



SCHOOL FEEDING INITIATIVES IN THE CENTRAL SAHEL

BURKINA FASO CASE STUDY

October 2023

The Central Sahel countries have been affected by an unprecedented food crisis due to protracted conflict, the global economic crisis and the effects of climate change. Plan International and its partners have implemented innovative school feeding initiatives as part of the response. In a crisis context, school feeding interventions help to keep children in school, giving them good learning conditions while improving their nutritional status. Moreover, school attendance protects children against various types of rights violations, especially girls who are more exposed to gender-based violence in times of crisis.



CENTRAL SAHEL CRISIS

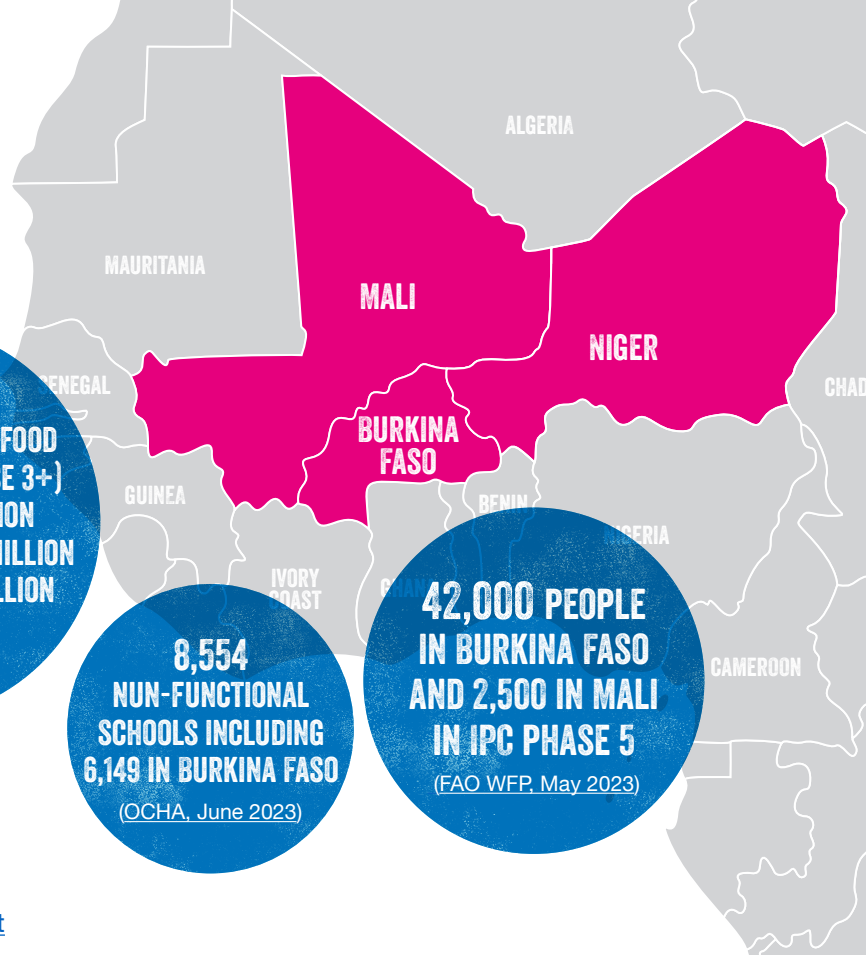
KEY FIGURES

2.7 MILLION
INTERNALLY DISPLACED
PERSONS (IDPS) WITH
SOME 78% IN BURKINA
FASO, AND 163,000
REFUGEES
(OCHA, June 2023)

6.3 MILLION
PEOPLE AFFECTED BY FOOD
INSECURITY (IPC PHASE 3+)
INCLUDING 3.3 MILLION
IN BURKINA FASO, 1.7 MILLION
IN NIGER, AND 1.3 MILLION
IN MALI
(OCHA, June 2023)

8,554
NON-FUNCTIONAL
SCHOOLS INCLUDING
6,149 IN BURKINA FASO
(OCHA, June 2023)

42,000 PEOPLE
IN BURKINA FASO
AND 2,500 IN MALI
IN IPC PHASE 5
(FAO WFP, May 2023)



Read our publication:
[Central Sahel Hunger Crisis Fact Sheet](#)

CENTRE-NORTH REGION OF BURKINA FASO

KEY FIGURES



927 CLOSED SCHOOLS,
AFFECTING 159,934 STUDENTS (INCLUDING 77,419
GIRLS) AND 4,013 TEACHERS (INCLUDING 1,314 WOMEN)
(Ministry of Education, May 2023)



493,954 IDPS
SETTLED IN THE CENTRE-NORTH, INCLUDING
242,986 CHILDREN UNDER 14
(CONASUR, March 2023)



548,006 PEOPLE AFFECTED
BY ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY, INCLUDING
49,761 PEOPLE IN IPC PHASE 4
(Harmonized Framework, March 2023)

**Aminata,
13, IDP**

"In our village, in years when the harvest was good, we ate well. When the harvest wasn't good, we bought food. Since we've been here, we no longer have arable land, so we have to pay for everything. We have nothing to eat at home in the morning, and when I don't eat, walking to school is difficult."



THE NATIONAL SCHOOL CANTEEN PROGRAMME IN BURKINA FASO: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Burkina Faso is a member state of the global School Meals Coalition and is committed to providing equitable access to sufficient, healthy, and nutritious food for schoolchildren. The **national school canteen programme** has been implemented since the 1960s based on an agreement between the State and the NGO Catholic Relief Services. In the 1990s, the Ministry of Education was involved in supplying food to schools. In the 2000s, **the principle of endogenous canteens was developed** on a national scale to give communities the greatest possible autonomy in school canteen management.

The endogenous canteen principle is based on **shared responsibility between beneficiaries, the state services and partners**. Throughout the school year, communities are expected to support the canteens using their harvests by contributing in kind, with the coordination of the Parents' and Mothers' associations and the school management committees (Comités de Gestion des Écoles – COGES) mandated by the Ministry of Education. During the second quarter of the school year, the state services provide food supplies. Communes are responsible for purchasing food and receive state funding for this purpose.

Since the beginning of the displacement crisis in 2019, **the school canteens in the crisis-affected areas have faced many challenges** that have limited or disrupted their services.

- Schools are receiving more and more internally displaced students and **face overcrowding**, making it harder to meet the food supplies needs.
- Many displaced families don't have access to farm land and host communities' harvests are **insufficient to participate for school feeding**.
- The Parents' and Mothers' associations as well as the COGES have **limited capacity** to gather contributions from the communities and manage the few resources available.
- The delivery of food supplies by the state services is **often delayed and the quantities delivered are insufficient** due to slow procurement processes, rising food prices and the volatile security situation.
- Support from NGOs and WFP is limited to certain provinces.



Souleymane Ouedraogo,
school director in Kaya

"Because of the food crisis, we noticed that a lot of students are absent from school. If a child isn't in school, he or she might be working. Some are forced to work as traders carrying plates of goods, and especially girls. Others turn to begging. Boys tend to go to work in the gold mines to earn something, to help the family. If we offer one meal per day, the parents will agree to send their children to school. I ask donors to help us more, for the success of our garden, because it's going to help us a lot."



THE SCHOOL GARDEN INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTED BY PLAN INTERNATIONAL AS A SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL SCHOOL CANTEEN PROGRAMME

The school garden initiative was implemented from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 as part of a food security and nutrition response project directly run by Plan International Burkina Faso and funded at 97% by the organisation.



STRATEGY

- **Large community mobilisation** with the recruitment of 3 local staff including 2 women to implement the school gardens' activities
- **Involvement of the provincial services** of the Ministries of Education and Agriculture, as well as Parents and Mothers' associations and COGES in each school
- **Selection criteria of the schools that participated in the project** include: availability of a borehole or waterpoint and a functional canteen, a schoolyard large enough to set up the garden (minimum of 0.25 ha), previous experience in gardening activities, accessibility to ease the project's supervision, and the motivation and engagement of the school actors.



KEY RESULTS



- **12 schools** in Kaya, Boussouma and Kongoussi communes were reached.



- **The schools were provided with farming tools**, some adapted for children (watering cans, hoes, etc.), materials for building fences, sprayers, protective equipment, and agricultural inputs (improved seeds, plant protection products, manure).



- **427 participants** (students, teachers, members of parents' and mothers' associations) were trained in agricultural practices, harvesting techniques, post-harvest management and techniques for preserving fresh harvested products, including 212 girls/women (50 IDPs and 162 from host community) et 215 boys/men (29 IDPs and 186 from host community).



- **5,470 students in total were reached**, including 2,825 girls (1,017 IDPs and 1,808 from host community) and 2,645 boys (1,010 IDPs and 1,635 from host community)



- **7 positive boreholes** have been rehabilitated or constructed.



- **Approximate harvest quantities:** 2.3 tons of onions, 1.1 tons of cabbage, 1 ton of tomatoes, 0.5 tons of purple eggplant, 0.4 tons of local eggplant, and in smaller quantities, depending on the school: potatoes, corn, onion leaves, and beans leaves.



- **101 children have set up gardens at home**, putting into practice what they have learned through the project:
 - 49 children in the Kaya commune, including 18 girls
 - 39 children in the Boussouma commune, including 22 girls
 - 13 children in the Kongoussi commune, including 3 girls.



Laetitia, 13, IDP

"In the garden, we produce vegetables to be used in the school canteen. I'd like to have my own garden at home, so that I can grow vegetables and make tastier sauces. I want to be an agriculturalist when I grow up."



Balkissa, 12, IDP

"If I wasn't at school, I'd have to work in a shop, but at school I learn to read and write, I learn songs, I also learn gardening. I'm happy to work in the garden because it helps me learn new things."



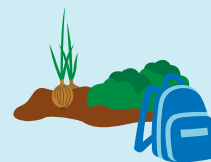
AVERAGE COST OF SETTING UP A SCHOOL GARDEN



Training costs
(04 training themes):
7,306,000 FCFA / 11,164.31 €



Cost of agricultural
equipment and inputs
distributed to schools:
32,500,000 FCFA / 49,663.30 €



Average cost per school
garden (training costs,
agricultural equipment
and inputs):
3,317,167 FCFA / 5,068.97 €



GOOD PRACTICES

- **Strengthening existing and operational school canteens**
- **Involvement of and cooperation with state technical services**, education stakeholders, and parents, including in monitoring of activities both during school year and holidays
- **Production of organic fertilizer and organic pesticide** effective against insect infestations
- **Participation of a group of twelve children per school in the training courses**, including six girls, for a total of 120 children, and participation of all children in maintenance of the gardens and watering
- **Social cohesion**: easier integration of displaced children among host community students, with an improvement in their well-being noted by the teachers, and integration of internally displaced adults among parents from the host community
- **Reconciling theory and practice** in student learning, agriculture-related lessons taking place in the school gardens
- Most of the children who have set up their own garden at home have received **support from their parents** who also have farming equipment and can look after the garden in the children's absence
- **Selection of an inclusive** school including children living with a disability.

Fabienne Nikiema,
agriculture animator of the project
in the Centre-North region

“The children are super-interested. Both girls and boys want to give their best. But at this rate, the girls are beating the record! The garden allows teachers to give practical courses in agriculture, and that will assist the children in their lives. There are children who replicate these activities at home.”



Follow our [Film about the school gardens in the Centre-North region](#) on YouTube



LESSONS LEARNT

- **The schools were selected on the basis of their capacity** to implement school gardens and their interest. The criteria defined at the beginning of the project were extended to include private schools.
- **Income from the sale** of surplus has enabled parents' associations and mothers' associations to purchase condiments for the canteens.
- **The strong involvement of parents** has alleviated the burden of maintaining the gardens, and has given students the time they need to do their homework.
- Human-powered pumps can break down and can be difficult for children to use. **The construction of piped water towers** in each of the 12 schools would enable the children to be more independent in tending the garden and make this task less tiring.
- It would be important to **monitor the impact of the school gardens** on student attendance by collecting data. Even though there was an overall increase in attendance, particularly from internally displaced children, as well as an increase in presence at school until the end of the day, particularly from children living far from the school.
- **Collecting data on the improvement of the children's nutritional status** would also be relevant.
- Many other schools in the Centre-North have expressed an interest in setting up school gardens. **This initiative needs to be scaled up** in collaboration with local partners.

CHALLENGES

- Lack of space, the school yards often being used to build classrooms to accommodate internally displaced students
- Limited water resources
- Breakdowns of water pumps installed by the project, costly to repair
- Insufficient involvement of certain parents and teachers
- Inconsistent and inadequate food supplies deliveries by state services





PERSPECTIVE: IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED HYDROPONIC SYSTEMS IN THE SCHOOL GARDENS

Integrated hydroponic systems (i.e., soil-less agriculture with poultry and fish farming methods) are an **innovative technology combining gardening and poultry and fish farming** that could be adapted to the Burkinabe context using locally sourced materials and integrated to the school gardens to achieve a reliable supply of fresh nutrient-dense and animal-sourced foods to feed students. An integrated hydroponic system is shaped like a pyramid with poultry cage on top, a fish basin at the base and vegetables growing on a grid all around. These systems **require little space and water resources**, so they could help to overcome the challenges encountered during the implementation of school gardens.

To enable Plan International Burkina Faso to design this innovative pilot project, a literature review was carried out and numerous resources were used, including those collected by Plan International Canada from various Country and National Offices, but also through testing hydroponic school gardens in Zimbabwe with the support of Plan International Germany.

Several field visits were carried out by the project's team and feasibility has been studied, including hygiene and safety aspects. Partners have already been identified to provide technical support: the National Federation of Young Agricultural Professionals and the Nazi Boni University.

The implementation of integrated hydroponic systems in the school gardens set up in the Centre-North could contribute:

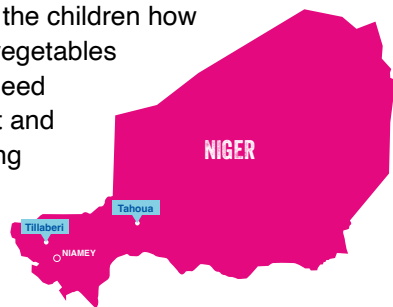
- to improve the reliability and duration of growing fresh nutrient-rich foods **to supply to school canteens**
- **to increase the technical empowerment of students, parents and other education actors** in managing integrated hydroponic production for school canteens
- **to support hands on learning** in nutrition education, sciences, and technology, as well as the **transfer of skills**, among vulnerable crisis affected boys and girls.



SCHOOL GARDENS IN NIGER

As part of Plan International's response to the hunger crisis and to encourage children to stay in school, we have supported the creation of **six school gardens in Tillaberi and Tahoua, western Niger, since 2022, reaching in total 1,050 students including 551 girls.**

The children and teachers were provided with seeds and gardening tools and taught how to grow and produce their own food. The agricultural and nutrition skills the students are learning in the gardens are essential. Teachers can introduce new concepts and help the children develop practical skills. The school gardens introduce children to sustainable farming methods that play an important role in food security. The different activities undertaken in the garden have taught the children how to grow a wide variety of vegetables and fruits, as well as the need to protect the environment and conserve the soil by making compost.



Ashraf, 11

"It has taught me how to keep a garden. It also motivated me to make my own garden at home. At home, we now eat moringa, grown from my garden. My parents gave me a hose so that I can water my garden."

SCHOOL CANTEENS IN MALI

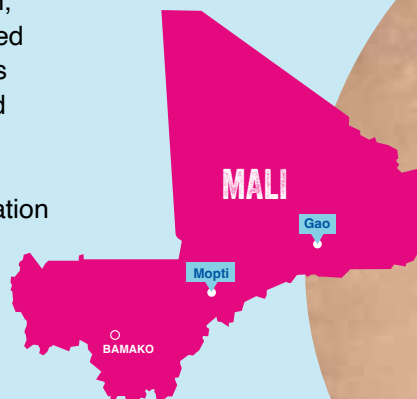
To keep children in school, Plan International has been working in crisis-affected Gao and Mopti regions to provide **nutritious school meals to more than 6,624 students every day in total from October 2022 to September 2023.** The project has supported five schools in Gao region and six in Mopti region by providing hot meals, infrastructure and kitchen equipment. Two school gardens in Mopti region and two school gardens in Gao region were also set up by the organisation, and the two schools in Gao region benefitted from chicken coops. Students and teachers in both regions were trained in hygiene and sanitation. Among the perspectives, Plan International aims to create management committees of students, parents and education actors to look after the school gardens.

Assiatou's father Mohamed

"Education is paramount, especially in the conditions of poverty and war that people face. The canteen has really helped us. I now know that my child has something to eat at school."

Assiatou, 9

"Before, my father was used to giving me money for food, and when he didn't have any, I couldn't eat. Now I like going to school because there is food there."



Follow our [Film about the school canteens in 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.