestic stability (Haavik et al. 05/10/2022; MSF 11/06/2021; Peace Insight 04/02/2015).

January 2022 saw the onset of the military coup started by Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba. Later, on 30 September, Captain Ibrahim Traoré, a member of the artillery unit of the armed forces of Burkina Faso, ousted Sandaogo Damiba and declared himself as transitional president of Burkina Faso. During Sandaogo Damiba's rule, relations with allies such as France, who were leading intervention authorities, had deteriorated, and French forces had been withdrawn from Burkina Faso. Traoré revealed little strategic planning since he has taken over and again established military rule in the country, which is still evolving from Compaoré's 27-year military-turned-authoritarian government (ACSS 28/10/2022; Al Jazeera 05/10/2022).

Compaoré had a tight relationship with military and political elites. The army he led served as his shield of security against the opponent and other external threats. Within nine months after his regime ended, two coups took over the country, marking the latest political instability and shift in Burkina Faso, amid other non-state armed group threat and security issues (ACSS 28/10/2022; Al Jazeera 05/10/2022). The country has become vulnerable to conflict because of a lack of national and international security networks and cooperation (Haavik et al. 05/10/2022; ACLED accessed 19/03/2023; HRW accessed 05/04/2023).

UKRAINE WAR

Africa mainly imports wheat from Russia and Ukraine. After the Ukraine war started in February 2022, the interrupted supply chain cut off Burkina Faso's food supply, especially of wheat. As at 26 July 2022, wheat prices, and by extension bread prices, had risen. There have been protests and negotiations between bakers and the Government, with the latter refusing to let the former increase the price of bread further. In response, bakers have been able to produce only a limited supply of bread, triggering displacement related to food insecurity (AA 26/05/2022).

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

In 2023, the EU has allocated EUR 25.5 million for humanitarian aid in the country (ECHO 08/02/2023). The UNHCR has also reinforced its protection interventions and civil documentation services in Burkina Faso given the scale of humanitarian needs in the country. The UN Refugee Agency has been working closely with the Government to provide durable solutions, such as the inclusion of affected people in national services. UNICEF has received USD 2.5 million for 2023, with about USD 8.3 million carried over from 2022, but there remained a 95% funding gap for this year as at 31 January 2023 (UNICEF 07/03/2023). To address the needs of three million people, the Humanitarian Response Plan requires USD 866 million in funding in 2023 (OCHA 17/01/2023).

INFORMATION GAPS

- The high displacement numbers have led to a lack of shelter-related information.
- In general, many areas of Burkina Faso experience water scarcity, leading to hygiene-related problems. That said, there is a gap in displacement site WASH-related information.
- There is a lack of information on children and vulnerable groups.

PROJECTED ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY SITUATION OF BURKINA FASO (JUNE-AUGUST 2023)

