

Social Media Watch

Protecting the Humanitarian Space in Niger

July-September 2024



To support the humanitarian response in the Sahel region, [Insecurity Insight](#) is conducting ongoing social media monitoring to understand perceptions and key concerns around the aid response in Niger, with the aim of contributing to the development of aid agencies' communication strategies in response to community sentiment.

Summary

From July to September 2024, 30 predominantly international aid-related organisations were mentioned in 246 public posts on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) in Niger. The international organisations included 12 aid or development organisations, eight United Nations (UN) organisations, six humanitarian organisations, and one aid donor.

Facebook and X accounted for 50% of all posts each, but posts on X increased compared to the previous quarter.

In Niger the highest proportion of aid-related posts originated from the social media accounts of aid or civil sector networks (42% of posts) and only 22% were from edited media, compared to Burkina Faso and Mali, where over half of all aid-related posts come from edited media.

The posts published in Niger reached an estimated 500,000 people, averaging more than 2,000 views per post, and generated 9,000 engagements. Sentiment analysis showed that all but four posts were either positive or neutral, with negative posts mainly propagating false information that aid organisations had artificially created or spread the Mpox viral infection and distributed harmful vaccines. Negative posts underperformed in terms of their spread on social media, reaching on average around only 1,000 users and generating an average of 33 engagement actions per post.

However, 12% of the 363 comments (i.e. responses to posts) expressed negative sentiments that often stemmed from mistrust and misinformation. An analysis of negative comments about aid-related organisations in Niger reveals deep distrust towards several individual international organisations, viewing them as “imperialist” entities advancing Western interests through manipulative social agendas, potentially harmful vaccine programmes, economic exploitation, espionage, and pervasive corruption, all of which are believed to obstruct genuine African progress and independence.

Aid-related organisations in Niger’s social media sphere

Introduction

Publicly available social media data published in French on X or Facebook related to aid work in Niger between July and September 2024 was analysed using keywords associated with a list of 127 local and international aid organisations known to be operating in the country.

From July to September 2024, at least **30 aid-related organisations operating or present in Niger were mentioned in 246 public posts on Facebook and X**, including 27 international organisations and three local ones (see Figure 1). These international organisations included 12 aid or development organisations, eight UN organisations, six humanitarian organisations, and one aid donor.

Nearly 50% of these posts were sourced from X, an increase compared to the April-June quarter of 2024, when 33% appeared on X. The share of post identified on Facebook fell from 67% to 50% in the July-September quarter. Most of the posts (96%) referred to international aid organisations: 27 of the 30 named organisations mentioned on public social media in the third quarter of 2024 were international organisations.

Social media accounts linked to organisations or networks operating in the aid or civil sector were the most important source of content related to aid agencies, accounting for around 42% of posts, a proportion very similar to the previous quarter (44%).¹ This seems a particular characteristic of aid-related posts in Niger compared to other Sahel countries. In both Mali and Burkina Faso, edited media are the most frequent source of posts about aid agencies (55% and 58%, respectively) and aid agency accounts only provide 30% and 18% of posts, respectively.

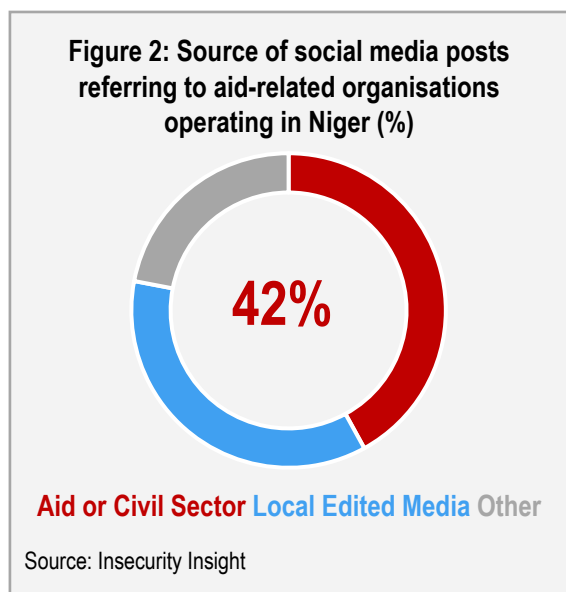
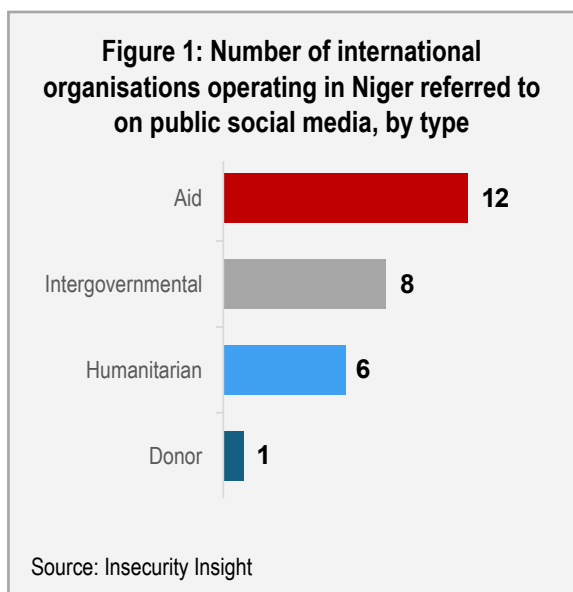
Other sources, including local authorities, donors, etc., accounted for 36% of content.

The local edited media, which also tends to be a significant source of content related to aid agencies in most other countries, accounted for 22% of posts in Niger (see Figure 2).

In July-September 2024 posts that referred to named aid-related organisations in Niger are estimated to have reached nearly 500,000 people, an average of more than 2,000 per post. Furthermore, it is estimated that these posts resulted in nearly 9,000 engagement actions in the form of comments, shares and emoji reactions, with an average of over 36 engagements per post.

Negative posts seem to have relatively underperformed compared to the previous quarter, reaching on average around 1,000 users (compared to 2,000 users on average for all posts combined) and receiving an average of 33 engagement actions per post (compared to 36 on average for all posts combined).

The posts were accompanied by 363 comments related to aid-related organisations (i.e. not counting comments unrelated to such organisations).



Opinions, misinformation, disinformation and hate speech

Of the public posts mentioning individual aid-related organisations on social media, 54% expressed positive sentiments and 44% were neutral, while only four public posts expressed negative sentiments (see Figure 4). This is a slight increase compared to the previous quarter, when only one negative post was identified.

Content produced by aid agencies and civil society organisations, which accounted for 42% of total posts, highlighted aid activities positively by sharing information about partnerships and programmes.

Additionally, the majority of content from local edited media (22% of total posts) portrayed the activities of aid-related organisations in a neutral manner, focusing on factual reporting.

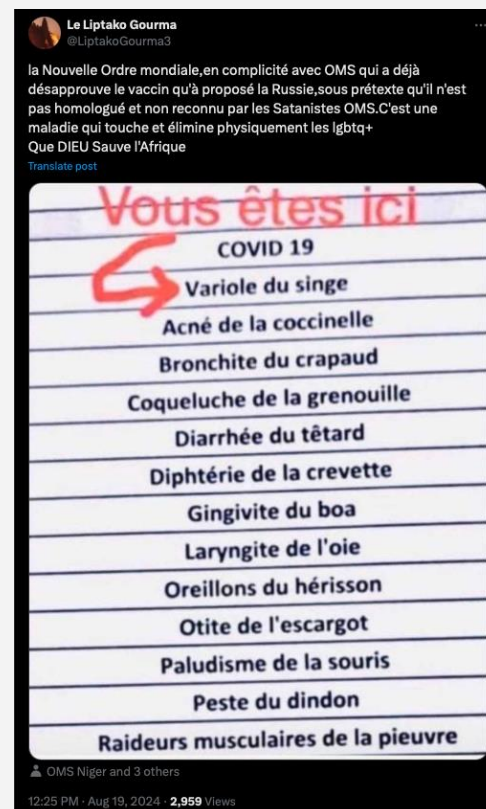
From July to September 2024, only four negative posts targeting specific, named aid organisations were identified in Niger's online space, accounting for approximately 2% of total posts. These posts, aimed at a UN organisation (the World Health Organization, or WHO), were related to the Mpox outbreak. They primarily propagated suspicions that the organisation may have artificially created or spread the viral infection, or distributed harmful vaccines (see Figure 3).

During the April-June quarter, negative sentiment centred on an international aid agency's donation of health equipment and supplies, with users arguing that the donation reflected a lack of sovereignty in the country. This suggests that criticism of international organisations' involvement in health care provision and management extends beyond issues related to Mpox.

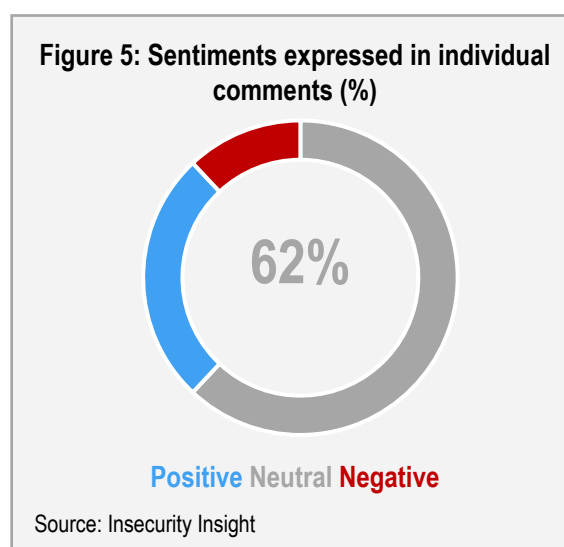
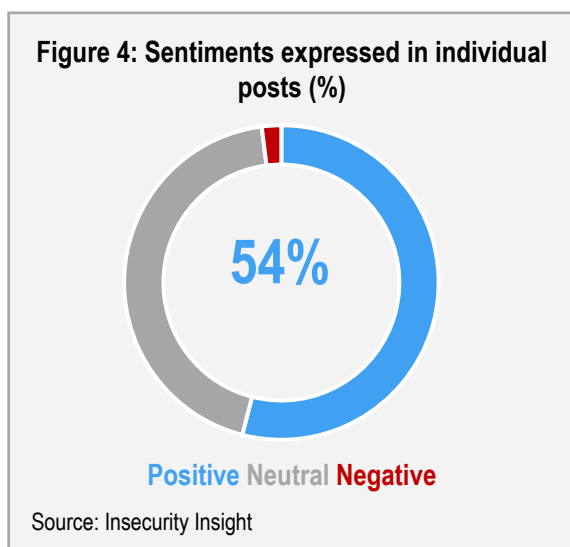
A total of 363 comments about aid-related subjects were written in reaction/response to the 246 posts. The majority of these comments generally expressed positive (26%) or neutral (62%) sentiments. However, 44 comments, or 12% of the total, expressed negative sentiments (see Figure 5).

Since 42% of all public posts were published by social media accounts associated with organisations or networks operating in the aid or civil sector, a significant portion of the positive sentiments originated from users who appeared to belong to these NGO networks, including employees and volunteers. While this interaction is largely confined to a specific "bubble" in the social media sphere, it nonetheless underscores the advantages of aid-related organisations actively sharing content about their work and activities. Such communication not only amplifies their message in their own networks, but also has the potential to positively influence external users through their engagement and interactions with the content.

Figure 3: Example of a post published on X propagating false information regarding a UN organisation



Source: X



Negative sentiments in these comments referred to seven aid-related organisations: one donor, four intergovernmental organisations, one humanitarian organisations, and one aid or development organisation. Negative sentiments towards the aid sector as a whole, referring to “NGOs” in general rather than specific aid-related organisations, were also detected. However, individual aid-related organisations were more frequently targeted, as highlighted in this section.

The comments reflected a spectrum of sentiments and opinions regarding international aid-related organisations operating in Niger, especially in the context of recent political instability in the country.

An analysis of the **negative comments** highlighted several recurrent and interlinked themes, which are discussed below.

Distrust in international organizations’ motives for providing aid

Many users expressed a profound distrust toward international organisations, particularly the UN ones, accusing them of advancing “imperialist” agendas. Comments referred to these organisations as “mafias” influenced by foreign powers. For example, one comment claimed, “The [international organisation] is a mafia organisation paid by Big Pharma and the global elite”, highlighting the perception of aid organisations as controlled by powerful Western elites. One user suggested that another UN organisation aimed to infiltrate African nations, saying that “[the organisation] ... seeks to infiltrate the security structures of Niger and the Sahel Alliance”.²

Accusations of political manipulation

Many comments linked international organisations to Western social and political agendas, often portraying these activities as undermining African values. One UN organisation was accused of supporting “satanic LGBT+ propaganda”. Another comment argued that the WHO’s health campaigns disguise broader political motives, with the organisation purportedly “creating viruses” to destabilise African nations. This theme underscores a perception that aid organisations promote Western interests rather than addressing real needs in African communities.

The data at a glance

In the third quarter of 2024 (July-September), 30 aid-related organisations were mentioned in 246 public posts on Facebook and X in Niger, a very similar number to the 32 mentioned during the second quarter of 2024. These 30 aid-related organisations included 27 international organisations – including 12 aid or development organisations, eight UN organisations, six humanitarian organisations, and one aid donor – and three local ones.

The social media platform X accounted for a higher share of social media posts compared to the second quarter (April-June), rising from 33% of posts to 50%. In turn, social media accounts linked to aid or civil sector networks remained the most important source of content related to aid-related agencies, accounting for around 42% of posts, followed by the local edited media, which contributed 22% of posts. Other sources, such as local authorities, donors, etc., accounted for 36% of content.

These posts reached an estimated 500,000 people, averaging 2,000 views per post, and generated nearly 9,000 engagements. In general, the absolute majority of posts about aid-related organisations remained either positive or neutral (99% in the April-June quarter and 98% in the July-September quarter). While negative posts rose from only one in the April-June quarter to four in the third quarter, they still represented only 2% of the total number of posts.

These 246 posts generated 363 comments on social media platforms, a decrease of 43% from the previous quarter, during which 638 pertinent comments were recorded. Nevertheless, social media user sentiment remained stable: 26% of the comments were positive (28% in April-June), 62% were neutral (56% in April-June), and 12% were negative (down from 16% in April-June).

Negative comments linked several individual international organisations to Western interests, manipulative social agendas, potentially harmful vaccine programmes, economic exploitation, espionage, and pervasive corruption.

Economic exploitation, poverty and corruption concerns

Many social media users criticised aid organisations for allegedly profiting from Africa’s hardships by perpetuating dependency and mismanaging resources. Some comments suggested that NGOs contribute to poverty rather than alleviate it, with one user stating, “Almost all NGOs are here to impoverish us”, expressing frustration over what they perceived as economic exploitation. Additionally, comments accused these organisations of supporting a “nefarious business” that benefits traffickers and corrupt aid officials instead of genuinely supporting African development. Another user emphasised, “We must stop this trafficking of men ... which fuels the business of a murky network of NGOs and enriches mafioso smugglers”. Furthermore, there was widespread scepticism about how aid funds are allocated, with users alleging corruption and mismanagement within NGOs. One remarked, “Corruption around and within these NGOs is often very significant”, while another commented on the lack of transparency regarding aid funding, saying, “In the hope that a large part of these funds doesn’t end up in the pockets of NGOs as usual”. This reflects the perception that aid funds are not reaching those in need and are instead reinforcing systemic issues.

Concerns over vaccine safety and intentions

Comments frequently cast suspicion on vaccines provided by UN organisations, with allegations that these might be harmful. For example, one user asked, “Are you sure these aren’t doses of vaccines tampered with by France to harm our children?” These concerns were amplified by fears that diseases like Mpox were artificially introduced, as one user alleged: “They created the Mpox virus”, insinuating that these organisations create diseases to justify their presence and maintain control over African health care systems.

General sentiment against Western influence

The underlying theme in these comments is a strong resentment of Western influence in Africa. Many users view Western-led interventions as attempts to control African nations. One person commented, “The West is looking for ways to support their terrorist allies”, implying that foreign powers actively undermine African stability through alliances with disruptive groups. This anti-Western sentiment extends to a broader critique of Western policies, with comments like, “The West ... doesn’t want to see Africa thrive”, reflecting a belief that foreign interventions obstruct Africa’s economic growth and independence.

In general, the negative sentiment in the comments often encompasses multiple concerns and themes. For example, one user questioned both the relevance of an external branch of a UN organisation operating in Niger and the management of aid-related funds, asking, “Why is the [UN organisation] office from Senegal coming to Niger to do this, or does the [UN organisation section] in Niger not have the necessary expertise? Or is it just to squander funds ...?” Another user expressed frustration with the perceived ineffectiveness of aid efforts and suspected that international organisations were gathering intelligence, presumably for foreign interests, rather than offering solutions, stating, “These organisations are just here to assess our weaknesses and broadcast them to the world without providing any real solutions”. These examples highlight how some comments often evoke and interlink different themes.

Reach of social media profiles



Eight accounts that posted negative content about aid organisations in Niger between July and September 2024 were further examined. Of these eight accounts, four explicitly supported Niger’s transitional military government and aligned themselves with broader regional political and military movements.

All eight account holders identified publicly as male, and four used anonymous profile pictures devoid of personal images. These anonymous accounts were notably less detailed, focusing predominantly on resharing political narratives and avoiding direct personal engagement. Two accounts identified themselves using broad descriptions such as “influencer”, “activist”, and “political analyst”.

Geographically, six accounts were based in Niger, while two were in Mali. The content across all eight profiles was predominantly political and military in nature, reflecting a concentrated engagement with Niger’s evolving political climate, but also included engagement on other international topics such as the conflicts in Ukraine and the occupied Palestinian territories. Despite their consistent activity, the accounts generally had modest followings and limited engagement (six of the accounts had under 2,000 followers, and the other two had 12,400 and 15,900 respectively).

These accounts with limited reach primarily amplify narratives from better known influencers.

Notably, two of the profiles analysed during this period were also active in the previous reporting period (April-June 2024). These recurring accounts are explored in greater detail below.

<h2>Profile analysis</h2>	
<p>Profile: @BoureimaKabirou</p> <p>Gender: Male</p> <p>Platform: X</p> <p>Location: Niger</p> <p>Reach: 1,301 followers</p> <p>Profession: Not specified</p> <p>Post frequency: Multiple times a day</p> <p>Language: French</p> <p>Presence on social media since: 2018</p> 	<p>This social media user actively uses his platform to critique aid organisations, which he frequently describes as agents of foreign influence seeking to undermine Niger’s sovereignty. Despite his small following of 1,301 users, his high-frequency posting ensures consistent engagement among his niche audience. His content focuses on opposing international NGOs, often accusing them of being extensions of Western political agendas rather than impartial humanitarian actors.</p> <p>The account aligns itself with anti-NGO and anti-Western ideologies, and actively engages with Nathalie Yamb, @szinger, and sissoko sora elvis, who are known pro-Sahel Alliance, pro-Russian and anti-NGO influencers. This content appeals to a growing sentiment in Niger that aid agencies are exploitative and tools of Western governments. For example, he comments (see post on the left) that the UN Development Programme, under the guise of humanitarian assistance, undermines local governance and sovereignty.</p>
<p>Profile: @SonniMaiga</p> <p>Gender: Male</p> <p>Platform: X</p> <p>Location: Mali</p> <p>Reach: 12400 followers</p> <p>Profession: Self-described political observer and media contributor</p> <p>Post frequency: Multiple times a day</p> <p>Language: French</p> <p>Presence on social media since: 2018</p> 	<p>@SonniMaiga is a prominent influencer on X with 12,400 followers, frequently posting content in which he identifies himself as a political analyst. His profile is often focused on criticising UN agencies and aid organisations, which he accuses of perpetuating neocolonialism and exploiting Mali’s resources under the guise of providing humanitarian assistance.</p> <p>Although critical of NGOs, @SonniMaiga does not explicitly support pro-military narratives. Instead, he centres his efforts on questioning the legitimacy of external actors operating in the Sahel. His account often amplifies posts from other regional influencers and political commentators, suggesting a strategic focus on reinforcing widespread narratives rather than introducing original viewpoints.</p> <p>With a relatively large follower base and active engagement, @SonniMaiga can influence online discussions. For instance, he recently commented on a post by the Luxembourg delegation in Mali asserting that aid funds provided to NGOs are likely to be misallocated.</p>

Conclusion

- From July to September 2024 social media activity in Niger indicated that discussions around aid-related organisations and activities were strongly present in the country's social media space. At least 30 such organisations were mentioned, comprising 12 aid or development organisations, eight UN organisations, six humanitarian organisations, and one aid donor.
- Posts on X rose from 33% to nearly 50% of aid-related content, showing a growing reliance on this platform instead of Facebook. Social media accounts linked to organisations or networks operating in the aid or civil sector were the most important source of content related to aid agencies, accounting for around 44% of posts.
- Social media accounts linked to organisations or networks operating in the aid or civil sector account for a higher share of post with aid-related content than in Mali or Burkina Faso, where edited media produced more posts than the aid sector itself.
- Niger consistently tends to have a smaller social media sphere than other countries in the Sahel such as Mali and Burkina Faso. For example, posts referring to named aid-related organisations in Niger reached an estimated 500,000 people, while in countries like Burkina Faso and Mali this figure tends to be over one million. Negative posts underperformed, reaching an average of 1,000 users compared to 2,000 for all posts combined, reflecting limited influence.
- While all but four posts expressed either positive or neutral sentiments, 12% of the comments (44 out of 363) expressed negative sentiments. Negative posts increased from one in April-June 2024 to four in July-September, representing 2% of total posts, compared to less than 1% previously. At the same time, negative comments dropped from 16% to 12%, suggesting reduced engagement with negative narratives.
- Social media discussions about aid organisations in Niger reveal significant distrust, with users accusing international aid organisations of promoting “imperialist” agendas that serve Western interests.
- Many commentators believe that international organisations manipulate African or local political and social values and misuse aid to exploit African economies, while concerns over vaccine safety and artificial/deliberate spread of diseases fuel scepticism about health initiatives.

Recommendations

- Use the aid agency social media presence to maintain a positive social media space for aid agencies in Niger: Recognise the importance of social media posts made by the aid sector in maintaining positive or neutral sentiment about the aid sector in Niger, and develop and implement a well-thought-out social media communication strategy.
- Enhance communication and transparency: Transparency about an aid-related organisation's activities, goals, and outcomes helps to counteract mistrust and negative sentiments. Regularly updating the public with clear, factual information about projects and successes can help build trust and dispel misconceptions.

- **Engage with the community:** Active engagement with local communities and stakeholders on social media can help to address concerns and provide valuable feedback. This involves responding to comments, clarifying doubts and participating in open discussions. This kind of engagement can turn unfavourable opinions into constructive feedback and improve an organisation's reputation.
- **Develop strategic counter-MDH campaigns related to disinformation regarding MPox:** Targeted campaigns should be implemented to counter misinformation, disinformation and hate speech (MDH). These campaigns should include fact-checking services, collaboration with local media, and partnerships with influencers to disseminate accurate information and debunk false claims.
- **Monitor and mitigate risks:** Social media should be continuously monitored for negative sentiments and MDH targeting aid-related organisations. These organisations should develop and deploy mitigation strategies, such as training staff in digital literacy and risk management, to safeguard themselves against potential security threats and ensure the safety of staff and the efficacy of aid operations.

Methodology and limitations

Publicly available social media data published in French on X or Facebook related to aid work in Niger between July and September 2024 was analysed using keywords associated with a list of 127 local and international aid organisations known to be operating in the country. To do so, Insecurity Insight used proprietary technology powered by an artificial intelligence tool to identify pertinent data on various social media platforms. The collected data was subsequently analysed, and the findings are presented in this brief. For ethical and technical reasons, the data does not include private social media content. Moreover, the analysis does not include sentiments expressed in languages other than French and is only based on the analysis of written content.

What is social media data?

The main components of social media data are *posts* and *comments*. A *post* refers to the uploading of fresh content by a user account or page that would appear both on the account or page “wall” and followers’ timelines. On X a post would usually be referred to as a “tweet”. In this document, both Facebook “posts” and X “tweets” are referred to as posts.

A *comment* is different from a post and refers to a social media user’s reply or response to a post in the form of a comment that appears in the commentary section of the social media platform.

In addition to posts and comments, social media data also includes various *types of user engagement* with posts and comments, such as in the form of “likes” and “shares” (or “reposts” on X).

Some organisations, including *edited media outlets, NGOs, local authorities, political actors* and others, participate on social media space by uploading posts or publishing comments for a variety of purposes, including to disseminate information.

Endnotes

1 This figure does not include content produced by the organisations themselves. For example, if organisation A publishes a post to publicise the work it is conducting, this post is not included in the data. However, if organisation A publishes a post regarding organisation B, then the post features in the data

2 Alliance des États du Sahel (Alliance of Sahel States, or Sahel Alliance), comprising Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, established on 16 September 2023.

Should you wish to provide us with any feedback or to get in touch, kindly write to: info@insecurityinsight.org

Other resources

Protecting the Humanitarian Space in Burkina Faso: Aid-related organisations were less frequently mentioned on social media between July and September 2024 than between April and June. However, in the smaller number of identified mentions, the proportion of negative content was higher and positive sentiment less frequently expressed than in the April-June period. Full briefing available in [English](#) and [French](#).

Applying an Anticipatory Action Mindset to Addressing Conflict and Food Insecurity in Mali: Over the past few months, Insecurity Insight has developed a series of reports on region-specific briefings focused on the application of an anticipatory mindset to conflict-driven food insecurity in Mali. This involves proactively monitoring violent events that pose risks for food security so that their worst foreseeable consequences can be mitigated or prevented through early conflict-sensitive actions. The briefings cover [Gao](#), [Ménaka](#), [Mopti](#), [Ségou](#) and [Timbuktu](#).

Attacks on Health Care More than Doubled in Niger's Tillabéri region in 2023: The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC) documented 18 incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care in Niger in 2023. Most incidents occurred in the first half of the year. In Tillabéri, cases more than doubled, especially in Say and Tera departments near the Burkina Faso border. Full factsheet available in [English](#) and [French](#).

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