

6. BURKINA FASO

The world's fastest growing displacement crisis



KEY FACTS

Population: **20.9 million**

3.5 million people in need of humanitarian aid

1.6 million facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

1 million people internally displaced

145th (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

136th (of 167 countries) for women's equality

159th (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

3/5 score for severity of access constraints

55% of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

PROBABILITY

7 HUMAN THREAT

4 NATURAL THREAT

IMPACT

7 CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

8 EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

Burkina Faso entered the IRC's Watchlist for the first time last year and it is now ranked at six as conflict activity continues to rise rapidly and spread, driving steep increases in humanitarian need, one of the world's fastest growing displacement crises and - with COVID-19 - bringing a risk of famine.

Just two years ago, Burkina Faso faced virtually no mass conflict or displacement. But in the first half of 2020, the country reported the third-largest increase in IDPs in the world - surpassed only by Syria and the DRC ([IDMC](#)). Over 1 million Burkinabes are now internally displaced, more than double the number at the start of 2020, as a result of violence involving both militant groups and communal militias ([UN](#)). Food security has deteriorated significantly at the same time, and the [UN](#) is now warning of a risk of famine. With conflict activity continuing to spread, needs are set to grow even further in 2021 and will be compounded by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Although newly established in Burkina Faso, the IRC carries out multiple successful emergency response activities. Unfortunately, the scale of the crisis is rapidly growing and the resources to respond to it remain below expectations. If this crisis persists without adequate resources and funding, poor access to basic social services will leave thousands of people vulnerable to extreme poverty."

- Dr. Leonard Kiema
Health and Nutrition Coordinator, IRC Burkina Faso



Above: The IRC distributes soap and helps train community members in northern Burkina Faso to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Conflict involving a complex array of government forces, local militias and militant groups may spread across even more of the country, affecting a larger share of the population.** Since 2018, militant activity has grown rapidly and become particularly entrenched in northern and eastern parts of Burkina Faso, in turn sparking conflict with local self-defense groups and militias. During 2020, violence has also spread to other parts of the country. The authorities' increasing reliance on communal militias to fight militant groups may actually have contributed to the growing conflict by feeding cycles of retaliatory violence along communal lines, in particular between farming and herding groups ([International Crisis Group](#)). Burkina Faso is now the epicenter of violence in the Central Sahel region and there is a risk of instability spreading from the country into other neighboring states, such as Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.
- ▶ **The conflict is increasingly deadly for civilians and disruptive to critical services.** Data from [ACLED](#) shows a 660% rise in fatalities caused by incidents identified as "violence against civilians", rising from 173 in 2018 to 1,319 in 2019. In the first nine months of 2020, Burkina Faso saw the third-highest civilian deaths (886) of all Watchlist countries and the fifth highest globally ([ACLED](#)). A wide range of militant groups, communal militias and official security forces are implicated in the killings, which have remained at similarly high levels so far in 2020 and appear set to persist into 2021. Meanwhile, nearly 300 local health centers are closed or are restricting services due to the conflict, limiting the healthcare that 1.1 million people can obtain ([ECHO](#)). Children are particularly affected; over 2,500 schools are shut, depriving 350,000 children of an education ([OCHA](#)) while over one third of children are at risk of protection concerns, including recruitment by armed groups and forced labour ([OCHA](#)).
- ▶ **There is a risk of famine due to the conflict and disruption to markets from COVID-19.** Even before the pandemic, an IRC assessment found that populations in conflict-affected areas were at risk from disease outbreaks and malnutrition because families were struggling to afford enough food to eat ([IRC](#)). Conflict is the key factor driving up food insecurity but COVID-19 has made it even harder for many Burkinabes to afford enough food, and the country is now at risk of famine ([FAO-WFP](#)). The number of people facing Crisis (IPC 3) or worse levels of food insecurity has more than tripled compared to pre-COVID levels ([WFP](#)). At least 11,000 Burkinabes are now experiencing the worst (IPC 5, "catastrophe") levels of food insecurity ([WFP](#)) - levels only seen in Yemen and Burkina Faso. Food insecurity is likely to grow in the next year, particularly in the conflict-affected north of the country, and Burkina Faso is one of four countries at risk of famine ([WFP](#)).

THE IRC IN BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso is the IRC's newest country program, launched in 2019 following an emergency response. The IRC's response started in Djibo, which hosts a large IDP population. We are delivering clean water, bolstering sanitation services, and have established a primary healthcare program, which includes reproductive healthcare and community-based services devoted to childhood illnesses and disease prevention. Learn more about the [IRC's Burkina Faso response](#).



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