Monitoring Brief

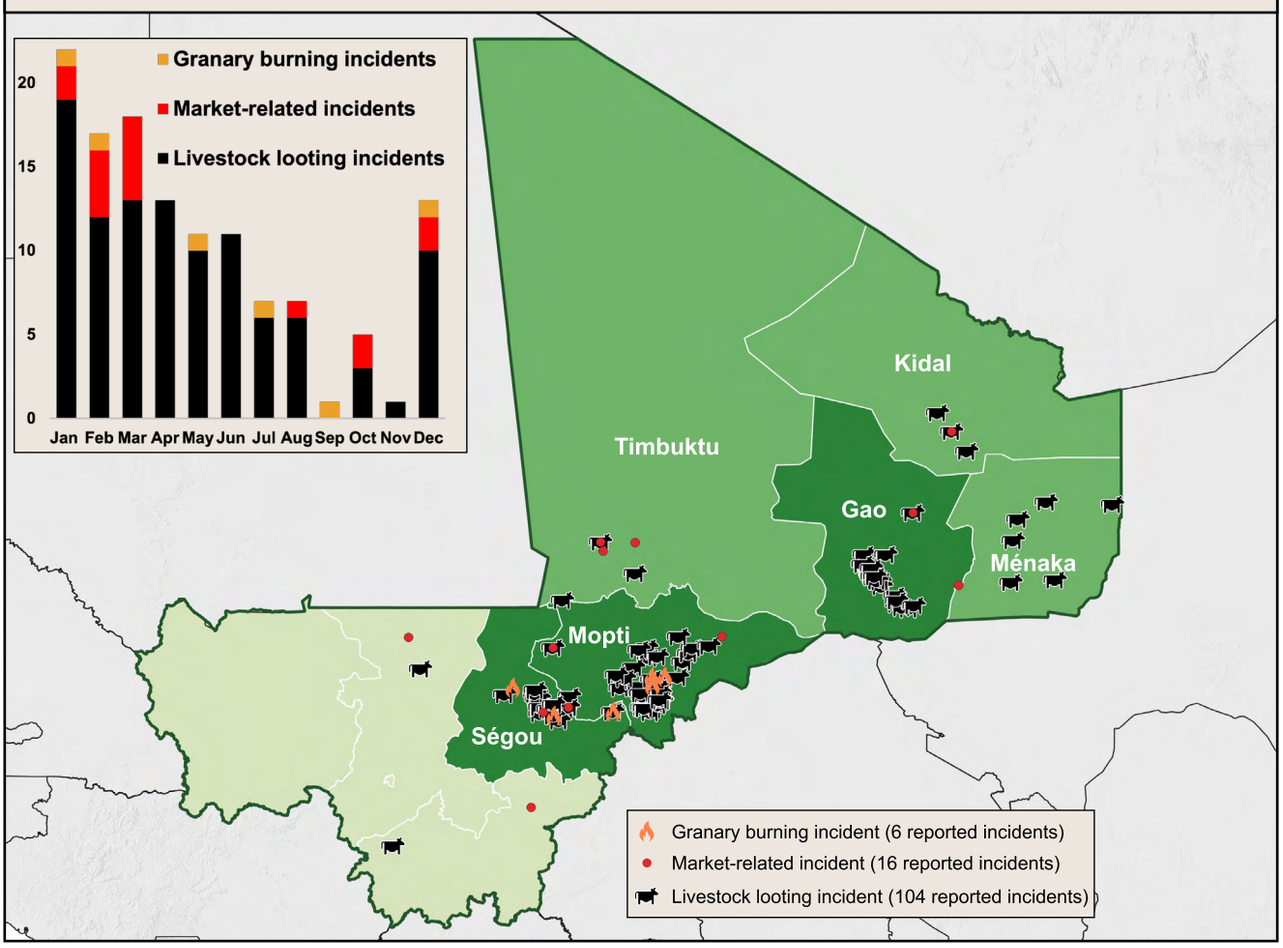
Food-related Violence in Mali in 2024

March 2025

Main trends

- **Food-related violence** was reported recurrently in Mali in 2024, especially in the Mopti, Ségou, and Gao regions between January and August and in December.
- The looting of livestock, attacks at markets, violence affecting travellers to and from markets, and granary burnings were the main types of reported violence.
- In late November 2024, JNIM militants **blockaded Léré** in the Timbuktu region after **destroying a bridge** linking Léré to Niafunké in the preceding days. Two months later, the inhabitants of Léré **reported** shortages of essential food items as the blockade continued. This added to the large areas of Mali where intermittent armed group blockades and extorted charges had already been imposed on transport routes, **undermining food security during 2024**.
- Many parts of central and northern Mali – including Gao and parts of Kidal, Ménaka, Mopti and Timbuktu – are **expected** to experience Integrated Food Security Phase Classification 4 ("Emergency") in the period to May 2025.

Figure 1: Reported incidents of key food-related violence in Mali in 2024



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Proactive actions should be taken to mitigate the worst foreseeable effects of food-related violence and blockades, including supporting resilience and positive coping strategies in affected communities.
- Information gaps resulting from the potentially long-term **discontinuation and disruption** of information services including the FEWSNET need to be addressed.

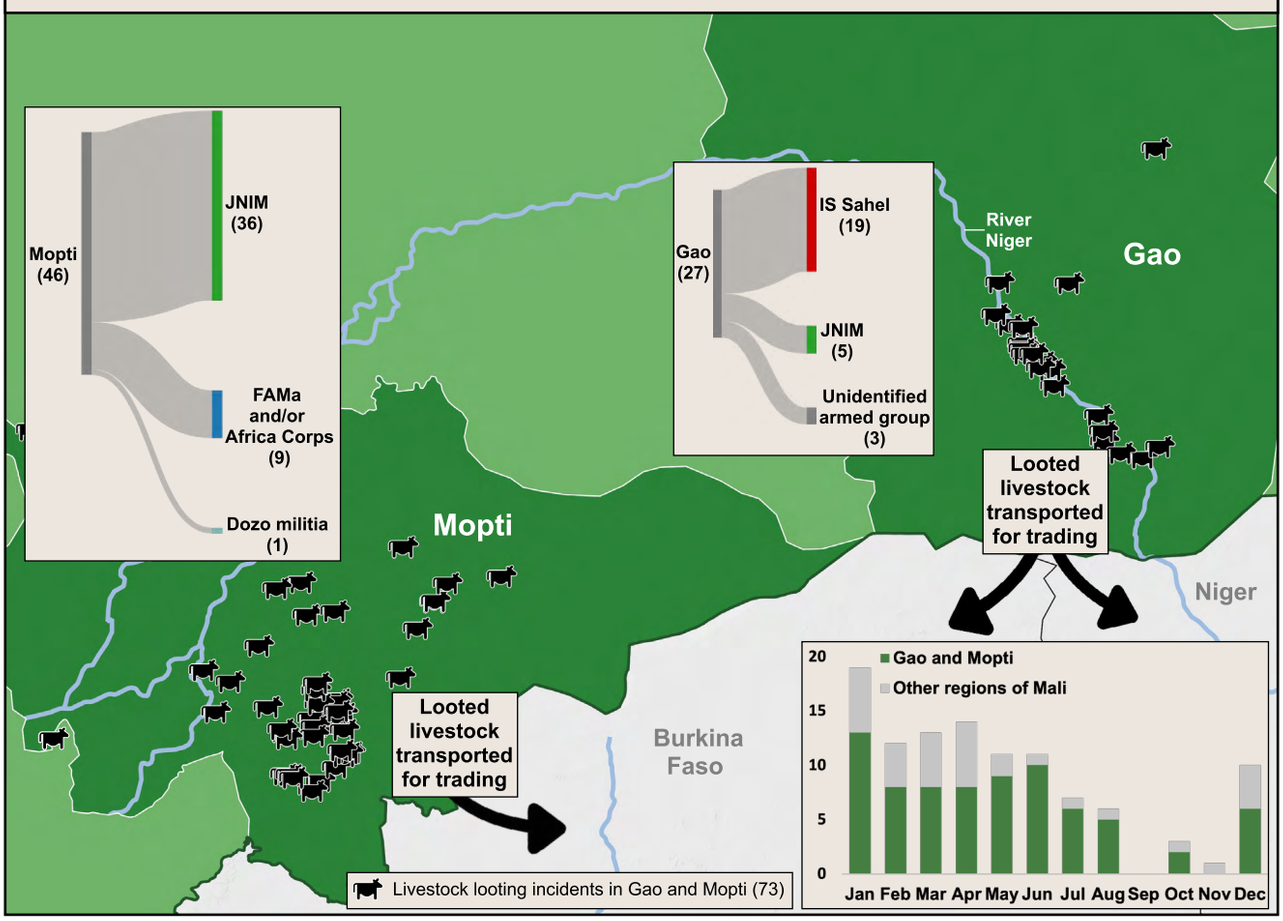
The dataset on which this briefing is based can be downloaded from the **Humanitarian Data Exchange** (HDX).

Methodology

REPORTED LIVESTOCK LOOTING INCIDENTS IN MOPTI AND GAO IN 2024

- The looting of livestock, including cattle, sheep and goats, was the most frequent form of reported food-related violence. The majority of incidents were in the Mopti and Gao regions.
- Most incidents in Mopti were attributed to JNIM militants, whereas in Gao IS Sahel was the most frequently named perpetrator.
- Several hundred livestock were taken in some incidents, which often also involved physical violence against civilians. Armed groups have transported large numbers of livestock stolen in Mali into Burkina Faso and Niger to trade the animals as part of an **illicit cross-border trade**, profits from which were partly used to finance and sustain these armed groups' activities.
- Reporting barriers mean that the reported livestock looting figures are likely to only partially reflect the full extent of the problem.

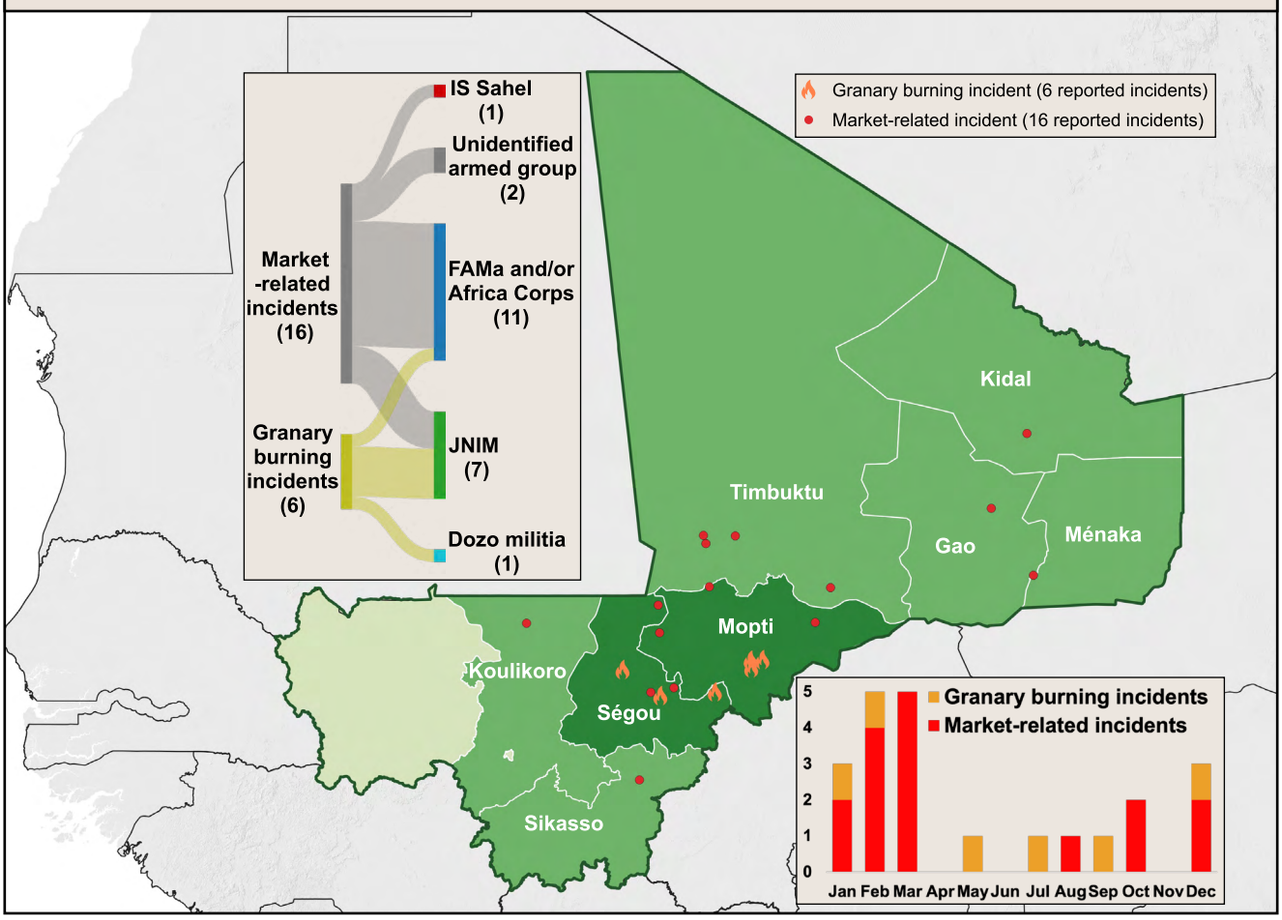
Figure 2: Reported livestock looting incidents in Mopti and Gao in 2024, and attributed conflict parties



MARKET ATTACKS AND CONFLICT-INDUCED BURNING OF GRANARIES IN MALI IN 2024

- At least 16 widely dispersed incidents of violence occurred at markets or directly affected people travelling to or from markets.
- Incidents attributed to the FAMa and/or Africa Corps involved markets being burned and struck by shells and goods being forcibly taken from markets. JNIM and IS Sahel militants were also named as perpetrators in incidents involving people being abducted, a goods truck leaving a market being struck by an improvised explosive device (IED), and a market livestock seller being shot and killed.
- Granaries were reportedly burned by conflict parties at least six times in Mopti and Ségou in 2024, often as part of wider attacks on communities. Most such incidents were attributed to JNIM militants. Dozo militia were named in one incident, as were the FAMa and Africa Corps, who were reportedly conducting security operations against Islamist armed groups at the time when the incident occurred.

Figure 3: Reported market-related violence and granary burning incidents in Mali in 2024, and attributed conflict parties



FORESEEABLE IMPACTS OF FOOD-RELATED VIOLENCE ON FOOD SECURITY

- The looting of livestock deprives communities of their livelihood sources, which could trigger forced displacement among the most vulnerable communities. Negative coping strategies such as selling livestock and other productive assets may also result.

- Violence at markets and directly affecting people travelling to or from them may lead people to visit these locations less often for fear of repeated violence, potentially disrupting food supply chains.

- If granaries storing food are set on fire shortly after the harvest, the destruction of these supplies may adversely affect food availability in the following lean season. Some communities may also implement negative coping strategies (e.g. planting fewer crops out of fear of the harvested product being destroyed) and adopt **additional security measures**, potentially reducing investment in agricultural productivity.

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ADOPTING AN ANTICIPATORY MINDSET: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING CONFLICT-INDUCED FOOD INSECURITY

To anticipatory action stakeholders and humanitarian programmers:

- **Embed an anticipatory mindset in humanitarian responses to conflict-induced food insecurity.** These responses should incorporate an understanding of the foreseeable consequences of conflict-related actions for food insecurity. Humanitarian programmers should take conflict-sensitive steps to mitigate these consequences before their worst effects materialise, and promote resilience and positive coping mechanisms among affected communities.

- **Natural-hazard-focused anticipatory action programmes** should consider the possible changes in communities if conflict-induced food insecurity increases and how this will impact any potential action when it is triggered.

To global conflict and hunger advocates:

- **Raise awareness and call for action** on conflict-induced food insecurity in Mali through public advocacy campaigns targeting the general public and private communications with state and non-governmental stakeholders to ensure that Mali does not become a forgotten crisis.

To actors engaged in humanitarian dialogue and diplomacy:

- **Consider highlighting the topics of food-related violence discussed in this briefing with state authorities and armed actors** in Mali when it is judged to be potentially productive and sensitive to political and security conditions. This may involve highlighting measures that armed groups can integrate into their engagement protocols and training programmes, as specified in InterAction's **Practical Measures to Prevent and Mitigate Conflict-Induced Food Insecurity**.

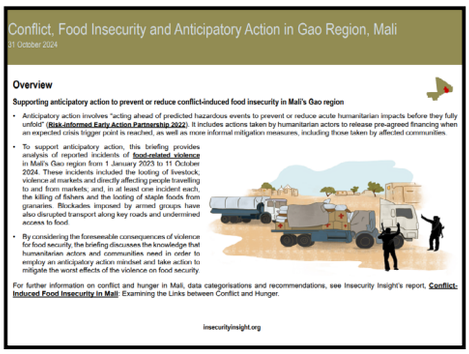
To donors:

- In a context of underfunded humanitarian responses and the potentially long-term **discontinuation** or disruption of vital data services such as FEWSNET, **supporting solutions to fill these data gaps should be prioritised**. This will ensure that the limited funds that are available are efficiently and effectively utilised in humanitarian projects and the communities they support.

- **Support projects that enhance the precautionary measures** taken by armed actors to mitigate the foreseeable consequences of their actions on food security consistent with InterAction's **Practical Measures to Prevent and Mitigate Conflict-Induced Food Insecurity**.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Gao Region


Conflict, Food Insecurity and Anticipatory Action in Gao Region, Mali
31 October 2024

Overview

Supporting anticipatory action to prevent or reduce conflict-induced food insecurity in Mali's Gao region

- Anticipatory action involves "acting ahead of predicted hazardous events to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold" (Risk-informed Early Action Partnership 2022). It includes actions taken by humanitarian actors to release pre-agreed financing when an expected crisis trigger point is reached, as well as more informal mitigation measures, including those taken by affected communities.
- To support anticipatory action, this briefing provides analysis of reported incidents of food-related violence in Mali's Gao region from 1 January 2023 to 11 October 2024. These incidents included the looting of livestock, violence at markets and directly affecting people travelling to and from markets; and, in at least one incident each, the killing of fishers and the looting of staple foods from granaries. Blockades imposed by armed groups have also disrupted transport along key roads and undermined access to food.
- By considering the foreseeable consequences of violence for food security, the briefing discusses the knowledge that humanitarian actors and communities need in order to employ an anticipatory action mindset and take action to mitigate the worst effects of the violence on food security.

For further information on conflict and hunger in Mali, data categorisations and recommendations, see Insecurity Insight's report, Conflict-Induced Food Insecurity in Mali: Examining the Links between Conflict and Hunger.

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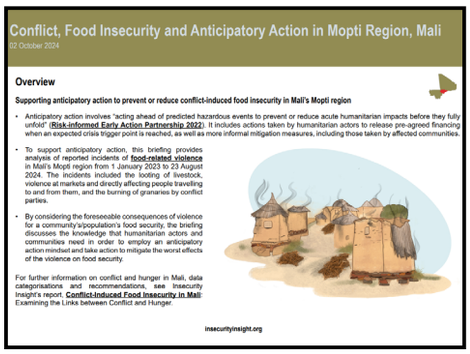
Mopti Region


Conflict, Food Insecurity and Anticipatory Action in Mopti Region, Mali
07 October 2024

Overview

Supporting anticipatory action to prevent or reduce conflict-induced food insecurity in Mali's Mopti region

- Anticipatory action involves "acting ahead of predicted hazardous events to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold" (Risk-informed Early Action Partnership 2022). It includes actions taken by humanitarian actors to release pre-agreed financing when an expected crisis trigger point is reached, as well as more informal mitigation measures, including those taken by affected communities.
- To support anticipatory action, this briefing provides analysis of reported incidents of food-related violence in Mali's Mopti region from 1 January 2023 to 23 August 2024. The incidents included the looting of livestock, violence at markets and directly affecting people travelling to and from them, and the burning of granaries by conflict parties.
- By considering the foreseeable consequences of violence for a community's/population's food security, the briefing discusses the knowledge that humanitarian actors and communities need in order to employ an anticipatory action mindset and take action to mitigate the worst effects of the violence on food security.

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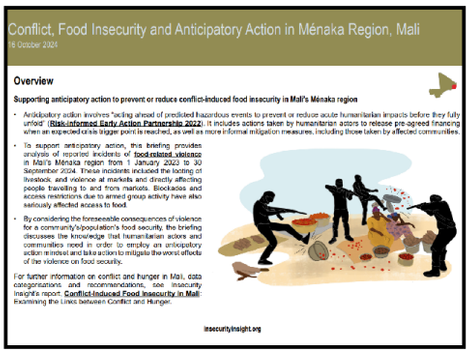
Ménaka Region


Conflict, Food Insecurity and Anticipatory Action in Ménaka Region, Mali
18 October 2024

Overview

Supporting anticipatory action to prevent or reduce conflict-induced food insecurity in Mali's Ménaka region

- Anticipatory action involves "acting ahead of predicted hazardous events to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold" (Risk-informed Early Action Partnership 2022). It includes actions taken by humanitarian actors to release pre-agreed financing when an expected crisis trigger point is reached, as well as more informal mitigation measures, including those taken by affected communities.
- To support anticipatory action, this briefing provides analysis of reported incidents of food-related violence in Mali's Ménaka region from 1 January 2023 to 30 September 2024. These incidents included the looting of livestock and violence at markets and directly affecting people travelling to and from markets. Blockades and access restrictions due to armed group activity have also seriously affected access to food.
- By considering the foreseeable consequences of violence for a community's/population's food security, the briefing discusses the knowledge that humanitarian actors and communities need in order to employ an anticipatory action mindset and take action to mitigate the worst effects of the violence on food security.

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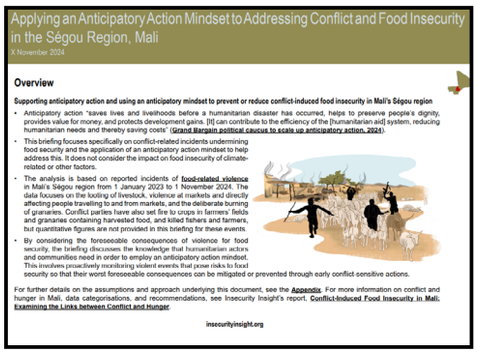
Ségou Region


Applying an Anticipatory Action Mindset to Addressing Conflict and Food Insecurity in the Ségou Region, Mali
8 November 2024

Overview

Supporting anticipatory action and using an anticipatory mindset to prevent or reduce conflict-induced food insecurity in Mali's Ségou region

- Anticipatory action "saves lives and livelihoods before a humanitarian disaster has occurred, helps to preserve people's dignity, provides value for money, and protects development gains. [It] can contribute to the efficiency of the [humanitarian aid] system, reducing humanitarian needs and thereby saving costs" (Grand Bargain political caucus to scale up anticipatory action, 2024).
- This briefing focuses specifically on conflict-related incidents undermining food security and the application of an anticipatory action mindset to help address this. It does not consider the impact on food insecurity of climate-related or other factors.
- The analysis is based on reported incidents of food-related violence in Mali's Ségou region from 1 January 2023 to 1 November 2024. The data focuses on the looting of livestock, violence at markets and directly affecting people travelling to and from markets, and the deliberate burning of granaries. Conflict parties have also set fire to crops in farmers' fields and granaries containing harvested food, and killed fishers and farmers, but quantitative figures are not provided in this briefing for these events.
- By considering the foreseeable consequences of violence for food security, the briefing discusses the knowledge that humanitarian actors and communities need in order to employ an anticipatory action mindset. This involves proactively monitoring violent events that pose risks to food security so that their worst foreseeable consequences can be mitigated or prevented through early conflict-sensitive actions.

For further details on the assumptions and approach underlying this document, see the Appendix. For more information on conflict and hunger in Mali, data categorisations, and recommendations, see Insecurity Insight's report, Conflict-Induced Food Insecurity in Mali: Examining the Links between Conflict and Hunger.

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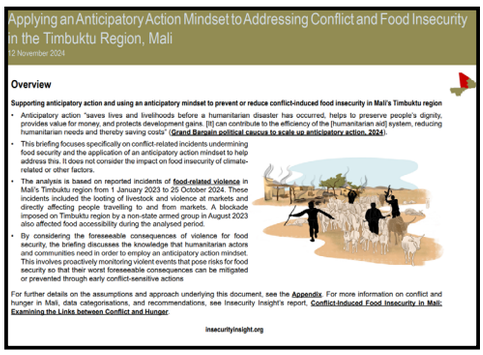
Timbuktu Region


Applying an Anticipatory Action Mindset to Addressing Conflict and Food Insecurity in the Timbuktu Region, Mali
12 November 2024

Overview

Supporting anticipatory action and using an anticipatory mindset to prevent or reduce conflict-induced food insecurity in Mali's Timbuktu region

- Anticipatory action "saves lives and livelihoods before a humanitarian disaster has occurred, helps to preserve people's dignity, provides value for money, and protects development gains. [It] can contribute to the efficiency of the [humanitarian aid] system, reducing humanitarian needs and thereby saving costs" (Grand Bargain political caucus to scale up anticipatory action, 2024).
- This briefing focuses specifically on conflict-related incidents undermining food security and the application of an anticipatory action mindset to help address this. It does not consider the impact on food insecurity of climate-related or other factors.
- The analysis is based on reported incidents of food-related violence in Mali's Timbuktu region from 1 January 2023 to 25 October 2024. These incidents included the looting of livestock and violence at markets and directly affecting people travelling to and from markets. A blockade imposed on Timbuktu region by a non-state armed group in August 2023 also affected food accessibility during the analysed period.
- By considering the foreseeable consequences of violence for food security, the briefing discusses the knowledge that humanitarian actors and communities need in order to employ an anticipatory action mindset. 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.

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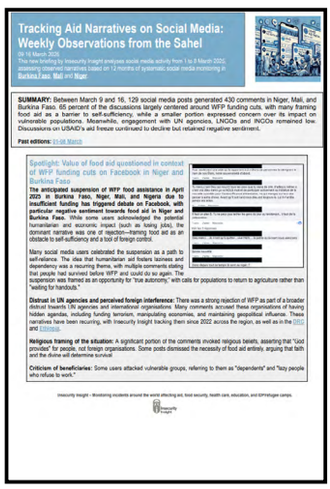
Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Factsheet (EN)

Coalition pour la protection de la santé en temps de conflit Fiche d'information 2023

Tracking Aid Narratives on Social Media Emerging Trends in the Sahel


Tracking Aid Narratives on Social Media: Weekly Observations from the Sahel
09-16 March 2026
This new briefing by Insecurity Insight analyzes social media activity from 1 to 8 March 2026, assessing observed narratives based on 12 months of systematic social media monitoring in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

SUMMARY: Between March 9 and 16, 129 social media posts generated 430 comments in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. 65 percent of the discussions largely centered around WFP funding cuts, with many framing food aid as a barrier to self-sufficiency, while a smaller portion expressed concern over its impact on vulnerable populations. Meanwhile, engagement with UN agencies, LNGOs and INGOs remained low. Discussions on USAID's aid freeze continued to decline but retained negative sentiment.

Past editions: 01-08 March

Spotlight: Value of food aid questioned in context of WFP funding cuts on Facebook in Niger and Burkina Faso

The anticipated suspension of WFP food assistance in April 2025 in Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, and Nigeria due to insufficient funding has triggered debate on Facebook, with particular negative sentiment towards food aid in Niger and Burkina Faso. While some users acknowledged the potential humanitarian and economic impact (such as losing jobs), the dominant narrative was one of rejection—framing food aid as an obstacle to self-sufficiency and a tool of foreign control.

Many social media users celebrated the suspension as a path to self-reliance. The idea that humanitarian aid fosters laziness and dependency was a recurring theme, with multiple comments stating that people had survived before WFP and could do so again. The suspension was framed as an opportunity for "true autonomy," with calls for populations to return to agriculture rather than "waiting for handouts."

Distrust in UN agencies and perceived foreign interference: There was a strong rejection of WFP as part of a broader distrust towards UN agencies and international organisations. Many comments accused these organisations of having hidden agendas, including funding terrorism, manipulating economies, and maintaining geopolitical influence. These narratives have been recurring, with Insecurity Insight tracking them since 2022 across the region, as well as in the DRC and Colombia.

Religious training of the situation: A significant portion of the comments invoked religious beliefs, asserting that "God provides" for people, not foreign organisations. Some posts dismissed the necessity of food aid entirely, arguing that faith and the divine will determine survival.

Criticism of beneficiaries: Some users attacked vulnerable groups, referring to them as "dependants" and "lazy people who refuse to work."

Insecurity Insight - Monitoring incidents around the world affecting aid, food security, health care, education, and IDP/refugee camps.

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