

Starvation and Conflict in Djibo - Burkina Faso

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Title of the emergency: Starvation and Conflict in Djibo

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Situation Report No.: 1

General overview

On the 26th of September, a supply convoy to the besieged Djibo was ambushed by armed groups, leading to the death of 27 soldiers, the kidnapping of 50 civilians, and more than 71 people dead. The supply convoy was largely destroyed by flames: **more than 80 trucks transporting mainly food burned out, causing urgently needed food and supplies not to arrive in the city.** This latest violent attack leaves the town of Djibo even more vulnerable and isolated, with the population suffering from conflict and starvation.

Since February 2022, jihadist armed groups have surrounded the northern town of Djibo, in Soum province, located at the border with Mali. The groups have been controlling the access routes to the city, preventing the entry and exit of people and goods. **This “siege” interrupted almost all-commercial activity, vital to enable the population to obtain basic goods, especially food items,** which traditionally arrived in Djibo by land.

By early March, shortages of food and water were already creating a dire humanitarian situation, which is until today not fully addressed. **Since the attack on the supply convoy, the situation in Djibo consistently deteriorates and first reports are coming out that people are starving.**

On the 3rd October alone, it was reported that at least eight children died of starvation.

The city of Djibo has seen its population increase from about 60,000 in 2019 to more than 350,000 today following successive waves of displacement in the region. Approximately, **175.000 children are under 15 years of age and represent half of Djibo’s resident population. More than 60.000 of them are less than 5 years old.**

Many children, some of them unaccompanied or separated, have been forced to drop out of school to work and are at risk of forced recruitment by armed groups. It is estimated that only in the Sahel region more than 80,000 children have been affected by the closure of schools. Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) are often exposed to a plethora of protection risks (rape, exploitation, recruitment into armed groups, etc.)

With few humanitarian actors currently active in Djibo, the support to the population is severely limited but extremely needed. So far, local support has been through cash or e-vouchers, as the local market was under-supplied, functioning only when supply convoys could reach the town. **Considering the latest events, emergency actions are necessary to protect the population.**

Burkina Faso is witnessing a complex humanitarian, security, and protection crisis that started in 2015 and escalated significantly from 2018, continuing to this day. The deteriorating security situation increased social discontent and already led to a military coup at the beginning of 2022. For the second time this year, another overthrow in power has occurred now in Burkina Faso: a group of army officers led by Captain Ibrahim Traoré seized power on 30th September.

The coups had been motivated by the Burkinabe government's inability to contain the jihadist insurgency in Burkina Faso. By September 2022, nearly 40 percent of Burkina Faso was controlled by non-state forces, and more and more territory slipping out of state hands.

The political instability adds to an already difficult humanitarian situation: Burkina Faso currently has more than **3.4 million food-insecure people, while 25% of children under 5 suffer from stunting** due to a multi-faceted crisis.

Overview of ChildFund response

Three ChildFund Alliance members – EDUCO, Children Believe and WeWorld - are active in the country.

WeWorld is the only member active in Djibo and able to respond to the acute emergency in the region. For this reason, Alliance members in the country support WeWorld.

On October 27th WeWorld Country Director in Burkina Faso, Francesco Dal Prà, was finally able to travel to Djibo with an UNHAS flight to directly assess urgent needs and provide support to the local team (25 people) to scale up activities.

WeWorld is ready to expand its support and quickly mobilize emergency funding to address the mounting humanitarian crisis in Djibo and to address long-term needs. We estimate that out of 5000 children under five, at least **3000 are in need of an urgent intervention to avoid malnutrition.**

WeWorld currently has two ongoing parallel projects funded by World Food Programme for emergency response and resilience building. The emergency project directly targets the immediate food crisis through e-vouchers: electronic cards charged with credits to be exchanged in affiliated shops with food items. This mechanism is **targeting a group of 30,000 IDPs** (internal displaced persons) and very poor residents. Almost half of the beneficiaries are children of 5 years old or less. The resilience building intervention is **targeting a group of 1000 DPIs and very poor resident families, around 7500 persons (of which more than 3000 are children under five years old)**, constructing above-ground small-scaled gardens where to cultivate vegetables for the family members, so as to vary and complement the children's diet with mineral and vitamin supplies, in a context where all vegetables have to be imported from outside.

Moreover, WeWorld is implementing a Child Protection in Emergency project, funded by the German Government in partnership with ChildFund Deutschland and Joining Forces. The project aims to support children by providing them “child safe spaces” where they can spend their time protected and followed by professional staff, able to identify child protection threats and support them and their families to find permanent solutions.

Next steps: Proposed Response Interventions and Budget Requirement

The most vulnerable population group is composed of children of 6-23 months old at risk of **malnutrition**. Emergency action is needed to support children and families as soon as possible: **the proposed intervention will support the identified children and their breastfeeding mothers for a period of six months.** The project intends to offer access to adequate nutrition in terms of quantity and quality by providing quality enriched infant cereal. **The planned distribution is of 2,5kg per child, which is enough for one month. In total, a minimum of 6 distributions is planned.** Moreover, it is necessary to distribute water purification kits (Watertab), to avoid any possible additional threat that could jeopardize the already delicate situation of children.

The assessment and identification of beneficiaries will be carried out within the target group of Emergency and Resilience ongoing projects, by measuring the MUAC (Mid-Upper Arm Circumference). **We estimate that over 5000 children under five, at least 3000 are in need of urgent intervention to avoid malnutrition and starvation.** In case of identification of malnourished children (acute, severe, or moderate malnutrition), they will be referred to the local health center (CSPS – Centre de Santé et



Promotion Social, in its acronym in French) and other responsible actors for further support and monitoring.

The cost of this urgent intervention is approximately 250.000 Euro, including procurement and transportation via helicopter of enriched infant flour, MUAC bracelets, drinkable water systems and water tabs, with a monthly frequency of 6 months.

WeWorld will be implementing all activities through its local teams in Djibo, composed of 10 field agents and coordination staff, also in charge of following-up the referred cases of malnutrition and to guarantee the effectiveness of the intervention.