



Impact of Food Insecurity on Children in 6 West and Central African Countries

West Africa Hunger & Protection Emergency Response

Across West and Central Africa, hunger is worsening with each passing day. World Vision spoke to children in Burkina Faso, Niger, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Mauritania, and Mali. We carried out extensive surveys over the last 6 months and created videos to document the voices of these vulnerable children.

We have heard the voices of these hungry children and are sharing their stories here.

“We have become sick because we do not eat our fill, and the hunger makes us unable to study. I no longer can manage to go to school, my parents do not have the means. I eat only once a day.” - Child in Burkina Faso

KEY FINDINGS



1. Children said they have only one meal a day in Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Central African Republic. Hunger is the daily lived reality for all the children we spoke to.

a. “We eat only once a day, sometimes we go the night without eating.” -Child in CAR



2. Children explicitly reported no food variety in both CAR and Burkina Faso over and over again.

- a. Nearly 2/3 of children we spoke to in Burkina Faso mentioned eating tô - a cooked mixture of water and millet, cornmeal or sorghum. This is a diet far more homogenous than what was reported in the other countries.
- b. 78% of children we spoke to in CAR said it is difficult to vary their diet.



3. Children reported missing school due to hunger, displacement, and the rising cost of food in all six countries. When kids are out of school, their futures are in jeopardy, and they are much more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

- a. “Some parents cannot send their children to school because the money to pay for schooling has gone into the food ration which is extremely expensive.” -Child in Chad
- b. Children in Central African Republic who can go to school said that they go without food, and by the end of the day, they have vertigo, feel dizzy, and cannot concentrate from hunger. “We have to eat well to go to school, lest we drop out because of food.” - Child in CAR
- c. Children in Niger said they have dropped a level in school because they have not been able to attend due to food insecurity.



4. **Hunger is increasing child protection risks – and kids know it.**

- a. Children in Niger said that the lack of affordable food is pushing children into begging, prostitution, theft, etc.
- b. Children in CAR said they have witnessed the death of their own parents due to hunger. This leaves them extremely vulnerable to exploitation: *“we finish school, we steal, we become uncontrolled and easy to manipulate.”*



5. **Rising food prices** mean families buy less food for the same price, and can feed less people. This was reported by children in Burkina Faso, Niger, CAR, and Chad.

- a. *“Before, if you had 500 FCFA, you would eat well. In the past we could buy a sack of millet for 15,000 FCFA, now it costs 25,000 FCFA. Now I no longer find it possible to have good food every day.”* -Child from Niger
- b. *“The number of 8 people who are with us, before at 3000F we could eat, but now it is difficult because of the price of food on the market.”* -Child from CAR



6. Children also said that **rising prices has led to poorer health and malnutrition.**

- a. *“[The impact of food insecurity is seen] on the malnourished children of our neighbors. They are victims of malnutrition and they do not go to school.”* -Child from CAR



7. **Lack of drinking water** is the main concern for children and communities in Mauritania, Niger, and CAR. **Climate change** has led to decreased production and rains, and children reported more disease and sickness in their communities from unclean water.

- a. *“I insist – we are in need of water. Really, that much water. We would really be helped.”* - Child in Mauritania



8. **Lack of humanitarian funding** has left children and families **in all 6 countries worse off than before.**

- a. *“When we were first displaced, there was aid. But now the aid has almost stopped and we are hungry. We have a lot of other children here and they cry all the time because of hunger. Whatever our parents can bring back from the city is often not enough to satisfy us. Often, they bring nothing, and we sleep with hunger. We really need help urgently!”* - Child in Mali

CHILDREN’S CALLS TO ACTION

Governments, donors, NGOs, and authorities should:

- *“Help us to find peace, and give us food to eat. Fight against terrorism.”* -Child in Burkina Faso
- *“Help us with the food crisis that is currently shaking our country. Without distribution of food and money, our school and health, and even our well-being, are threatened.”* -Child in CAR
- *“Take steps to alleviate this food insecurity. Help producers, stabilize food prices for milk, rice, and meats, and support the people to eat.”* –Child in Niger
- *“Work for the return of peace; Ensure road safety; Build boreholes because our community does not have a drinking water point.”* -Child in CAR
- *“Get involved, establish security that allows us to plow our fields without fear of facing armed groups.”* - Chad
- *“Give us land to cultivate or cash to buy food or food directly, because we are mostly hungry. Children are hungry here!”* -Mali

WHAT IS WORLD VISION DOING?

World Vision, as a member of the OCHA-led regional interagency Advocacy group is

1. Raising attention on the food security and protection crises in the Sahel.
2. Calling for urgent funding in the Sahel to ensure a rapid scale-up of the response and
3. Influencing the parties to the conflict and relevant actors to improve humanitarian access and prioritize the protection of civilians.