Over the past two years, Burkina Faso has witnessed the unfolding of an unprecedented humanitarian emergency. Conflict and insecurity have provoked what is now one of the fastest growing displacement crises in the world, forcing more than 1.3 million people to flee their homes. Some 3.5 million people need humanitarian assistance, including 2.9 million people facing acute food insecurity (344,000 are in IPC Phase 4). Among those already facing acute conditions, 1.7 million people are at elevated risk of slipping into an emergency – or even catastrophic – food insecurity in the absence of humanitarian assistance. Three out of four people experiencing IPC Phase 3 or IPC Phase 4 live in the four regions most affected by insecurity: Centre-Nord, Sahel, Est and Nord. In addition, some 308,000 children are suffering from acute malnutrition, including 94,000 suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

Food security response capacity in Burkina Faso expanded in 2020, reaching more than 1.35 million people with food assistance despite continued access constraints and the COVID-19 challenges. Since October 2020, food assistance has been delivered to remote and previously inaccessible areas, including Oudalan province, Sahel region, which was one of the IPC5 hotspots in 2020. By drawing on different assistance modalities (cash and food) to cover the six regions most affected by the humanitarian response (Sahel, Center North, North, East, Boucle du Mouhoun and Center-East), the food assistance response for the first half of 2021 reached 911,000 people, close to half of the targeted 25.5 million people representing 2.5 M – or 46% reached). However, significant funding shortfalls have meant that less than half of those targeted received critical livelihoods inputs ahead of the main planting season. Immediate resources are needed to assist rural families to produce food during the off-season and the pastoral lean season.

To sustain regular food assistance distributions to a larger number of people in need, WFP, in coordination with the food security cluster was forced to reduce rations. Most beneficiaries are receiving half of the normal food rations. Beneficiaries in hard-to-reach areas receive 75% of the rations to provide a buffer if distributions are disrupted.
At the end of the first semester of 2021, 1.1 million people were reached with food assistance and emergency livelihood activities given the low level of funding for Food Security, at 25.5% of total needs ($64 million). With the current level of funding, the food assistance pipeline will come to a halt in October, and there is a risk for a reduction of agricultural activities and assets of households most exposed to seasonal shocks, in turn, affecting their nutritional status.

Overall, the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is seeking $608 million to support 2.9 million people in need. Some $187 million is urgently needed now to prevent further deterioration in food and nutritional security, targeting some 1.7 million with emergency food assistance. Funding of the HRP remains low (24%) with growing concern on the sustainability of operations as a result, in contrast to increasing needs in the wake of the recent surge in violence and displacement.

While attacks on civilian populations and resulting new displacement usually decrease with the onset of annual rains, this has not been the case in the current year. Instead, increasing levels of violence and displacement have continued to be recorded in recent months (IDP number projection could reach 1.4 million by the end of 2021). Meanwhile, the continued shortfall in humanitarian funding puts pressure on partners to prioritize response to the most critical life-saving activities. Underfunding and lack of sufficient flexibility in rapid response funding, as well as access challenges, mean that only 20% of alerts issued on new displacements result in delivery of a complete rapid response package. It will also compromise the ability of humanitarian actors to extend to new vulnerable areas. Funding shortfalls for livelihoods assistance are further eroding people’s resilience, forcing them to adopt negative coping strategies to access food, with lasting implications for their food security, and risk pushing them into IPC 4. Lastly, reduced food aid rations may further affect people’s resilience; combined with increasing displacement, this will likely result in an ever-larger number of people in need of assistance and greater severity of their needs.

We call on States to provide new funding to allow humanitarians to reach civilians in need, including newly displaced persons as well as those experiencing increasingly protracted displacement and humanitarian needs. We also call on States to use their influence, including through high-level advocacy with the government and other relevant parties at the national, regional and local levels, to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access and the protection of civilians, in accordance with international humanitarian law.