Humanitarian situation monitoring (HSM) in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger

Situation overview : Niger – Tillabéri and Tahoua regions | March 2020

Context
Since the outbreak of violence in Mali in 2012, the border area between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso has been characterized by a climate of insecurity due to the presence of armed groups, crime and rising tensions between communities. The security situation in Niger has deteriorated sharply since 2018 and has caused the internal displacement of 159,028 people in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions as of March 2020. In addition, the provision of humanitarian assistance is subject to multiple constraints resulting in limitations to access affected populations due to security, geographic and climatic factors, as well as to measures taken as part of the state of emergency covering parts of the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions. Limited humanitarian access is one of the factors at the origin of important information gaps about the scope, nature and severity of needs. To fill these information gaps, REACH has been implementing a monitoring of the humanitarian situation, financed by the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) since January 2020, following a pilot phase in November 2019. This situation overview presents the main results for data collected in March 2020 in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions and analyzes the development of main indicators in the Tillabéri region between November 2019 and March 2020.

Methodology
This assessment adopts a so-called “Area of knowledge” methodology. The aim of this methodology is to collect, analyze and share up-to-date information regarding multi-sectoral humanitarian needs in the region, including in areas that are difficult to access. Data was collected at the settlement level, through interviews with key informants (KIs). These KIs were selected based on their recent (less than a month) and detailed knowledge about a settlement. Results are reported when at least 4.6% of the settlements in each region have been assessed. In case more than one KI was interviewed about the same settlement, the results were aggregated at the settlement level. To deepen the information provided by the KIs, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held in certain settlements with KIs and / or members of the displaced population, and these discussions focused on the dynamics of displacement and the severity of humanitarian needs. This overview presents the most recent results from the data collection carried out between March 9 and 27 in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions, as well as the evolution of the results in the Tillabéri region between November 2019 and March 2020.

As the geographical coverage of this monitoring is limited and the information is based on responses from KIs, the results should be considered as indicative of the situation.

Key results
• Important population movements, particularly of internally displaced persons (IDPs), have been observed in the first quarter of 2020, mainly in departments located at the border with Mali (Abala, Ayerou and Tillia). The number of displaced persons (IDPs and Malians refugees) in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions has increased from 138,843 in December 2019 to 155,696 in March 2020.
• Significant levels of humanitarian needs were reported, especially related to food security and livelihoods, potentially caused by adverse natural and climatic conditions (rainfall deficit) and issues related to the highly volatile security context. According to KIs, the majority of the population did not have access to enough food during the past month in...
92% of the settlements assessed in Tillabéri (compared to 70% in November 2019). In November 2019, in 26% of the assessed settlements in Tillabéri, KIs reported that the majority of the population did not have access to their usual means of livelihood. This proportion increased to 50% in March 2020 mainly due to insecurity, according to the KIs.

- Access to hygiene and sanitation also appears to be limited according to the KIs, who reported that the majority of the population did not use latrines in 80% of the assessed settlements. Open defecation, which is still often practiced in the assessed areas, increases the risk of water contamination and water-borne diseases. The application of good hygiene practices appears to be very limited, which could lead to an increase in health risks. The KIs reported that hand washing with soap or ash was applied in 7% of assessed settlements by the majority of the population.
- Structural factors (presence of health services, schools, etc.) seem to be the main drivers of a lack of access to health and education in the Tahoua region compared to the Tillabéri region, where insecurity seems to be the main barrier to access basic services.

Geographical coverage of the assessment in March 2020

Coverage table from January to March – Tillabéri region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total # of KIs</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of settlements</td>
<td>4,453</td>
<td>4,453</td>
<td>4,453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of assessed settlements</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coverage table for March – Tahoua region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total # of KIs</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of settlements</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of assessed settlements</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Displacement

During the first quarter of 2020, significant population movements were recorded in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions with the deterioration of the security situation\(^2\). In March 2020, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) counted 97,097 IDPs and 61,931 refugees in these two regions\(^2\). According to KIs, most IDP movements take place within the same department. Security considerations, including violence in places of origin and preventive displacements, are the main reasons reported by the KIs to explain population movements. Displacements are often carried out in waves\(^9\) and according to the FGD participants, it seems that as the journey progresses, IDPs from the same place of origin end up at different displacement sites.

Proportion of settlements assessed in March where KIs reported IDP movements in the last 3 months:

![Map showing displacement areas]

Presence of displaced persons

Displacement in Tillabéri seems to be on a rise. Whereas UNHCR and Nigerien authorities counted 138,843 displaced persons\(^10\) in December 2019, this number has risen to 155,696 in March 2020. IDPs are the most present displaced population group in the assessed settlements. KIs reported the presence of IDPs in 5% of the assessed settlements and refugees in 2% of the assessed settlements. In the Tillabéri region, the presence of IDPs has been reported mainly in the departments of Abala, Banibangou and Ayerou. Movements from Niger to Mali have also been reported\(^11\). In the Tahoua region, the presence of displaced populations has mainly been reported by KIs in the department of Tillia (31% for IDPs and 15% for refugees). The areas most affected by population movements are located near the border with Mali and not far from the areas where recent attacks were perpetrated by non-state armed groups\(^11\).

\(^9\) Multi-sectoral assessments of the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), from January and February 2020 by: DRC Site d’Ayorou, Acted/PUI Site de Ouallam, Acted/Alima Site de Banibangou.

\(^10\) This figure includes internally displaced persons and Malians refugees. In March 2020, UNHCR also counted 3,332 Burkinabé refugees in the Tillabéri region.

Evolution of the number of IDPs and Malian refugees in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions between December 2019 and March 2020:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number of IDPs</th>
<th>Number of Refugees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>80,844</td>
<td>57,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>88,030</td>
<td>58,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>96,033</td>
<td>58,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>97,097</td>
<td>58,599</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Main axes of displacement**

According to the information provided by the KIs, displacements take place at the departmental or communal (admin 3) levels. For the Tillabéri region, in 5 out of the 7 departments where the KIs reported the presence of IDPs, they added that the host villages and villages of origin of IDPs are located within the same departments. In the Tahoua region, displacement seems to mainly affect the department of Tillia.

Main departments / circles of origin of IDPs and refugees by proportion of settlements assessed in March where KIs reported their presence during the month preceding data collection:

- **Tillabéri**
  - IDPs: Ayerou (23%), Banibangou (15%), Abala (15%), Ouallam (15%), Kidal (40%), Oudalan (40%)
  - Refugees: Kidal (40%), Oudalan (40%)

- **Tahoua**
  - Tillia (50%), Gao (50%), Ménaka (50%)

According to FGD participants, journeys between the settlements of origin and the host settlements can sometimes take half a day, while others last up to a week. In this case, displaced populations appear to be passing through a number of sites before settling in a displacement site. Most households travel on foot or on donkeys and cannot transport their goods, materials and food, given the distance to cross. Displacement further increases the vulnerability of people with special needs (young children, pregnant women, elderly, etc.) and the journey may adversely affect the health of these people on the move, who often lack food and potable water.

**Factors inducing displacement**

According to information provided by the KIs, security considerations - such as violence in the settlements of origin and preventive displacement - constitute the main causes of displacement (reported for IDPs in 89% and for refugees in 93% of the assessed settlements). Since the large-scale attacks perpetrated by non-state armed groups at the end of 2019 and at the start of 2020, the security situation has remained particularly unstable in these areas and multi-sectoral assessments (MSA) of the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) show that these incidents are at the origin of the main latest waves of displacement. Non-displaced populations choose to remain in their settlements of origin because they do not want to leave (46%) or they have no reason to leave (44%), according to the KIs. In the settlements most exposed to security incidents and threats, displacement might reportedly be incited as long as insecurity prevails in the area. The recent non-state armed

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12 These figures include only the Malian refugee population. In March 2020, UNHCR also counted 3,332 Burkinabé refugees in the Tillabéri region.

13 The circles correspond to administrative unit 2 in Mali (equivalent to the department in Niger).

14 These are successive armed attacks against the military positions of Agando, Inates, Chinégodar and Tamou between December 2019 and February 2020.
groups attacks as well as continuing military operations in the border strip with Mali and Burkina Faso suggest that movements, both preventive and to flee violence, are likely to occur in the coming months and contribute to the increased vulnerability of the populations in the area.

**Food security**

In 90% of the assessed settlements, KIs reported that the majority of the population did not have access to sufficient food during the past month. Unfavorable natural conditions, such as lack of rain and short growing season, are the main causes reported by KIs to explain the limited access to food in the Tillabéri region. In the Tahoua region, the main reason reported by KIs related to an insecure access to land and insufficient financial resources. Insecurity seems to have an impact on the level of food security of populations, as it may limit access to markets and may lead to the loss of people’s livelihoods (abandonment of fields, theft of livestock, looting of cereal banks).

Proportion of settlements assessed in March where the KIs reported that the majority of the population did not have access to enough food in the past month:

According to the KIs, the availability of food is insufficient for the majority of the population of 90% of the assessed settlements. The most recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) ranks the situation of the two regions in Phase 2 (stressed) in the pastoral areas of the regions of Tillabéri and Tahoua and in Phase 3 (crisis) in the agropastoral areas of Tillabéri. Climatic factors (lack of rain, short growing season) pose the main obstacles to access to food in the Tillabéri region according to the KIs (in 74% of the settlements assessed). In the Tahoua region, the KIs rather highlighted

15 OCHA rapport mensuel Tillabéri. March 2020
16 Food insecurity remains in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) in the agro-pastoral livelihood zones of the Tillabéri region (north-central of the region). In the pastoral part (north of the regions of Tillabéri and Tahoua), food insecurity is at Stress level (Phase 2 IPC) (Source: Fews.net, Food Security Outlook. February 2020).
insecure access to land (in 38% of the settlements assessed), for example as a result of armed groups crossing fields\textsuperscript{17}, or due to additional pressure on the land’s resources caused by the early arrival of transhumant pastoralists\textsuperscript{18}. This phenomenon also contributes to increasing conflicts over crop damage\textsuperscript{19}.

Evolution of the proportion of settlements assessed by the KIs in the Tillabéri region where the majority of the population did not have access to enough food, during the past month:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.9\textwidth]{chart.png}
\caption{Evolution of the proportion of settlements assessed by the KIs in the Tillabéri region where the majority of the population did not have access to enough food, during the past month.}
\end{figure}

Main coping strategies
According to KIs, the main strategies to cope with a lack of food in the assessed settlements\textsuperscript{20} include reducing the amount of food consumed during meals (82%), consuming less preferred and less expensive food (71%) and reducing the number of meals per day (60%). These practices can lead to food and nutritional deficiencies, and ultimately malnutrition, particularly for children.

Main sources of food
According to the KIs, the most common source of food in the assessed settlements of the Tillabéri region is subsistence farming (reported in 64% of settlements assessed). However, more and more settlements seem to be purchasing food compared to past months, and this was most common for about a quarter of assessed settlements in March. Indeed, in January, at the end of the main harvest period, subsistence agricultural farming was cited as the main source of food in 84% of the assessed settlements, while the purchase of food was mentioned in 10% of assessed settlements. In the Tahoua region, KIs reported that the main source of food is its purchase (57%) followed by subsistence livestock farming (26%). The growing proportion of settlements depending on purchasing food potentially increases their vulnerability, making them dependent on market access, price fluctuations and the availability of food on the market; while the markets supply is not always stable\textsuperscript{21}.

Evolution of the proportion of settlements assessed in the Tillabéri region - by main source of food according to the KIs:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.9\textwidth]{chart2.png}
\caption{Evolution of the proportion of settlements assessed in the Tillabéri region - by main source of food according to the KIs.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{17} UNHCR. Rapport d’analyse des données de monitoring de protection Tillabéri. December 2019.
\textsuperscript{19} FAO, CIRAD. Système d’information sur le pastoralisme au Sahel. 2012.
\textsuperscript{20} These percentages were calculated on the total of settlements where KIs reported that the majority of the population did not have access to enough food in the past month.
\textsuperscript{21} Supply remains relatively average for markets in predominantly pastoral areas and low for markets in the far north of the country and in regions under emergency due to insecurity (Diffa and Tillabéry) (Source : Système d’Information sur les Marchés Agricoles, Bulletin No. 126, March 2020).
Market access

In 89% of the assessed settlements, KIs reported the presence of a functional market within walking distance. However, this proportion is 40% of assessed settlements in the Tahoua region, according to KIs. In the Tillabéri region, the Abala department seems most affected by market inaccessibility as KIs reported that 17% of the assessed settlements do not have access to the market. In addition, KIs reported an increase in the price of cereals in 74% of the assessed settlements. Aside from seasonal fluctuations, price increases could have been exacerbated by insecurity and conflicts, which limited flows and led to the closure of several markets. Access to markets and prices of food and non-food items could further be affected by the closure of borders in line with the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) preventative measures.

Proportion of settlements assessed in March where the KIs reported the presence of a functional market, within walking distance, during the past month:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tillabéri</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahoua</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Livelihoods

KIs reported in 51% of assessed settlements that the majority of the population did not have access to their usual livelihoods. The livelihood activities most practiced by the majority of the population, namely agriculture and livestock farming, also appear to be the most disrupted, which could increase the vulnerability of populations that depend on these activities, especially approaching the lean season. Insecurity and unfavourable climatic conditions seem to be the main factors in explaining disruptions to livelihoods of these populations.

Access to livelihoods

According to the KIs, the main activities carried out by the majority of the population in the past month are livestock farming (72%), subsistence agriculture (58%) and trade (39%). However, for half of the assessed settlements in Tillabéri (50%), and about two-thirds of assessed settlements in Tahoua (66%), KIs indicated that the majority of the population didn’t have access to their usual livelihoods activities. Insecurity appears to be the main obstacle in Tillabéri to accessing usual livelihoods, reported respectively in 53% and 35% of assessed settlements of Tillabéri and Tahoua where the majority of the population didn’t have access to usual livelihoods according to KIs. Insecurity results in the abandonment of fields, the loss of agricultural production, the limitation of animal movements as well as the slowing down, or even, the termination of commercial activities. The unfavourable climatic conditions, reported as main reason in 25% of the settlements of Tillabéri affected by a loss of livelihoods, directly impacts the large part of the population that depends on agriculture and livestock farming, leading to a drop in agricultural and fodder production. Finally, limited access to land seems to be the main obstacle to access livelihoods reported in 43% of assessed settlements of Tahoua by KIs. According to the KIs, almost all of the assessed settlements (91%) in the Tahoua region did not have access to arable land, sufficient seeds and agricultural equipment.

23 The practice of income-generating activities has been restricted due to limited transportation and insecurity. Livelihoods are also disrupted by theft and extortion of livestock, which appear to be common practice by armed groups in certain settlements. (Source: FGDs, January 2020).
Evolution of the proportion of settlements assessed in the Tillabéri region where the majority of the population did not have access to their usual means of subsistence during the past month according to the KIs:

- November: 26%
- January: 47%
- February: 61%
- March: 50%

Disruption of livelihood activities by type

Some livelihood activities seem to be particularly disrupted in comparison to others. According to the KIs, in 41% of assessed settlements, access to daily work was disrupted for the majority of the population. In addition, in 40% of assessed settlements, livestock farming was disrupted and this proportion was 35% for subsistence farming, according to KIs. The loss of livelihoods has a direct impact on households’ food security; preventing them from carrying out their usual activities to access food and income, they may no longer be able to meet their food consumption needs.

Evolution of the proportion of settlements assessed in the Tillabéri region where the KIs reported that these subsistence activities were disrupted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily work</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock farming</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence agriculture</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH)

The availability of water seems insufficient in 48% of the assessed settlements, for which KIs reported a lack of access to sufficient water to cover households’ needs. The proportions of KIs who reported significant time to reach the preferred water source are higher in the departments of Abala, Ayerou, Filingue and Téra. Access to sanitation facilities, but also the possibility of being able to apply good hygiene practices such as hand washing seem limited and can contribute to increased health risks (from water-borne diseases, or diseases linked to contamination of food, etc.). In fact, the majority of the population did not use latrines in 80% of the settlements assessed and the majority of the population washed their hands with soap or ash in 7% of the settlements as reported by the KIs.
Proportion of settlements assessed in March where the KIs reported that the majority of the population did not have access to enough water to meet household needs in the past month:

Access to water

While access to water seems to be a general concern, some areas appear to be more affected. Access to a sufficient quantity of water seems to be most problematic in Banibangou and Bankilare, where the KIs reported in March that in all assessed settlements, the majority of the population did not have access to enough water to meet household needs. These proportions were 91% and 46% in January for the two departments mentioned above. As for water quality, KIs reported the absence of an improved water source in 15% of the assessed settlements. This percentage is highest in Ayerou (60%), Bankilare (25%) and Tillabéri (36%) according to the KIs.

Evolution of the proportion of settlements assessed in the Tillabéri region where the KIs reported that the majority of the population had access to an improved water source (wells, mini Drinking Water Supply, standpipes, taps and protected wells):

The time required to reach, wait and return from the water source is estimated to be more than an hour for 8% of the assessed settlements according to the KIs, with higher proportions in the departments of Abala, Ayerou Filingue and Téra.

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24 Wells, mini Drinking Water Supply, standpipes, taps and protected wells are considered to be improved water points, defined as water points with the potential to provide clean water for consumption due to their design or construction (definition developed from the washdata.org site).
A long distance or time to obtain water could pose problems, as it may expose vulnerable groups of people to protection risks. In addition, the pressure on water resources could cause tensions between pastoralists and agriculturalists, as well as between local and displaced populations. Insecurity and a lack of resources seem to be major barriers for people to access water. Compared to the Tillabéri region, insecurity seems to play a bigger role in relation to a lack access to water in the Tahoua region in March, where in 20% of the settlements assessed, KIs reported that during the past month, some people were unable to reach their preferred water point because they feared for their safety (against 2% for the region of Tillabéri). A lack of financial resources also hampers access to improved water sources. For settlements that have human-powered pumps and recovery systems, water is usually not provided for free and is reported to be unaffordable for some members of the community.

Access to latrines
KIs reported that in 80% of the assessed settlements, the majority of the population did not use latrines. This proportion is higher (at least 90%) in assessed settlements in the departments of Bankilare, Abala, Torodi, Ouallam and Ayerou. Among the settlements where the majority of the population did not use latrines, the main reasons reported by KIs are that there is no latrine (58%), or not enough for everyone (28%) and that cultural reasons inhibit the use of latrines (5%). Open defecation, which is still often practiced in the areas assessed, increases the risk of water contamination and water-borne diseases.

Evolution of the proportion of settlements assessed in the Tillabéri region where the majority of the population did not use latrines in the past month:

Hygiene
The application of good hygiene practices seems very limited in the two regions, which could increase health risks. In the Tahoua region, 23% of KIs in the assessed settlements reported that the majority of the population washed their hands with soap or ash. In the Tillabéri region, handwashing with soap or ash appears to be practiced by the majority of the population in less than 5% of the assessed settlements in the departments of Banibangou, Bankilare, Torodi, Tillabéri, Filingue and Say.

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Health and nutrition

A number of obstacles are limiting access to health facilities, especially in the Tahoua region. Structural issues, as well as insecurity, appear as the main barriers to access to health services. Among the 9% of settlements where the KIs reported the unavailability of functional health services, the main cause reported by the KIs was that there had never been any health infrastructures nearby, whereas security considerations were cited as the second most important reason. Furthermore, according to the KIs, the majority of the population had access to nutritional programs in 59% of the settlements assessed. However, curative programs reportedly were more accessible than preventive programs for malnutrition, particularly in the Tahoua region.

Proportion of settlements assessed in March where the KIs reported that the majority of the population did not have access to functional health services within walking distance in the past month:

Access to health services

In the Tahoua region, KIs reported a lack of access to functional health services within walking distance in 31% of the assessed settlements (compared to 7% in the Tillabéri region). The poor coverage in health services in the border strip of the departments of Tillia and Tassara hampers access to healthcare for the populations, as healthcare may simply not be available close by for these settlements. The distance to health facilities seems to be a particular obstacle in certain departments. Among the settlements assessed where the KIs reported that functional health services were accessible, the health services were located at more than one-hour walk in 17% of these settlements, with higher proportions in the departments of Ayerou, Banibangou, Bankilare and Ouallam.

27 Several health facilities in the region remain closed in the departments of Ayorou, Banibangou, Bankilare, Filingué, Ouallam, Téra and Tillabéri due to insecurity or lack of staff (Source: OCHA. Rapport mensuel. March 2020).
Limited access to health services seems to be the result of both structural limitations and problems linked to insecurity. Indeed, among the settlements in which the KIs reported the lack of available, functional health services, the distance to these services was the main reason according to the KIs for 82% of the assessed settlements in Tahoua and 43% of the assessed settlements in Tillabéri. Security considerations are cited as the most important reason in 16% of the settlements assessed. The lack of available medicines was reported in 14% of the settlements assessed in the Tillabéri region. In addition, the availability of emergency services facilitating critical care appears to be limited in the two regions. Limited access to health services can lead people to practice self-medication or to an absence of treatment for those who need it.

Proportion of settlements assessed in March where the KIs reported the availability of emergency services facilitating critical care:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tillabéri</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahoua</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Health issues**

KIs in both regions cite malaria (in 60% of the settlements assessed) and fever (in 4% of the settlements assessed) as main health issues. Malaria is widespread and endemic to the region, and remains the primary reason for consultations in health facilities. Respiratory problems were also reported as a major problem by KIs in 25% of the settlements assessed in the Tillabéri region, with higher proportions in the departments of Abala, Bankilare and Filingue. Malnutrition has been reported as a health issue by KIs in the department of Tassara (Tahoua region), and may be correlated with the low presence of community-based malnutrition prevention services.

Three main health problems most reported by KIs, by proportion of settlements assessed in March:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tillabéri</td>
<td>Malaria 58%, Respiratory problems 25%, Fever 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahoua</td>
<td>Malaria 77%, Fever 11%, Malnutrition 3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nutrition**

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29 OCHA. Aperçu des besoins humanitaires Niger, 2020
According to the KIs, the population did not have access to nutritional programs within walking distance in 38% of the assessed settlements, with highest proportions in the departments of Tillia, Filingue, Say and Ayerou. Among the settlements where KIs have reported the presence of nutritional programs, curative programs seem to be more accessible than preventive programs for malnutrition. According to the KIs, the treatment of children (for moderate malnutrition in 80% and severe malnutrition in 54% of the settlements assessed) seems most available, as well as treatments for breastfeeding mothers (moderate malnutrition in 47% and severe malnutrition in 35% of the settlements assessed). However, in the assessed settlements of Tillia and Tassara (in Tahoua region), KIs reported that all of the settlements assessed had neither community outreach workers in the village who provided advice/support on infant and young child feeding, nor a support group for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers.

**Mortality**

Proportion of settlements assessed in March in which KIs reported an increase in the number of deaths in the past month:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tillabéri</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahoua</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proportion of settlements assessed in March where KIs reported an increase in the number of deaths is higher in the settlements of the departments of Torodi, Tera and Say. Malaria and fever are reported by KIs in 89% of the settlements assessed as the main causes of increased mortality.

**Shelters and non-food items**

According to the KIs, IDPs seem to living in particularly vulnerable shelter conditions compared to the non-displaced population and refugees. In 47% of the assessed settlements, KIs reported that IDPs resided in precarious shelters30. This precariousness increases health risks as well as risks of protection incidents, especially for vulnerable groups among the IDP population. The main causes of shelter destruction reported by KIs in the assessed settlements are bad weather and flooding (reported in 67% of the settlements assessed, having reported shelter destruction). Fires and attacks have also been mentioned as causes for shelter destruction in the Tillabéri region. Furthermore, according to the KIs, there is a general lack of available construction materials, in particular cement, metal sheets, ropes, plastic sheeting and wood, while the lack of available non-food items (NFI) seem to mainly concern mosquito nets, blankets, mats, buckets and soap. Disruption on the markets (in particular the closing of certain markets) and the lack of financial means of households seem to be the main factors affecting access to these materials and items6.

**Types of shelters by population group**

IDPs seem to be more often living in precarious shelters than non-displaced populations and refugees. According to the KIs, the IDPs resided in precarious shelters in respectively 46% and 25% of the settlements assessed in Tillabéri and Tahoua. The majority of the refugees resided in transitional shelters or durable structures (in 72% of the settlements assessed according to the KIs). As for the non-displaced populations, the KIs indicated that they resided mostly in structured shelters (99% in Tillabéri and 73% in Tahoua). The precariousness of shelters makes the population more vulnerable to harsh weather6. Homeless people or people residing in precarious shelters may also be more exposed to protection and security risks, especially vulnerable groups (such as women, children and elderly persons, people with a disability)31.

30 Categories considered as precarious shelters: makeshift shelter, emergency shelter, public building and traditional tent.
Proportion of settlements assessed in March by type of shelter and population group, as reported by KIs:

**IDP**

- **Tahoua**: 50%
- **Tillabéri**: 46%

**Non-displaced population**

- **Tahoua**: 73%
- **Tillabéri**: 99%

**Destruction of shelters**

The destruction of shelters was reported by the KIs in the first quarter of 2020 mainly at the beginning of the year (January and February), particularly in the departments of Torodi, Ayerou, Abala, Ouallam, Tera and Gotheye. In March, the KIs reported that in 32% of the settlements assessed in Tassara, shelters had been destroyed during the past month. For 14% of these settlements, the KIs reported that the destruction of shelters affected as much as half of the shelters in the settlements. Bad weather and floods are the main factors causing the destruction of shelters reported by the KIs, and affected 67% of the assessed settlements having reported a destruction of shelters. Niger is affected by floods every year, particularly at the end of the rainy season. Floods often result in the destruction of basic infrastructure (wells, health facilities, schools, housing, etc.) of food stocks, crops, livestock, etc. KIs also reported destructions caused by fires in the departments of Ouallam, Tera and Tillabéri, and by attacks in the department of Banibangou.

**Evolution of the proportion of settlements assessed in the Tillabéri region where the KIs reported that shelters were destroyed during the past month:**

- **November**: 24%
- **January**: 25%
- **February**: 20%
- **March**: 2%

Access to construction materials and NFIs remains limited. KIs noted a particular lack of available cement, metal sheets, ropes, plastic sheeting and wood. The availability of construction material seems to have reduced in the Tillabéri region during the first quarter of 2020, particularly in Banibangou. Disruptions in markets and trade routes may explain this decrease in availability.

**Construction materials most cited by KIs as being unavailable for the majority of the population, by proportion of settlements assessed during the past month:**

- **Cement**: 56%
- **Metal sheet**: 50%
- **Rope**: 35%
- **Plastic sheeting**: 35%
- **Wood**: 33%

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[32] The mapping of the markets in the Liptako-Gourma for the month of February 2020 shared by Fews Net reports a minimal or even no level of activity in Banibangou, and significant disruption and limited activity in the border departments of Mali, particularly in the departments of Abala, d'Ayerou, Bankilare, Tillia and Tassara. (Source: Fews.net, Food Security Outlook, Février 2020).
Availability of non-food items

Among NFIs, mosquito nets and blankets are least available to the population in the two regions according to the KIs; not available to the majority of the population in respectively 48% (mosquito nets) and 46% (blankets) of the assessed settlements. According to the participants of the FGDs, the limited availability of NFIs can be explained by a lack of financial means, as well as by limited access to markets. Restricted access to essential NFIs could have numerous consequences; e.g. on the health of the population and the application of good hygiene practices (the use of a container for transporting drinking water, a pan for cooking food, etc.).

| Non-food items most cited by KIs as being unavailable for the majority of the population, by proportion of settlements assessed in the past month: |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mosquito net | 48% | |
| Blanket | 46% | |
| Sleeping mat | 35% | |
| Bucket | 30% | |
| Pan | 29% | |

Protection

According to KIs, in more than half (59%) of the assessed settlements, the majority of the population felt insecure over the past month, which is likely the result of security incidents in the area. In fact, in the first quarter of 2020, 129 protection incidents were recorded in the Tillabéri region and 62 in the Tahoua region, affecting the sense of security of the populations in these regions. Violence by armed groups seems to be the main fear among women, men and boys, while forced marriage has been reported by the KIs as the main protection concern of girls living in the two regions. Insecurity, does not only drive displacements, it also reportedly impacts access to land and to basic resources and services such as water, education and health.

33 UNHCR. Incident protection Tillabéri Tahoua, January-March 2020.
Insecurity

The KIs reported that in 59% of the settlements assessed in Tillabéri, the majority of the population did not feel safe. This proportion is particularly high in the departments of Abala, Ayerou, Banibangou and Torodi. In the Tahoua region, the sense of insecurity among the majority of the population reportedly affects 29% of assessed settlements, particularly in the department of Tillia.

Proportion of settlements assessed in March where the KIs reported that the majority of the population did not feel safe in the past month:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tillabéri</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahoua</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proportion of settlements assessed in March for which the KIs reported security incidents in which one or more civilians were killed or seriously injured in the past month:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tillabéri</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahoua</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The KIs reported that 17% of the settlements assessed had experienced security incidents (civilians killed or seriously injured), and these proportions were the highest in Torodi (38%), Tera (37%) and Say (29%). These departments are located near the border with Burkina Faso; an area where UNHCR has reported numerous protection incidents, including kidnappings and assassinations.11
Evolution of the proportion of settlements assessed in the Tillabéri region where the KIs reported incidents in which civilians were killed or seriously injured in the past month:

![Chart showing percentage of settlements assessed in November, January, February, and March]

The KIs reported looting in 5% of assessed settlements, in particular in Ayerou (30%) and Banibangou (17%). Throughout the first quarter of 2020, these two departments have consistently been most affected by looting according to the information provided by KIs in the assessed settlements. According to the UNHCR, the Tillabéri region is also affected by looting of granaries and cereal banks. RRM assessment data furthermore indicate looting of shops.

Protection concerns

The main protection concern of women, men and boys seems to be related to violence by armed groups (reported in respectively 48%, 47% and 24% of the settlements assessed). For girls, forced marriage was reported by KIs as the main protection concern in 23% of settlements assessed. Forced marriage has a number of negative effects on the development of girls and may increases risks of gender-based violence (GBV). In the FGDs conducted as part of this assessment, participants reported that torture, rape and murder are the main fears among women and girls, while boys and men seem to be most concerned about torture and murder. Finally, the relationship between displaced population and local communities has been reported by the KIs as predominantly good in 63% of the settlements assessed. However, in some displacement sites, the coexistence between the local and displaced communities seems to be more fragile, and their mutual relationship is prone to manipulation by non-state armed groups.

Education

In 15% of the assessed settlements in Tillabéri and 29% of the settlements assessed in Tahoua, the KIs reported that the majority of school-age children did not have access to functional education facilities within walking distance. Constraints to access education seem to mainly result from a lack of infrastructure (particularly in the Tahoua region) and insecurity (particularly in the Tillabéri region). In addition, recent government measures adopted in March against the spread the COVID-19, which resulted in the closure of all schools, will further affect access to education. Finally, girls and boys reportedly do not face the same barriers to access education. Early / forced marriage and household duties were reported as the main barriers to education for girls, while the inability for boys to attend school seems to relate to their obligation to work.

Access to education

According to information provided by the KIs, access to education seems most limited in the departments of Banibangou and Ayerou, where KIs in more than half of assessed settlements reported that the majority of school-age children did not have access to education services. Among the settlements where access to education was limited, insecurity seems to be the main driver according to the KIs in the Tillabéri region (in 78% of the settlements assessed). An increase in attacks on schools in this region was reported in January 2020 and appears to have had serious consequences for the education of children. Teachers are now considered to be the target of multiple threats by non-state armed groups, which has led many to leave the schools where they teach. In the Tahoua region, more structural weaknesses were identified, particularly the absence of any educational infrastructure nearby in 90% of the assessed settlements. Protection risks faced by children on their way to school is also reported in 11% of the settlements assessed in Tahoua as a barrier to education.

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35 The school-age population is defined by children aged 6-17.
36 At the end of January, 354 schools were closed in Niger for security reasons, including 331 in the Tillabéri region. (Source: UNICEF. Humanitarian Situation Report. January 2020).
sending displaced children to school are also highlighted, particularly given the limited capacity of schools to absorb a sudden increase in the school-age population with the arrival of displaced households.

Evolution of the proportion of settlements assessed in the Tillabéri region - by main reason for the limited access to education services during the past month according to the KIs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers stopped working or were moved</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructures were destroyed during attack</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never had school facilities nearby</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Education of girls and boys**

Access to education is not the same for girls as it is for boys. According to the KIs, in 46% of the settlements assessed, half of the girls or more had not attended school in the past month (compared to 39% for boys). According to the KIs, barriers to access education for girls could be explained by early / forced marriages, which is often the reason why many of them drop out of school, as well as by the distribution of domestic roles, young girls often having to carry out household duties.

On the other hand, barriers to education for boys are rather linked to having to work outside of the house, according to the KIs.

Three main reasons for girls not attending school according to KIs:

- Early / forced marriages: 21%
- Children must work at home: 18%
- Children must work outside the home: 15%

Three main reasons for boys not attending school according to KIs:

- Children must work outside the home: 55%
- Parents ignore the usefulness of school: 9%
- Parents cannot pay school fees: 7%

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38 Question asked in the settlements assessed in which the KIs reported that the entire population group did not attend classes during the month preceding the data collection.
The KIs reported that in about one-third (31%) of assessed settlements, the majority of the population had difficulties accessing information on available humanitarian assistance. The limited coverage or even absence of a mobile network, as well as the limited availability of electricity, appear to be significant barriers to access to information. Communities and relatives seem to be preferred sources for sharing information. In areas where humanitarian access is already very limited due to insecurity, the role of these information providers is very important to be able to communicate with populations living in these areas, to share key messages and inform them on humanitarian assistance.

Proportion of settlements assessed in March where the KIs reported that the majority of the population had difficulties accessing information on humanitarian assistance available in the past month:

Access to information

According to the KIs, limited coverage or the absence of a telephone network appear to be the main difficulties accessing information (in 34% and 29% of the settlements assessed in Tahoua and Tillabéri). This is particularly worrying considering that KIs reported that phones are the privileged source of information for the populations. Radio also seems to be an important source of information in Tillabéri according to the KIs, while in Tahoua, populations of assessed settlements seem to rely more on in-person conversations as their primary source of information. The limited availability of electricity, reported by KIs for 11% of the settlements assessed in Tahoua, may be an additional barrier to access information.
Main sources and providers of information

Main source of general information according to KIs, during the past month in the settlements assessed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tillabéri</th>
<th>Tahoua</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone calls</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversing with people</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main information providers according to KIs, during the past month in the settlements assessed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tillabéri</th>
<th>Tahoua</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community leaders</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends / family</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authorities</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accountability

The humanitarian situation in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions seems to have deteriorated during the first quarter of 2020 following attacks of non-state armed groups, particularly on the border strip with Mali. Humanitarian access continues to be a major constraint, due to the security environment and government restrictions, including the imposition of armed escorts in certain areas and restrictions related to COVID-19. When asked about the needs of populations in their settlements, KIs indicated that the majority of the population needs food security assistance in almost two-thirds of assessed settlements (65%). They also cited a need for assistance in the health (38%), livelihoods (26%), WASH (32%) and protection (19%) sectors. While the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions face structural challenges related to desertification and a lack of basic services and infrastructure, resulting in needs for food, health and nutrition assistance, humanitarian needs seem to have been aggravated by the spike in violence at the end of 2019 and early 2020, and the resulting population movements. During displacement people often lose their livelihoods, which limits their resources to access food and basic services. Displacements are often carried out in several waves, which can complicate the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance. Difficulties are also highlighted by the humanitarian community to provide emergency assistance to the displaced populations while some of them are still in inaccessible areas. In addition, faced with the risk of the spread of COVID-19, government measures have been taken (curfew, restrictions on movement and assembly), which are also likely to impact humanitarian activities.