

WFP Regional Bureau for West Africa

COVID-19 Situation Report #4

August 2020

Highlights

- As of end of August, the West Africa region has reported 185,673 confirmed COVID-19 cases, of which 151,740 cases are recovered and 3,033 deaths reported. The number of active cases was thus less than 17 percent of the confirmed cases (i.e. 30,900 active cases). On average, the increase has slowed down compared to the earlier phase of the pandemic.
- Nonetheless, the impact of the extension of COVID-19 containment and border restriction measures, exacerbated by the impacts of heavy rains and floods (that have hit several countries in the region in August), the security context, and the ongoing lean season, are all affecting negatively livelihoods, incomes and food security of the most vulnerable populations.
- The needs in the region still stand high, with net funding requirements of USD 395 million for the next six months (September 2020-February 2021).
- Preparations for the reopening of schools for the 2020/2021 academic year, mostly planned between September and October in the region, are underway. Resilience activities further resumed, while COVID-19 related (partly) cash-based transfers (CBTs) were rolled out in August in Cameroon and Senegal. Linked in part to the increasing needs in urban settings, emergency response through CBTs is further planned in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania (as part of lean season response) and Nigeria.

Regional Overview

- The **number of COVID-19 cases** in the Regional Bureau of Dakar (RBD) region¹ continued to rise, though on average the increase has slowed down compared to the earlier phase of the pandemic. By the end of August, the region had close to 200,000 confirmed cases and 3,000 deaths reported,² an increase of 16 percent and 14 percent respectively since the last [regional external situation report \(5 August\)](#).
- Despite having the lowest number of COVID-19 confirmed cases, Sao Tome and Principe has the highest **incidence rate** in the region, with 407 cases per 100,000 people, followed by Mauritania (150) and Ghana (141).
- The rapid surge in COVID-19 cases in The Gambia has overwhelmed the few isolation and treatment centres in the country, and the President once again declared a National State of Public Emergency (SOPE), effective August 6 for 21 days. **States of public emergency** were also maintained throughout the month in Chad, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Sierra Leone and Togo.



Beneficiary receiving cash ration in Tagant, Mauritania. WFP/Damien Vaquier

- In most countries however, restriction measures were further relaxed, and curfews and mandatory confinement suspended (except in Chad, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo). Markets closed due to COVID-19 having decreased.
- Since the beginning of August, **heavy rainfall and floods** have hit several countries in the region, especially in the Sahel, resulting in fatalities, material damage, destruction of livelihoods, population displacements and deteriorated access. In **Nigeria**, heavy rains on 2 August destroyed more than 2,500 shelters in an internally displaced persons' (IDP) camp in Bama Local Government Area, affecting an estimated 1,880 households and left areas of the camp submerged in water. In **Niger**, the national floods situation showed that the number of people and crops affected had increased by 226 percent and 300 percent respectively compared to 2019. In **Chad**, nearly 120,000 people have been [displaced](#) after flash floods and access to some beneficiary locations were rendered impossible, while in **Mauritania**, flooding due to heavy rains have resulted in slowing down the reopening of schools (in Hod El Chargui region).
- In parallel to the spread of COVID-19, the **deteriorating security situation** in the region continued to cause widespread population displacements and exacerbate populations' vulnerabilities. In Burkina Faso, the number of IDPs has exceeded one million as of August.³ Moreover, acts of violence targeting civilians, security forces, humanitarian workers and humanitarian convoys were reported in Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Central Sahel and Nigeria. As such, WFP's activities were temporarily suspended in CAR (Koui, 11 August), Cameroon (Bamenda, 14 August) and Niger (in the North of Tillaberi, Ouallam and Fillingue, 18 August).

Monitoring of food security situation

- Seasonal weather monitoring** indicated that in early August, the rainfall season pattern in West Africa was average to above average, and the early season dryness had been sharply absorbed, with remarkable vegetation recovery as well as improved water resource availability. Rainfall excess and the continued favorable conditions led to high Niger river levels and caused flooding across the Niger River basin of Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. Meanwhile, across Mano river countries over western Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, rainfall remained low and deficits persisted.
- A certain progressive normalization in the functioning of markets in the region is reported, and overall, the markets are relatively well supplied with basic foodstuffs. However, the rise in food prices has been further accentuated compared to July, particularly in Benin, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, The Gambia and

¹ Countries covered by RBD include: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and Togo.

² Data as of 26 August. Source: [COVID-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering \(CSSE\) at Johns Hopkins University](#)

³ New figure was released on 17 August by the National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation (CONASUR) that reported 1,013,234 IDPs.

Togo.⁴

- In **Mali**, WFP warns that some 12,800 beneficiaries of cash-based transfers (CBTs) and nutrition support risk being negatively impacted by the imposition of ECOWAS sanctions, including closure of borders and the suspension of financial, commercial and economic transactions with Mali, following the 18 August military coup. The consequences were already felt in neighboring **Niger**, where trucks were blocked at the border, with the potential to increase the price of food items imported from Mali and to affect the supply chain of humanitarian actors in the tri-border area in the medium term.
- Extension of COVID-19 related restriction measures in some countries continue to have an impact on the livelihoods, incomes and food security of the most vulnerable. In **Central African Republic (CAR)**, analysis highlights that loss of employment and decrease in household's income has been the major consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (the number of surveyed households engaged in income generating activity dropped by 26 percent). In **The Gambia**, the proportion of families with poor food consumption has slightly increased from 20 to 22 percent between July and August, and in **Niger**, there have been significant increases in the market prices of the main cereals due to the depletion of farmers' and traders' stocks and difficulties in supply chains (local cereal prices are 35-45 percent higher than in 2019).
- Nonetheless, the situation is expected to improve with the gradual resumption of economic activities. In **Cameroon**, latest marketing monitoring highlights that a clear increase in the price index can be noted from 2019 to 2020, however food inflation is expected to normalize in the coming months, as the Government has lifted most COVID containment measures, allowing for the resumption of key economic activities, including air and maritime transportation. In **Ghana** as well, food security is expected to be bolstered by the harvest of the 2020/2021 major season, which begins from July to September.



WFP humanitarian air service, Sao Tome and Principe. WFP/Alessandro Valori

Resource Mobilization and Partnerships

- The situation in the region remains critical due to the growing needs during the ongoing lean season, the security context, and the impact of COVID-19, all affecting food security. In **CAR**, due to funding and logistics constraints, the food rations distributed in August covered only 50 percent of the daily per capita energy requirement and this reduction caused a 10 percent decline in the total beneficiary reached in comparison with the total

achieved in July. In **Burkina Faso** and in **Mali** as well, rations had to be reduced by 50 percent and 40 percent respectively to selected groups of beneficiaries⁵.

- The total **2020 needs-based plan** budget of the region as of August 2020 amounted to **USD 1.8 billion**, while the six months net funding requirements (NFRs) for September 2020 to February 2021 are USD 395 million, representing 40 percent of requirements. Most of the needs (85 percent of the NFRs) are for the crisis response area, followed by the resilience building and root causes areas (21 percent and 2 percent respectively).
- **Budget revisions** to the country strategic plans (CSPs)/interim country strategic plans (ICSPs) were approved during August in **CAR, Senegal** and **Sao Tome and Principe**. The latter two budget revisions were fully related to COVID-19, where new crisis response strategic outcomes were added to the CSPs to enable WFP to provide emergency food and nutrition assistance to the most affected populations or support host Governments in implementing national contingency plans. For the 15 budget revisions that were approved to date in 2020 (nine COVID related and six unrelated to COVID), the total budgetary increase is USD 869.2 million, while the total direct beneficiary increase is 5.1 million people. Additional budget revisions are upcoming or are still under revision/review in eight country offices⁶.

WFP Operations

- **Reopening of schools** is tentatively planned for most of the countries in the region between September and October, while some are planning it for later in the year or at the beginning of next year, such as: **CAR** (26 December), **Ghana** (1 January), **Guinea** (1 November), **Liberia** (1 December) and **Senegal** (12 November). As such, throughout the month, discussions were ongoing with host Governments and education partners to plan for the safe reopening of schools and resumption of on-site school feeding. Food commodities were transferred to regional warehouses/schools along with hygiene products.
- Classes to close the current 2019-2020 academic years were held in Benin, Cameroon, CAR, Guinea and Nigeria, during which on-site school meals were provided for some, while distribution of **take-home rations** to school children's households continued in August in **CAR, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Senegal** and **The Gambia**.
- **In-kind food assistance** and CBTs to cope with the impact of COVID-19 and lean season, and rising food insecurity continued to be provided. In **CAR** and **Sierra Leone**, food assistance to COVID-19 patients and people in quarantine continued. In **Chad**, as part of the support to National Response Plan for food security during the COVID-19 pandemic targeting 433,000 people, the first food distribution was concluded in mid-August and the second distribution kicked-off on 20 August. In **Guinea**, the project targeting 25,000 households affected by COVID-19 in Conakry was launched on 13 August, while beneficiary targeting as part of the three-months emergency food assistance and CBTs (RESIGUI project) began on 21 August. The latter is in response to the lean season and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and targets 20,000 households.
- In **Cameroon**, unconditional CBTs in urban and peri-urban areas to mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have started at the end of August in the North-West, East and Far North regions. In **Senegal** as well, WFP started implementing the emergency food assistance (PUSA) through two-months CBTs targeting 529,625 people at risk of falling into food crisis. About 72,000 beneficiaries started receiving seasonal assistance via

⁴ This analysis monitored the situation in 10 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Togo). Source: [Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on food and nutrition security in the Sahel and West Africa](#).

⁵ In Burkina Faso, reduction in monthly cereal, bean and oil rations was applied to all IDPs/host families with the exception of IDPs in Djibo who have experienced ration

reductions over several months due to access constraints. In Mali, reduction was for all beneficiaries receiving emergency food assistance, except for COVID-affected people, newly displaced and host communities.

⁶ Budget revisions were ongoing (under review/revision) in Benin, Cameroon and Mali, while they are upcoming in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

money transfers in August.

- Meanwhile, preparations were ongoing for the implementation of: the urban response in Lagos, Abuja and Kano and scale-up plan (targeting 1.7 million people) in the North-East of **Nigeria**; second round of one-month CBTs in **Côte d'Ivoire** (targeting 1,328 COVID-19 affected households, including people living with HIV); and three-months CBTs as part of the WFP-UNICEF joint social protection programme in **Guinea Bissau** (targeting 1,600 most vulnerable families to COVID-19).
- **Unconditional resource transfers** to IDPs, returnees and crisis-affected populations and **lean season interventions** continued in the Sahel and conflict-affected countries, while emergency food assistance was also initiated in **Mali** targeting 34,000 flood-affected people and to 26 landslide affected households in **Sierra Leone**. In **Mauritania**, unconditional seasonal transfers under the lean season response have been prioritized in the Government National Response Plan to the COVID-19 outbreak and WFP plans to scale up assistance by providing 200,000 beneficiaries with CBTs.
- **Resilience strengthening activities**, including food assistance for assets (FFA) activities, further resumed in August in **Cameroon, Mali, Mauritania, The Gambia** and **Senegal**. In **Niger**, WFP is undertaking preparatory work to resume community FFA activities from November, while household level activities as readjusted in March are still ongoing. Training on the production of soap and face masks targeting mainly women participants continued in **CAR**, while the project was initiated in **Mali**.
- In **The Gambia**, WFP in collaboration with the Government, UN and implementing partners launched on 6 August a two-year Peace Building Fund project, which aims at strengthening the resilience of communities in three regions (North Bank, Upper River and Central River), against the adverse effects of climate change and conflicts, also currently exacerbated by COVID-19. In **Senegal**, beneficiary registration exercise as part of Green Climate Fund project started on 17 August, and in **Burkina Faso** as well, identification of 2,500 vulnerable adolescent girls was conducted, who will be assisted through a safety net and livelihood project as part of WFP's support to the national social protection programme aiming to empower impoverished youth. A similar youth empowerment project is ongoing in **Sierra Leone**, where 10 mt of food was distributed in August to 1,000 youths and their families who are engaged in the development of irrigation structures in inland valley swamps.
- **Prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition activities** are ongoing as planned in the region to targeted pregnant and lactating women and children. Moreover, initiatives aimed at enhancing food fortification and production of fortified nutritious foods are ongoing in **Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal** and **The Gambia**.

Service Provision

- Critical technical support to host Governments and partners in providing essential cargo and passenger transport, as well as procurement and logistics services (including storage, transport, dispatch and inventory) are ongoing in the region, through WFP's air passenger service as part of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) and existing support mechanisms, such as the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD), UN Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) and bilateral service provision.
- As of August, **10,292 m³ of health and humanitarian cargo** were dispatched to date in the 19 countries of the region, and 38 organizations were supported. Largest volume of cargo were transported for Nigeria (2,021 m³) and Ghana (1,483 m³). Meanwhile, 10,959 passengers (50 percent NGOs, 35 percent UN

agencies and 15 percent diplomats/donors) were transported in 22 countries⁷ through 597 flights completed. With the latter services, 173 organizations were supported.

- As commercial flights have resumed in most of the countries in the region as of August, WFP's **global passenger services** have significantly scaled back starting 15 August. Nonetheless, a few flights were maintained to countries that have not yet opened their borders, including to Ghana, Sao Tome and Principe, The Gambia, Republic of the Congo and Mauritania.
- Moreover, while setting up of tents and mobile storage units and support for renovations of government-owned central medical stores (to enhance storage quality and expand storage capacity) are ongoing in **Cameroon** and **The Gambia** respectively, mobile facilities were allocated to the Ministry of Health in **Burkina Faso** in August, to be used during COVID-19 screening control once land borders reopen.

Inter-Agency Coordination

- WFP continues to collaborate and cooperate closely with UN partners both at regional and country office levels, to support host Governments in providing integrated COVID-19 responses. In **The Gambia**, the UN System has started to prepare the UN Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP), with WFP co-leading the focus areas on social protection, agriculture, food security, nutrition and resilience. The SERP will align with the five streams of work under the Global UN Framework on the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. Moreover, WFP, FAO and UNICEF jointly produced an [article](#) on effective joint UN nutrition programming in The Gambia. In **Niger**, the food security cluster (FSC) has held consultations to update the analysis of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on food and nutrition security, whose results published in April indicated that 5.6 million would be affected over the period June-August 2020.



Distribution of livestock to vulnerable families in Timbuktu region. WFP/Youssouf Amadou Cisse

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⁷ 22 countries include the 19 countries of RBD region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Republic of the Congo.