

# HUNGER CRISIS IN MALI

## ADVOCACY BRIEF

November 2022

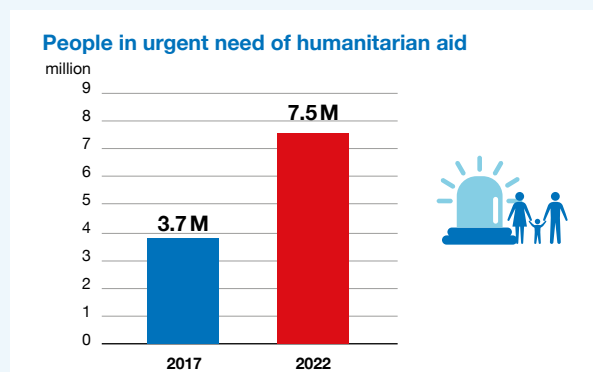
Mali, like the rest of the Central Sahel, has been increasingly characterized by protracted conflict and insecurity, large-scale population displacement, climate shocks through extreme weather events, and a **rapidly worsening hunger crisis** that has been exacerbated by multiple recent economic shocks.

It is not just hunger and malnutrition, which are reaching critical, life-threatening levels. It is also the many disproportionate impacts that girls and young women face due to hunger: increased gender-based violence, early child forced marriage, school dropout, and the dangerous lack of essential health services.

# OVERVIEW OF HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

## Mali is facing a rapid deterioration in humanitarian needs.

In just five years, from 2017 to 2022, the number of people in urgent need of humanitarian aid in Mali [doubled](#) from 3.7 million to 7.5 million, over a third of Mali's population.<sup>1</sup> This staggering number includes [5.1 million](#) children in urgent humanitarian need of food, nutrition, water, health, education, protection and shelter.<sup>2</sup>



**The main drivers of the hunger crisis in Mali are conflict, climate change and economic shocks.**

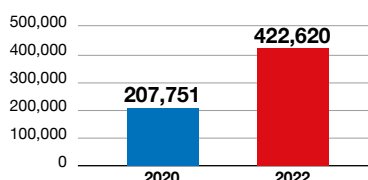
Civilians in the country's centre and north (especially in the regions of Bandiagara, Douentza, Mopti, Ségou, Gao and Ménaka) are either caught in the crossfire of conflict or deliberately targeted, violating a central tenet of international humanitarian law. Particularly in the tri-border area with Niger and Burkina Faso, the security situation has worsened considerably.<sup>3</sup>

**There are nearly 2,000 schools closed around the country**, either because they were attacked by armed groups or because teachers fled for their safety.<sup>4</sup> This represents almost a [quarter](#) of all schools in northern, central and southern Mali, affecting 600,000 Malian children who remain out of school.<sup>5</sup>

Civilians continue to flee for their safety in the hundreds of thousands. The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Mali has [almost doubled](#) in less than two years, reaching 422,620 in August 2022.<sup>6</sup> They continue to be

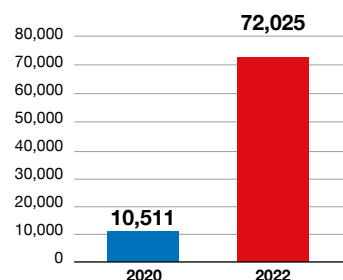
forcibly displaced to flee conflict, insecurity and floods, often to areas that have little to services or economic opportunities. The country also hosts about 56,000 refugees, mostly from Niger, Burkina Faso and Mauritania.<sup>7</sup>

### Internally displaced people (IDPs)



**Floods** are having devastating impacts, submerging villages under water, leaving families no choice but to leave to find shelter elsewhere. This year, at least [72,025](#) were affected by floods, almost seven times the number of those who were affected by floods last year.<sup>8</sup>

### People affected by floods



To make matters worse, Mali has had to endure **multiple economic shocks** over the last two years: from the economic fallout caused by COVID<sup>9</sup> to regional sanctions (now lifted)<sup>10</sup> to the impacts of the Ukraine conflict on heavily import-dependent Mali,<sup>11</sup> thousands of Malians were catapulted into acute food insecurity, unable to access sufficient nutritious food due to a prohibitive rise in the prices of essential food items.





# UNPRECEDENTED HUNGER CRISIS

During this year's lean season (June-September), the period between planting and harvesting, an estimated **1.84 million people were suffering from acute food insecurity** (Crisis Level IPC 3 and above), meaning the lack of food is threatening their lives or livelihoods.<sup>12</sup> This record-breaking number is an increase of over half a million people who were acutely food insecure last year and includes 156,000 people at Emergency Level IPC 4.

Emergency Level impacts members of households who are suffering from very high acute malnutrition or excess mortality and are only able to mitigate food consumption gaps by employing emergency livelihood strategies and selling assets.

Throughout the last year, it is estimated that more than 1.2 million children under five suffered from **acute malnutrition**.<sup>13</sup> Within this number, over 300,000 children suffered from the most life-

threatening form of acute malnutrition, Severe Acute Malnutrition.<sup>14</sup> Otherwise known as severe wasting, this is a lethal condition where a lack of nutritious food turns common childhood illnesses (like diarrhoea or measles) into killers. The bodies of severely wasted children are reduced to the most basic bodily functions, such as breathing.

Even as Malians harvest their crops at the end of this year's rainy season, high levels of acute food insecurity are expected to continue into 2023 given the impact of insecurity and the lasting impact of recent economic shocks.

A number of mitigation measures have been taken by the Government of Mali, including notably the introduction of price ceilings for certain basic food items. However, government efforts were strongly impacted by budgetary pressures linked to regional sanctions and the suspension of budgetary aid from major development donors.

**1.84 MILLION  
PEOPLE  
IN ACUTE FOOD  
INSECURITY**

**1.2 MILLION  
CHILDREN  
SUFFERED FROM  
ACUTE MALNUTITION  
LAST YEAR.**



## OUR FIELD RESEARCH

We know that **gender inequality is exacerbated during emergencies**. Through our Rapid Gender Analysis and a study on Cash and Voucher Assistance (both conducted in August 2022 in the regions of Mopti, Gao, Tombouctou, Segou and Menaka), we spoke with 1352 girls, boys, women and men. We found the following:



### FOOD SECURITY

- According to 93% of the focus groups participants, **MEN CONTROL THEIR HOUSEHOLD'S RESOURCES**
- **65% SAID ONLY MEN COULD ACCESS FOOD DISTRIBUTION SITES.**
- On the last 3 days in the last 7 days, **70% LIMITED FOOD PORTIONS, 25% DID NOT EAT AT ALL** and **60% BORROWED MONEY TO BUY FOOD.**
- **39% MENTIONED THE DISPOSAL OF PRODUCTIVE ASSETS** like animals to buy food.



### EDUCATION

- **72% OF HOUSEHOLDS** said there were school drop-outs in their communities.
- **82% OF THOSE SURVEYED SAID GIRLS' EDUCATION HAS BEEN STRONGLY IMPACTED** by the food crisis, notably due to additional domestic work responsibilities.
- About **66% MENTIONED THEY WERE STRUGGLING TO SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL** due to lack of resources, long distances, early marriage, lack of birth registration and insecurity.



### CHILD PROTECTION

- **50% OF RESPONDENTS** said both gender-based violence and child marriages had increased in their communities.
- **13% OF HOUSEHOLDS** mentioned child labour among out-of-school children.
- **46% MENTIONED UNACCOMPANIED OR SEPARATED CHILDREN** in their communities due to conflict and insecurity, death of parents, displacement separating them from their parents, and abandonment.







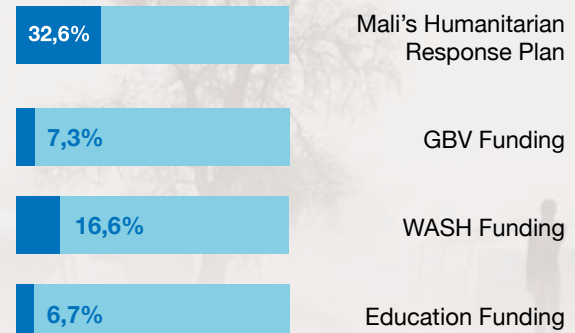
## HUMANITARIAN FUNDING GAP

Mali's [Humanitarian Response Plan](#) is the least funded in the region, and the second-least funded HRP after Mozambique. Only weeks away from the end of 2022, Mali's Humanitarian Response Plan is only 32.6% funded.<sup>15</sup>

All sectors of humanitarian response are underfunded in Mali, [especially](#) child protection, education and WASH.

- At a time when armed conflict is fuelling large-scale displacements and girls and young women suffer from gender-based violence, protection is still only 7.3% funded.
- At a time when over 400,000 displaced people have little to no access to water and sanitation services, WASH is 16.6% funded.
- At a time when 600,000 children are out of school, education is 6.7% funded.

This seriously undermines the ability of those who are on the frontlines of humanitarian response to provide food assistance, cash and voucher support and other basic services that are necessary for the most vulnerable to survive.



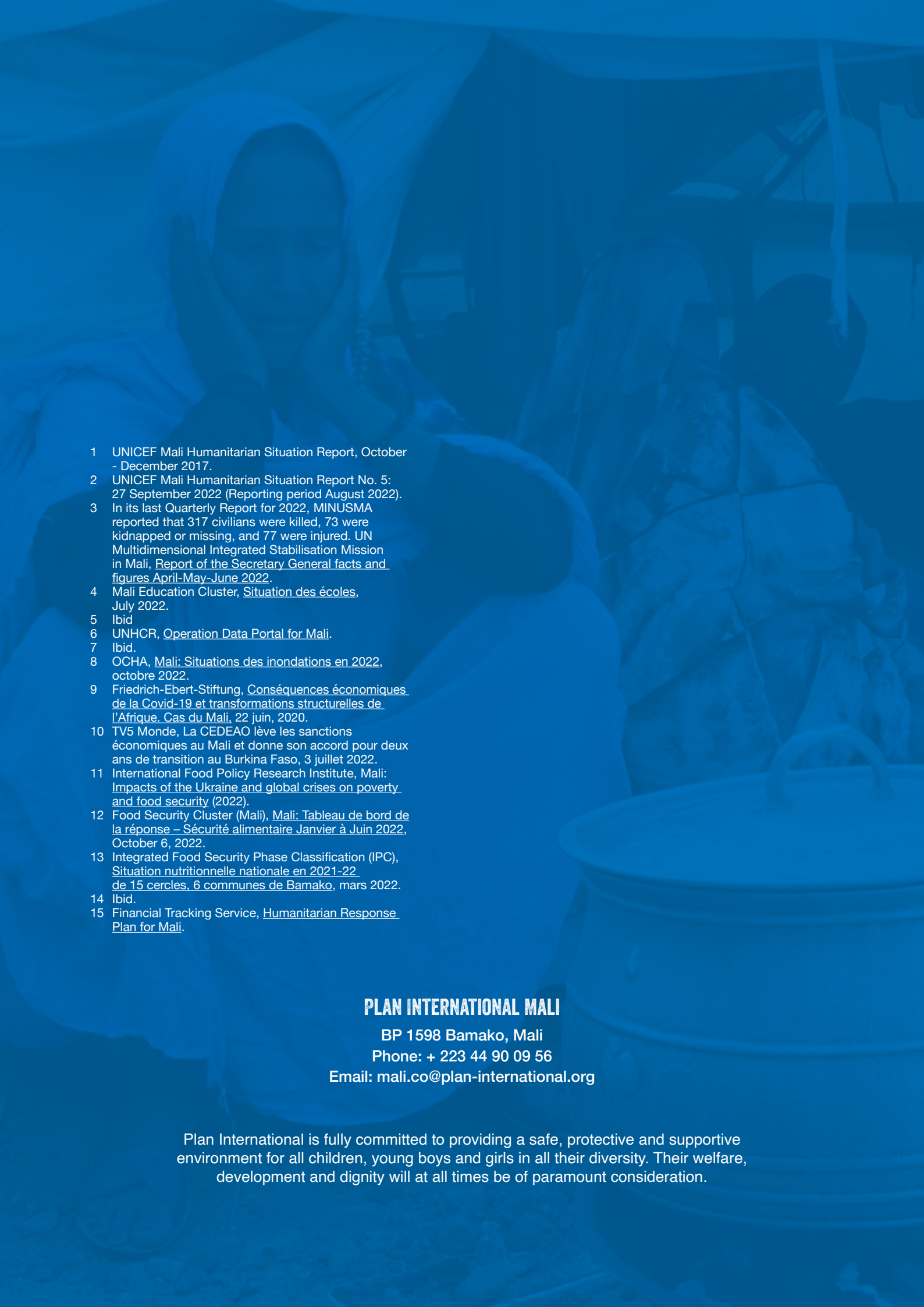
## RECOMMENDATIONS



Unless we take action now, the impacts of the current crisis in Mali will be felt for many years to come, with devastating consequences on the physical and mental wellbeing of Malian girls and boys, their livelihoods and the services they depend on.

**This is why we are urgently calling on the international community to work with local and national authorities and deliver on the following recommendations:**

- **Urgently deliver US \$455 million in flexible funding to save the lives of 1.84 million people who are suffering from acute food insecurity**, particularly children under 5, pregnant and lactating women, girls and young women, elderly people and those living with chronic illnesses.
- **Prioritise gender and age sensitive approaches** to address the gendered impacts of hunger as well as its knock-on impacts on the rights of girls to education, protection and health, including by ensuring the most underfunded sectoral humanitarian response plans are adequately funded.
- **Bolster humanitarian diplomacy efforts** to ensure unfettered humanitarian access, particularly in areas with high levels of internally displaced people, such as Menaka, Gao, Timbuktu and Mopti.
- **Build resilience by:**
  - **Strengthening early warning systems and ensuring it consistently triggers anticipatory action**, such as Cash and Voucher Assistance and other market-based interventions, ahead of predictable shocks like droughts or floods.
  - **Bolstering support for livelihood programs** like agricultural seeds and tools support, livestock management interventions, disease and pasture management, and skills training to increase economic opportunities. This will help prevent those living in fragile settings from falling into deeper crisis after future economic and climate shocks.

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- 1 UNICEF Mali Humanitarian Situation Report, October - December 2017.
  - 2 UNICEF Mali Humanitarian Situation Report No. 5: 27 September 2022 (Reporting period August 2022).
  - 3 In its last Quarterly Report for 2022, MINUSMA reported that 317 civilians were killed, 73 were kidnapped or missing, and 77 were injured. UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali, Report of the Secretary General facts and figures April-May-June 2022.
  - 4 Mali Education Cluster, Situation des écoles, July 2022.
  - 5 Ibid
  - 6 UNHCR, Operation Data Portal for Mali.
  - 7 Ibid.
  - 8 OCHA, Mali: Situations des inondations en 2022, octobre 2022.
  - 9 Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Conséquences économiques de la Covid-19 et transformations structurelles de l'Afrique. Cas du Mali, 22 juin, 2020.
  - 10 TV5 Monde, La CEDEAO lève les sanctions économiques au Mali et donne son accord pour deux ans de transition au Burkina Faso, 3 juillet 2022.
  - 11 International Food Policy Research Institute, Mali: Impacts of the Ukraine and global crises on poverty and food security (2022).
  - 12 Food Security Cluster (Mali), Mali: Tableau de bord de la réponse – Sécurité alimentaire Janvier à Juin 2022, October 6, 2022.
  - 13 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), Situation nutritionnelle nationale en 2021-22 de 15 cercles, 6 communes de Bamako, mars 2022.
  - 14 Ibid.
  - 15 Financial Tracking Service, Humanitarian Response Plan for Mali.

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Plan International is fully committed to providing a safe, protective and supportive environment for all children, young boys and girls in all their diversity. Their welfare, development and dignity will at all times be of paramount consideration.