

Burkina Faso's youth speak up

Boys and girls share their needs and expectations of the humanitarian response

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to the young people who took the time to speak with us and to share their views.

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Introduction

While accountability to affected people is a fundamental element of humanitarian responses, the voices of crisis-affected boys and girls are often left out. Given that young people represent 55% of those in need in Burkina Faso¹ and have a right to be heard,² the Child Protection sub-cluster in Burkina Faso asked Ground Truth Solutions to support the development of a study to understand young people's perceptions so that their views can inform humanitarian planning by government officials, non-governmental organisations, and humanitarian coordination.

Ground Truth Solutions is an international non-governmental organisation that helps communities influence the design and implementation of humanitarian assistance and has over a decade of experience engaging with crisis-affected populations to collect their views on the assistance they receive, as well as their recommendations for how things could be improved. Since 2020, Ground Truth Solutions has supported the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Humanitarian Country Team by conducting surveys of people in Burkina Faso on the receiving end of humanitarian assistance.

To develop a youth-centred methodology, Ground Truth Solutions collaborated with actors specialising in child protection with a solid understanding of the national context to coordinate an exploratory research project to identify priority themes for girls and boys. This was achieved with considerable support from technical and operational partners based in Burkina Faso – Terre des hommes Lausanne, Humanity and Inclusion, ECPAT France, the National Coordination of Associations of Children and Young Workers in Burkina Faso, and Plan International – as well as the support of the Child Protection sub-cluster and the Ministry of Solidarity, Humanitarian Action, National Reconciliation, Gender and Family. Some partners contributed to this project without additional funding, showing remarkable dedication to hearing young people's perceptions and ensuring they inform the actions of humanitarian actors.

Our process

The development of the methodology was based on the belief that this research project could not impose preconceived research priorities on youth. Instead, the team was committed to understanding first what boys and girls, in all their diversity, consider most important in their daily lives, and what aspects they would like to see improved by humanitarian actors, be they non-governmental organisations, state services, or any other structure. Facilitators encouraged conversations around structured questions and activities via focus group discussions, but young people's comments guided the conversation. This semi-structured focus group discussion format assumed that the topics spontaneously mentioned by the participants were those most important to them and that their ideas, while likely influenced by their peers, were not influenced by the facilitators.

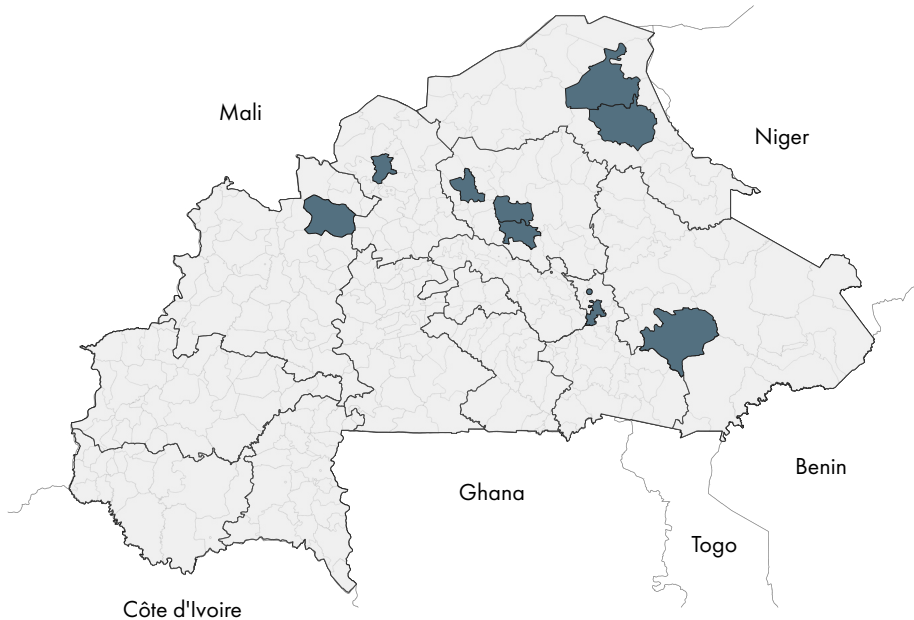
The term 'humanitarian actors' refers to all entities involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance, including national and international organisations, UN agencies, civil society, and government.

The terms 'youth' and 'young people' are used throughout this report to refer to the participants in the focus group discussions who ranged in age from 10 to 17 years old.

¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 31 March 2023. "[Humanitarian Needs Overview, Burkina Faso.](#)"

² United Nations. 20 November 1989. "[The Convention on the Rights of the Child \[Article 12\].](#)"

Between September and November 2022, 31 focus groups were held in the communes where project partners had ongoing programmes for girls and boys. In total, this study covered the six principal regions targeted by humanitarian action in Burkina Faso. While the project aimed for equal representation of all demographic variables, the final sample varied slightly. See the [methodology](#) for more information.




The nine communes where the focus group discussions took place in Burkina Faso are highlighted in blue.

We conducted 31 focus groups with 202 youth, distributed as follows:



Commune

-  8 in Boussouma
-  26 in Dori
-  26 in Fada N'Gourma
-  24 in Gorom-Gorom
-  17 in Kaya
-  27 in Kongoussi
-  24 in Koupéla
-  27 in Ouahigouya
-  23 in Tougan



Sex

-  107 girls
-  95 boys


Status

-  109 internally displaced persons
-  93 non-displaced

Age

-  88 from 10-13 years old
-  114 from 14-17 years old

Living with a disability

-  19 considered themselves to be living with a disability

Key findings

This report identifies key priorities for youth, the changes they want to see in their daily lives, and how humanitarian actors could better support their needs and aspirations.

Overall, we found that:

- **Young people prioritise their basic needs.** They seek help in obtaining food and better access to water.
- **Boys and girls know their future depends on their education.** Their educational requests varied by gender: girls were more likely to ask for help with school fees, while boys were more likely to ask for school supplies.
- **Young people pointed out that bicycles could help them meet their basic needs (easier means to collect food and goods) and get to school.** Those living with disabilities requested technical aid to improve their mobility.
- **Earning a living and supporting a family is already a priority.** When youth are faced with a lack of educational opportunities and pressing needs, they must consider the prospect of working to support themselves and their families starting at an early age. Older participants (aged 14-17) felt the pressure to contribute more acutely given the context of the humanitarian crisis. Boys spoke more often than girls about their prospective occupations and the importance of being mobile, which may reflect socio-cultural norms that boys are expected to have a profession and thus be able to get around. Girls wanted vocational training because it is seen as the most effective way for them to contribute to their families' income and gain independence.
- **Playing and socialising is important but seen as a privilege.** The many responsibilities placed on young people limit their participation in social and recreational activities. Gender and age disparities were observed in that boys aged 14 to 17 and girls in general mentioned these activities less than boys aged 10 to 13. This can partly be explained by the lack of time available to 14 to 17 year-old boys already responsible for earning an income, as well as for girls who must take on household chores from an early age.
- **Safety issues affect young people's well-being.** The threat of insecurity permeated some focus group conversations, with young people mentioning their fear of "bad people," risk of explosives, and violence perpetrated by non-state armed groups. Some also spontaneously mentioned organisations they could go to for psychosocial support or services in case of sexual assault.
- **Lack of knowledge and communication with humanitarian actors.** Most youth were aware that assistance was being distributed in their community, but many were not well informed about where it came from.
- **Young people perceive religion as a key element in their personal and collective development.** Religion was frequently mentioned by girls and boys who see mosques and churches as important places to develop their relationship with God and become good people. These religious spaces are also perceived as places for fostering peace and strengthening communities.
- **Boys and girls don't think that their opinion matters.** They said their ideas and feedback were not taken into account by humanitarian actors because they are young. They also feared negative consequences for speaking out.
- **Perceived unequal targeting generates feelings of injustice and exclusion.** Young people perceived the targeting process as unjust. Girls were the most likely to talk about this, which may be partly because they were more likely to attend aid distributions with their parents and therefore witness inequalities in targeting first-hand. Participants aged 14-17 were also more likely to talk about unequal targeting, with many mentioning that they or their households had never received assistance.
- **Distribution sites are considered dangerous and degrading.** Participants described verbal and physical abuse at distribution sites, as well as conditions where they felt devalued and their dignity compromised.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been developed jointly with project partners based on an analysis of young people's feedback. The Child Protection sub-cluster in Burkina Faso will develop an action plan, but the recommendations are cross-sectoral and apply to all humanitarian actors, not just Child Protection sub-cluster members. The findings will be presented to the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group and other fora in Burkina Faso.

1. **Inform and raise awareness among all humanitarian actors of the direct or indirect impact of all aid programmes on young people, even those only targeting adults.** All aid and services targeting adults have a direct or indirect impact on youth or are used by them. All humanitarian actors should understand that under the Convention of the Rights of the Child, young people have rights to information, protection, and the right to have their views heard.
2. **Inform and raise awareness of young people's right to participate in humanitarian programmes and their right to express themselves.** This is not a simple communication campaign, but requires time, resources, and trust-building with young people, their caregivers, and their broader community. Child protection specialists should play a leading role in the implementation of rights-based education and ensure this is mainstreamed across the response and not limited to special projects.
3. **Improve young people's and their caregivers' access to information** on targeting criteria and the aid goods and services available to them (including duration of assistance, dates of distributions, and other details). Improving how information is shared requires better engagement between adults and humanitarians, since speaking directly with trusted adults is the preferred channel of communication for both boys and girls.
4. **Include girls and boys in decision-making, planning, and targeting processes for humanitarian aid.** Many young people feel excluded from these processes and do not know how to get involved, even when they feel entitled to do so. To ensure that the assistance provided meets young people's needs, it is essential to create spaces to actively involve them in decision-making processes. This will also contribute to the clarity and transparency of humanitarian assistance in the eyes of girls and boys.
5. **Ensure closer collaboration between the Ministry for Humanitarian Action,³ and non-governmental humanitarian and development organisations** to ensure better coordination of aid and to avoid physical and verbal violence during distributions, as requested by young people.
6. **Invest in both immediate needs (food, water, mobility assistance, emergency education) and long-term support (livelihood support and sustainable education programming), as young people see these as simultaneous and interdependent needs.** Technical aids were frequently requested by girls and boys with disabilities; vocational training was mentioned more by older boys and girls.
7. **Provide spaces for play, sports, and art as essential outlets for young people's psychosocial resilience.** Finding time to play, be creative, and meet others is important for youth, but not all young people have this privilege. Play and socialisation can build capacity for action and resilience, as well as help young people manage emotions and stress, improve confidence, develop interpersonal skills (such as conflict transformation, communication, and collaboration), improve attitudes, and develop a sense of belonging with others. Having time to play and being encouraged to do so is critical to support young people's well-being in crisis situations.

³ This ministry (Ministre de la Solidarité, de l'Action humanitaire, de la Réconciliation nationale, du Genre et de la Famille) is commonly referred to as 'Action Sociale'.

1. Basic needs are top of mind

While young people identified many important elements in their daily lives, meeting basic needs was their number one priority. Young people, regardless of their sex, age, or community, emphasised their basic needs – understandable, when the response in 2022 only reached 57% of those targeted and less than half of those identified as being “in need.”⁴ Humanitarian actors have to make difficult choices, especially as only 42% of the response was funded.⁵ Of the adults surveyed who received aid in 2022, less than half felt it met their basic needs.⁶

Food was the most important basic need mentioned by young people. Girls and boys talked about picking fruit from trees, getting food from humanitarian actors, buying food and spices at the market, or raising livestock to eat or sell to buy food. They systematically stressed the importance of receiving assistance that meets their basic needs, particularly the need for food. “We ask you to help us eat,” said one girl in Ouahigouya. Even if some young people already receive food aid, they suggested that the aid provided in this area is not enough. “If they bring more, we will be happy,” said a boy in Tougan. Parents shared this view; according to a survey of adults in 2022, lack of food is the second most important concern of parents for their young people’s future, after education.⁷

Young people also mentioned the importance of water for their hydration, hygiene, and health. “Water is life and the pump gives water. If you are dirty, you go to the pump and you can have water to wash yourself and your clothes,” explained a boy in Gorom-Gorom. Young people noted that access to pumps can be difficult as they are not always available in their immediate surroundings or in sufficient numbers. A displaced boy in Gorom-Gorom, for example, asked aid workers to “make pumps for internally displaced people. At the moment we drink water from wells, so we want pumps in our homes.” While of course recommendations like this, taken literally, are often impossible with aid budgets, the point is that water accessibility is a vital concern for young people.

In some communes, notably Kongoussi and Gorom-Gorom, water shortages were a problem long before the humanitarian crisis.⁸ In these communes, young people not only face a lack of water on a daily basis, but also travel long distances to fill their containers. Young people with disabilities are particularly affected when water points are far away, as they face physical difficulties in fetching water. In Gorom-Gorom, a boy with a disability recommended that humanitarian actors “give buckets because there are children who cannot carry [the water] with the jerry cans,” implying that jerry cans are too large for children and difficult to manage for those living with a disability. Some young people also requested access to water points in their schools.

Young people also asked humanitarian actors to meet other basic needs. These include clothing and toiletries to keep clean, as well as access to medical care and shelter, although the latter two were less frequently mentioned.

Boys and girls also repeatedly expressed their wish to receive bicycles from humanitarian actors to get around which they considered to be an essential need. “As the school is far away, we need a means of transport for the young people so that they can go there themselves,” remarked a boy in Gorom-Gorom. More appropriate transport available for young people would improve and speed access to humanitarian distribution sites they must attend with their caregivers, avoiding long hours of walking. Young people with disabilities highlighted the need for access to

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We ask you to help us eat.

– Girl, Ouahigouya

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If they bring more, we will be happy.

– Boy, Tougan

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Water is life and the pump gives water. If you are dirty, you go to the pump and you can have water to wash yourself and your clothes.

– Boy, Gorom-Gorom

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As the school is far away, we need a means of transport for the young people so that they can go there themselves.

– Boy, Gorom-Gorom

⁴ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2022. [“Burkina Faso, Humanitarian Response Plan, Plan Overview.”](#)

⁵ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2022. [“Burkina Faso 2022, Response Plans, Appeals.”](#)

⁶ Ground Truth Solutions. June 2023. [“When your immediate needs are met, you can fight harder to make a living: Perceptions of aid in Burkina Faso.”](#)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross. June 2021. [“Burkina Faso: When water scarcity meets conflict.”](#)

technical aids for their mobility. A displaced girl in Gorom-Gorom explained: “I want to be helped with a bicycle for the disabled as I cannot walk.” If boys’ and girls’ basic needs are not covered, their mental health and psychosocial well-being will suffer.⁹

Young people recognised the importance of humanitarian assistance in helping their families and communities to meet especially difficult needs. When young people were asked what is important to them in their daily lives, family and community were most frequently mentioned. Girls and boys emphasised the importance of a culture of community support. As one girl in Ouahigouya put it: “our elders take care of us and we take care of our younger ones.”

Young people also highlighted health professionals and institutions as a critical source of support. When participants discussed the elements in their lives that were important to them, they frequently mentioned doctors, nurses, midwives, hospitals, Health and Social Promotion Centers (Centre de Santé et Promotion Sociale, CSPS), pharmacies, and ambulances, indicating that they were not only aware of structures that exist in their community but believed such structures were crucial to support their community’s health and well-being. A young boy in Ouahigouya commented, “We go [to the hospital] when we have a hot body, or a stomach ache, we are given a prescription, and we buy the medicines with our money, and go home to swallow them.” While a teenage boy in Tougan pointed out that hospitals are important “because we have a right to be healthy.”

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Our elders take care of us and we take care of our younger ones.

– Girl, Ouahigouya

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We go [to the hospital] when we have a hot body, or a stomach ache, we are given a prescription, and we buy the medicines with our money, and go home to swallow them.

– Boy, Ouahigouya

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We have a right to be healthy.

– Boy, Ouahigouya



A socio-environmental map created by boys in Tougan in which they identified the most important elements in their daily life (people, places, things, and events) by drawing or writing them and positioning them on a map.

Image: Terre des hommes Lausanne (2022)

⁹ Terre des hommes. November 2021. “[Guide opérationnel: Vers la résilience psychosociale et le bien-être.](#)”

2. Education could lead to a brighter future, if it was available

Learning, literacy, acquiring knowledge, and becoming somebody were of paramount importance for boys and girls. This desire to learn and develop – and thus the right to quality education¹⁰ – is mentioned frequently, second only to discussions about basic needs. Lack of education was also parents' main concern for their young.¹¹

Young people recognised school as an essential place for learning and acquiring knowledge and underscore the importance of learning how to read and write, whether in Arabic or French. They also believed that school is essential to prepare them for the future and enable their long-term development. Boys and girls said that education will help them “become people of tomorrow.” “For a child who has been to school, if he goes somewhere, he will find himself. He is not in the dark,” said one boy in Dori. A young man in Ouahigouya explained that school helps to “acquire the knowledge to do a job of your choice – doctor, soldier, teacher, and whatever you want.” The young people mentioned a range of occupations they could aspire to if they went to school, such as becoming a minister, president of a mine, doctor, teacher, or shopkeeper. Both boys and girls felt that without an education, their future would be seriously compromised. “The child who does not go to school will be a bandit. They will remain illiterate,” shared one girl in Gorom-Gorom.

Young people asked aid workers to help them finance their school fees and obtain supplies such as notebooks, pens, and school bags. Several displaced young people regretted not being able to continue their schooling in their new village and asked aid workers to help them return to school. A displaced girl in Kongoussi said, “I want them to come and build schools for the young people who have just arrived and have no place.”

Young people's educational requests were gendered: girls were more likely to ask for their school fees to be covered, while boys were more likely to ask for school supplies. This trend revealed a socio-cultural reality where girls were much less likely to attend school than boys and also less likely to continue their education after primary school. Discussions with facilitators highlighted the fact that boys' education is often privileged in families with limited resources. A study by Plan International in Burkina Faso revealed that one in three girls has never been to school or has only attended school for one year.¹² According to the same study, early marriage and pregnancy are major factors in the dropout of girls enrolled in school. In Burkina Faso, more than half of girls (52%) are married before the age of 18.¹³

Although girls are less likely to be enrolled and continue their education than boys, it is important to note that the security situation poses challenges in terms of school participation and young people's dropout rate.¹⁴ Despite efforts to ensure young people's enrolment in school, the security situation has resulted in the closure of about a quarter of schools. Only a quarter of the young people whose schools have closed have been re-enrolled in other schools.¹⁵ It is possible that their new schools may close soon after their arrival. And pupils who change schools repeatedly often have to make do with a poorer quality education, sometimes spending several years studying the same course material.

The lack of teachers and classrooms, as well as violence in the school environment, further compromise the learning environment. In Fada N'Gourma, Tougan and Gorom-Gorom, young people spoke of the violence perpetrated between pupils, but also by

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For a child who has been to school, if he goes somewhere, he will find himself. He is not in the dark.

– Boy, Dori

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The child who does not go to school will be a bandit. They will remain illiterate.

– Girl, Gorom-Gorom

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I want them to come and build schools for the young people who have just arrived and have no place.

– Displaced Girl, Kongoussi

¹⁰ United Nations. 20 November 1989. “[The Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Article 28\)](#).”

¹¹ Ground Truth Solutions. June 2023. “[When your immediate needs are met, you can fight harder to make a living: Perceptions of aid in Burkina Faso](#).”

¹² Plan International. June 2020. “[Adolescent girls in crisis: Voices from the Sahel](#).”

¹³ United Nations Young people's Fund. March 2022. “[Child Marriage Country Profile Burkina Faso](#).”

¹⁴ United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. March 2023. “[Burkina Faso: Aperçu des Besoins Humanitaires 2023](#).”

¹⁵ United Nations Young people's Fund. March 2023. “[Le Burkina Faso abrite désormais près de la moitié des écoles fermées d'Afrique Centrale et de l'Ouest](#).”

teachers. In Gorom-Gorom, a boy said: “I don’t like school because the teachers hit the young people.” All those providing educational services in crisis contexts must urgently review the conduct of their teachers and staff and take corrective measures to ensure young people feel safe and secure in the classroom.

Beyond the classroom, some young people spoke of mosques as another source of knowledge, specifically a place where they learn to read the Koran. Because of their spiritual dimension, boys and girls felt that these havens of worship offered a path for personal and collective development. For instance, some young people explained that praying regularly and following God’s teachings would allow them to reach heaven. Other young people, such as a boy in Dori, explained that the mosque is the place “where people prepare their destinies.” Young people’s emphasis on places of worship and spirituality indicates the importance of having a meaningful life and cultivating hope, which is essential for young people living in particularly vulnerable contexts because their spiritual connection strengthens their resilience, helping them to be able to cope and adapt to the situation.¹⁶

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I don’t like school because the teachers hit the young people.

– Boy, Gorom-Gorom



Girls in Ouahigouya participate in a focus group discussion activity.
Image: Terre des hommes Lausanne (2022)

¹⁶ Terre des hommes. November 2021. “[Guide opérationnel: Vers la résilience psychosociale et le bien-être.](#)”

3. Supporting the household is already a priority

Young people are aware that their education is often insufficient and that they cannot always rely on school to ensure their professional future. To compensate for this, many of them look for opportunities to earn a living, but these are also scarce. Around half (49%) of the adults surveyed believed they could earn a living in the local community, and the lack of work opportunities was their third most important concern for their young people's long-term future.¹⁷ Girls and boys were also aware of this gap, but the scarcity of livelihoods forces them to help their families in any way they can.

The need to contribute to the needs of their families increases with age: young people aged 14-17 were more likely to mention workplaces such as the fields, rivers, and factories when talking about the important elements of their daily life. They also focused on the importance of livestock and cattle. "If we raise them, we can sell and pay for goods," explained a girl in Kaya, while another young girl in Ouahigouya added that they can "sell them to pay for school." Older participants' increased responsibility to provide for their families was also reflected in their requests to humanitarian actors as they often asked about financial support and job opportunities, while younger young people focused primarily on education and additional help with their schooling.

There was a notable disparity between the way boys and girls discussed livelihoods. When discussing their daily lives, boys placed more emphasis on finding work within their community, possibly because of cultural expectations that they should find occupations to support their families. When talking about their community, boys were more likely to mention specific, known occupations such as shepherds, drivers, electricians, guards, vendors of juice, candy, or bread, masons, and mechanics. Boys also tended to discuss transportation options, such as cars and bicycles, as they are often required to travel to find a job or steady work.

Although girls were less likely to identify specific occupations within their communities, they were much more likely than boys to seek help from humanitarian actors for training in some sort of trade. Given their limited access to school and the threat of early marriage and pregnancy,¹⁸ vocational training appeared to be the most effective way, in their view, to contribute to their families' income and gain independence. In Kaya, one girl said: "We search for work for those who are not in school." A girl in Gorom-Gorom envisaged "developing a cattle feeder if I can get support, developing a small business, and learning a trade [such as sewing and weaving]." The occupations girls talked about pursuing were often in line with socio-cultural gender norms. Sewing and hairdressing were most frequently mentioned, followed by raising livestock and running small business.

Some young people with disabilities also spoke about the need for specific tools, working materials, and specialised training from humanitarian actors in order to earn a living, indicating that they also felt responsible to some extent in helping to support their respective households. For example, in Gorom-Gorom, one boy with a disability asked for "the humanitarians to help me with a bicycle, butchery equipment, food, and training in entrepreneurship", while a girl requested "support to fatten sheep and training in sewing and commerce." Further research is needed to better understand how young people with disabilities wish to one day earn a living, the barriers they might face, and ways to mitigate them.

While some young people living with a disability seemed confident in their ability to succeed, given the opportunity, one girl in Gorom-Gorom said, "I need help with

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We search for work for those who are not in school.

– Girl, Kaya

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[I ask] the humanitarians to help me with a bicycle, butchery equipment, food, and training in entrepreneurship.

– Boy, Gorom-Gorom

¹⁷ Ground Truth Solutions. June 2023. "[When your immediate needs are met, you can fight harder to make a living: Perceptions of aid in Burkina Faso.](#)"

¹⁸ United Nations Young people's Fund. March 2022. "[Child Marriage Country Profile Burkina Faso.](#)"

many things because I cannot do anything as a disabled person.” This testimony of feeling worthless suggests the need to deconstruct attitudes and environments that hinder young people living with a disability to participate in society and access services in the same way as other youth.

Young people’s spontaneous references to their education and professional future underscores that having a “role and responsibility” is central to their psychosocial well-being.¹⁹ Currently only 36% of adults surveyed believed that the aid they received would help them live without aid in the future.²⁰ Young people are developing during situations of humanitarian crisis and need specific support that takes this into account. They need to be able to actively contribute to society. This is particularly important for young people with disabilities, who find their capacity to contribute mostly or completely impeded. To better support young people’s well-being, humanitarian organisations must collaborate with development, peace, and government agencies to ensure that long-term needs are addressed alongside immediate needs. Every child should be able to access a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development.²¹



A socio-environmental map created by girls in Ouahigouya. During this activity young people identified the most important elements of their daily life (people, places, things, and events) by drawing or writing them and then placing them on a map created by the group.
Image: Terre des hommes Lausanne (2022)

¹⁹ Terre des hommes. November 2021. “[Guide opérationnel: Vers la résilience psychosociale et le bien-être.](#)”

²⁰ Ground Truth Solutions. June 2023. “[When your immediate needs are met, you can fight harder to make a living: Perceptions of aid in Burkina Faso.](#)”

²¹ United Nations. 20 November 1989. “[The Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Article 27\).](#)”

4. Playing and socialising are important but considered a privilege

Young people regularly mentioned play and socialising as important elements of their daily lives. In addition to playing with friends and siblings, boys and girls spoke about specific places where they were able to meet up, play, and talk together. These included child-friendly spaces created by humanitarian actors, as well as schools, youth centres, playgrounds, gardens, and water points. Speaking about the recreational areas, a girl in Gorom-Gorom commented that “the young people go to have fun and dance with their friends until they are tired. You leave with a smile and you come back with a smile.” Celebrations and parties were also cited as important moments: “On the day of the party we go to buy our clothes with our savings. We waste money without our parents knowing about it. We all chip in some money to be able to share. We celebrate,” said one boy in Gorom-Gorom. This sentiment was shared by some young people living with disabilities. In Gorom-Gorom, a boy with a physical disability said he loved playing cards until late at night with other young people and enjoyed attending celebrations. Young people also emphasised trees as an important place for gathering and socialising: “The shade of the tree is for shelter, it is a place to rest, to exchange ideas,” explained one boy in Dori. “It is this tree that allows people to orient themselves here,” said a girl in Dori. “People are used to staying in the shade. If you go there right now, you're going to find people sitting [under the tree].”

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On the day of the party we go to buy our clothes with our savings. We waste money without our parents knowing about it. We all chip in some money to be able to share. We celebrate.

– Boy, Gorom-Gorom

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People are used to staying in the shade. If you go there right now, you're going to find people sitting [under the tree].

– Boy, Dori



Girls take part in an ice-breaker activity in Ouahigouya.
Image: Terre des hommes Lausanne (2022)

Play is a right.²² But play and social time seem to be a privilege for many young people, given the responsibilities they face in their daily lives. More boys than girls in the study spontaneously mentioned the importance of play and socialisation. Girls appear to have fewer opportunities to access recreational, leisure, and sports spaces and less time to participate in them because they are responsible for many household tasks. In some of the focus groups, they laughed when asked if they liked to play, as this is already out of step with their everyday role. In addition, fewer boys aged 14-17 than those aged 10-13 mentioned spaces where they could play and socialise, as they seemed to be more concerned with providing for their families. These comments highlight the disparities between different age and gender groups, in a context where teenagers and girls are faced with many responsibilities, limiting their participation in social, recreational or sporting activities.

Yet play and socialisation are essential for young people's development and contribute to their psychosocial well-being. Access to safe recreational spaces is crucial in a context where insecurity persists, children face multiple sources of stress (daily difficulties in accessing basic services, violence, displacement), and where multi-sectoral assessments indicate that a significant proportion of families have a member in a state of stress or psychological distress.²³

²² United Nations. 20 November 1989. "[The Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Article 31\).](#)"

²³ United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. March 2023. "[Burkina Faso: Aperçu des Besoins Humanitaires 2023.](#)"

5. Safety, security, and peace are central to well-being

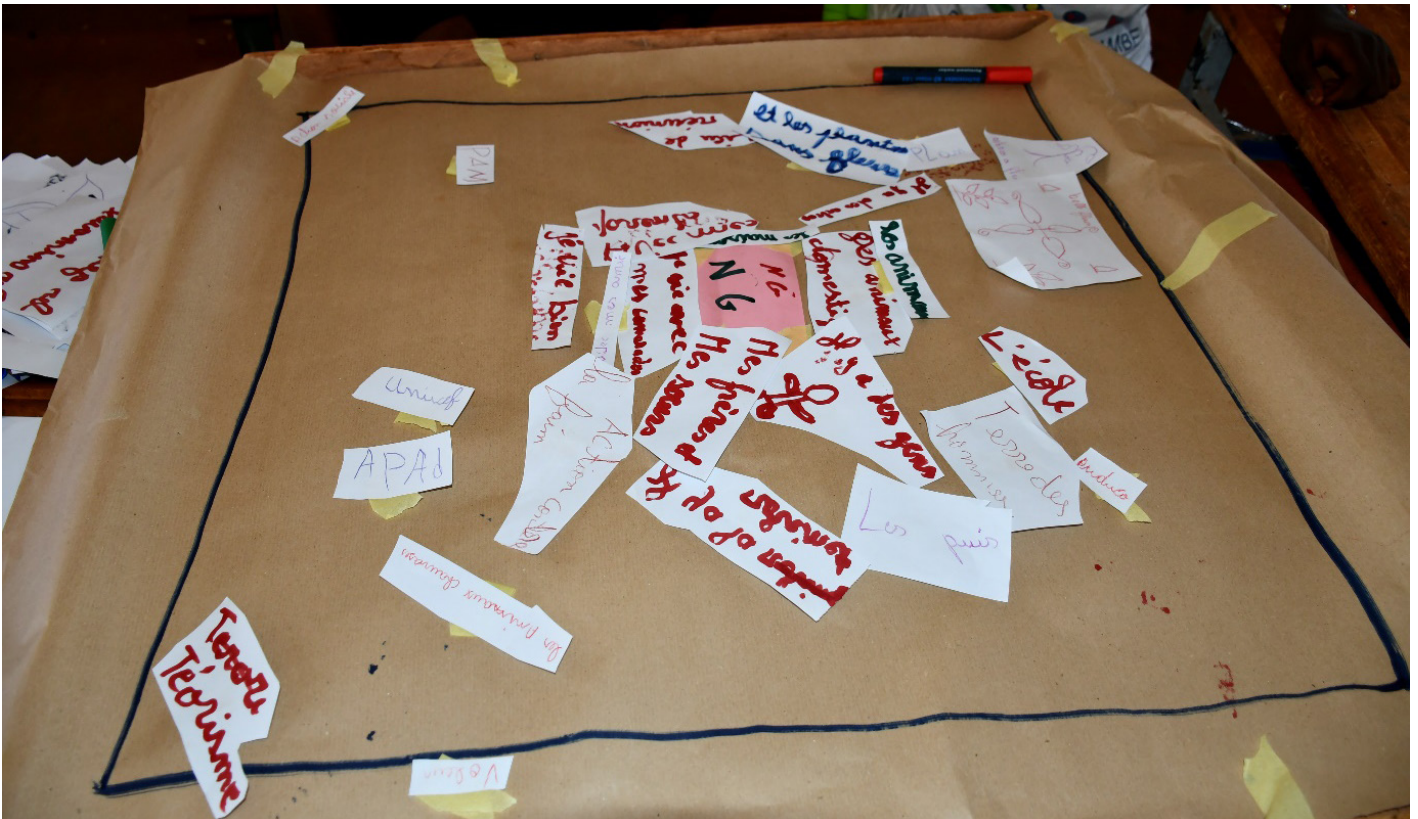
Topics related to safety and security were never raised by the facilitators but came up naturally and in various ways during discussions with the young people, indicating that for many, protection and safety are one of their main concerns.²⁴ Young people, for example, consider stop signs to be essential to ensure safety on the roads in their community. A boy from Ouahigouya explained that thanks to these signs, “people are careful not to hurt themselves.” Another boy from Tougan added that “if you get to the stop sign, you stop. If there is no stop sign, people come, and they can have an accident.” Boys, in particular, emphasised safety while traveling, which is important to them because social-cultural norms expect and enable boys to move more freely and regularly in public spaces, compared to girls, who are more often confined to private areas.

Burkinabè youths also mentioned various government institutions – the Ministry of Humanitarian Action, police, gendarmerie, mayor’s office, and high commission – as frequently as they mentioned education, indicating the importance of such bodies in their daily lives. Teenagers (aged 14-17) put more emphasis on their government compared to those aged 10-13 likely because teenagers are more aware of the government’s presence or because they are more often exposed to adult discussions about the government’s role. Young people explained that these government institutions are important to meet basic needs such as receiving official documentation. “When you want to get a birth certificate, someone helps you,” said a boy in Kaya, while another explained, “They help us to get an ID card.”



If you get to the stop sign, you stop. If there is no stop sign, people come, and they can have an accident.

– Boy, Tougan



A socio-environmental map created by girls in Ouahigouya in which they identified the most important elements in their daily life (people, places, things, and events) by drawing or writing them and positioning them on a map.

Image: Terre des hommes Lausanne (2022)

²⁴ United Nations. 20 November 1989. “[The Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Article 19\)](#).”

The threat of insecurity also permeated some focus group conversations. Young people mentioned their fear of “bad people” coming into their community and the risk of explosives. They also described the violence perpetrated by non-state armed groups. For instance, when a boy in Ouahigouya was mapping the elements in his environment, he shared, “There are the jihadists. They shoot people to kill them. They steal cattle to go into the bush and drive people out of their villages.” Some youth mentioned the state military forces and planes that were used to “go to war,” “chase the bad people,” and fight the armed groups. Such descriptions of ongoing violence indicate young people's awareness of current events, as well as their continued sense of vulnerability. Adults share this sense of omnipresent insecurity: while 61% reported feeling safe in their daily lives, those who did not feel safe said their primary concern was the risk of armed attacks.²⁵

Boys and girls rarely associate humanitarian actors with their own protection. This may be because protection services are limited in their area, young people are unaware of them, are not targeted by them, or it may be due to the limitations of this study. However, a few young people spontaneously mentioned the existence of an organisation that provides psychosocial support, suggesting that they themselves or someone close to them had benefited from or heard about such services. In Tougan, a group of girls indicated a specific organisation to which they could turn in the event of sexual assault: “We come to tell [name of organisation] that it's rape, it's rape.” This mention of gender-based violence echoes other studies' findings that this is a critical concern for young girls throughout Burkina Faso – and an issue requiring continued attention by aid providers.²⁶

Beyond concerns about their immediate safety and security, some girls and boys also spoke about the importance of achieving peace. For youth in Dori, the mosque is one place where they can remove themselves from the prevailing sense of insecurity. “The mosque,” said a boy in Dori, “allows us to distance ourselves from danger.” Another boy added, “I think the mosque is very important because it is the pathway to peace. It is where you learn to forgive, and where you forgive yourself.”

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There are the jihadists. They shoot people to kill them. They steal cattle to go into the bush and drive people out of their villages.

– Boy, Ouahigouya

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We come to tell [name of organisation] that it's rape, it's rape.

– Girl, Tougan

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The mosque allows us to distance ourselves from danger.

– Boy, Dori

²⁵ Ground Truth Solutions. June 2023. [“When your immediate needs are met, you can fight harder to make a living: Perceptions of aid in Burkina Faso.”](#)

²⁶ United Nations Young people's Fund. March 2022. [“Child Marriage Country Profile Burkina Faso.”](#)

6. Limited knowledge and communication with humanitarian actors

Most young people were aware that humanitarian assistance was distributed in their commune, but many did not know who or where it came from. In Tougan and Koupéla, boys and girls often confused implementing humanitarian organisations with the Ministry of Humanitarian Action, the government agency responsible for coordinating humanitarian assistance. Indeed, some organisations provide assistance through the Ministry of Humanitarian Action in certain areas. Meanwhile, young people in Ouahigouya frequently mentioned the names of humanitarian organisations, most likely because humanitarian organisations have a more visible presence on the IDP site in this commune. Among those humanitarian organisations that girls and boys had heard of, they had difficulty identifying and distinguishing them. This problem was particularly noticeable among illiterate and younger participants, who mostly recognised humanitarian organisations by their logos.

What young people perceive as humanitarian aid impacts who they think provides aid. Young people are more likely to recognise tangible goods as assistance, but intangible services, like child-friendly spaces where facilitators implement playtime activities with children, might be less likely to be seen as aid.

Of course, confounding humanitarian organisations and government agencies, as well as being unaware of what goods and services qualify as assistance and those that do not, are not necessarily red flags. This lack of knowledge, however, about what is going on in their community and the ability to participate in conversations about aid programming requires critical attention, given that young people have a right to participate²⁷ and a right to information.²⁸



A girl in Tougan works on the group's socio-environmental map.
Image: Terre des hommes Lausanne (2022)

²⁷ United Nations. July 2009. "[Convention relative aux droits de l'enfant \(Paragraphe 2 de l'article 12\).](#)"

²⁸ United Nations. 20 November 1989. "[The Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Article 17\).](#)"

Humanitarian actors should create opportunities for young people to get involved in programming in a safe and accessible way so they can listen to their needs and aspirations and take actions accordingly. When doing so, humanitarian actors must still respect the household unit by ensuring that caregivers have easy access to information about programming that impacts their household and child. Doing so will help all community members feel better informed, and knowing how to participate should improve girls' and boys' psychosocial well-being and resilience.²⁹

For now, girls' and boys' participation in humanitarian programming is limited and communicating with humanitarian actors is difficult. Some young people think information, in general, is shared in written format and find this exclusionary because they cannot read or write. Radio might be one solution. As one girl in Gorom-Gorom pointed out: "There is the radio for those who cannot read because the message will be in local languages." But youth strongly prefer two-way communication, emphasizing the desire to not just receive information, but to give feedback too. A boy in Gorom-Gorom explained that he liked to use the phone "because you can call someone on it and that person can call you back." Communication via hotlines, for example, also provides a confidential means of providing feedback. One participant in Kongoussi said that hotlines are important "because it's between you and the receiver." Although young people valued the direct contact and privacy afforded via phone calls, some pointed out that access to phones was not universal and connection issues often hindered communication.

As a result, face-to-face contact was the preferred means of communication for most young people. This method of communication allows for direct and focused contact, where girls and boys feel heard and can participate, regardless of their education level or phone access. Most participants said they preferred to receive information and provide feedback about aid programming via members of their community, particularly their adult caregivers. Yet less than half (49%) of adults surveyed felt informed about aid provided, making it difficult for them to respond to their children's questions. And while some caregivers might know where to get answers – 56% of adults surveyed knew how to submit feedback – very few (28%) reported that they had shared a concern with humanitarian actors using the channels they know.³⁰ To support their children, adults need to be able to get involved in aid programming decisions and have easy access to information or else both parents and children will remain in the dark.



There is the radio for those who cannot read because the message will be in local languages.

– Girl, Gorom-Gorom

²⁹ Terre des hommes. November 2021. "[Guide opérationnel: Vers la résilience psychosociale et le bien-être.](#)"

³⁰ Ground Truth Solutions. June 2023. "[When your immediate needs are met, you can fight harder to make a living: Perceptions of aid in Burkina Faso.](#)"

7. Young people feel their opinions don't matter

Young people, particularly girls, reported that even if they manage to communicate with humanitarian actors, their views are not taken into account. One boy in Koupéla said that “sometimes the adults do not listen to us.” A girl in Fada N’Gourma complained that “they listen but they don’t do anything.” Some young people said they simply don’t have the right to ask questions about humanitarian aid. When asked why they don’t understand how aid is targeted, girls in Kaya said “we can’t ask.” Young people also reported more extreme cases where they feared the consequences of speaking out: “They will hit you. They will take your name off [the list of those receiving aid]. If you speak out, they say you will spoil their work. They insult you. They will say you are rude. They’ll say you don’t respect your parents at home and that’s why you’re talking like this. They will say that you don’t know more than the grown-ups. They will also go and tell your parents.”

For many young people, the right to communicate with humanitarian actors and to be heard is reserved exclusively for adults. In Tougan, a girl noted: “We can’t [give our opinion] because we are small. If we were adults, it would be better,” while another lamented, “if we were adults there would be no problems. We could go and have a say.”

Again, these testimonies point to the need for humanitarian actors to dramatically improve their engagement with both young people and their caregivers. Yet given that some young people described instances of verbal and physical abuse, they are unlikely to be very trusting of some humanitarian actors. Humanitarian actors must consider power dynamics and the level of trust when beginning to work with the community to determine how youth can engage in aid programming. This analysis will help them to co-determine ways in which youth can participate in humanitarian programming, in line with their preferences and accessibility concerns.

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They will hit you. They will take your name off [the list of those receiving aid]. If you speak out, they say you will spoil their work. They insult you. They will say you are rude. They’ll say you don’t respect your parents at home and that’s why you’re talking like this. They will say that you don’t know more than the grown-ups. They will also go and tell your parents.

– Boy, Fada N’Gourma

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We can’t [give our opinion] because we are small. If we were adults, it would be better.

– Girl, Tougan



Girls in Tougan participate in a socio-environmental mapping activity. During this activity young people identified the most important elements of their daily life (people, places, things, and events) by drawing or writing them and positioning them on a map designed by the group.

Image: Terre des hommes Lausanne (2022)

8. Unclear targeting fuels feelings of injustice and exclusion

In all communes – except Koupéla and Kongoussi – young people called on humanitarian actors to improve how aid was targeted. This sentiment was shared by the adults interviewed in 2022. Most (86%) did not know how humanitarian actors decide who receives aid and who does not.³¹ Although some young people understood the vulnerability criteria used by humanitarian actors to select who receives assistance, most found it difficult to understand the selection process and said the registration system was unclear and poorly organised. For instance, several non-displaced young people stated that humanitarian actors only help displaced people, which they saw as unfair. Meanwhile, displaced youth reported they had not received assistance since their arrival, some two years ago. “What I would like is for the Ministry of Humanitarian Action to take care of the IDPs and the young people, because since we arrived, we have received nothing,” shared one boy in Gorom-Gorom.

With partial or no information on who receives aid and who does not, it is no surprise that many young people feel that targeting is left to chance, with humanitarian actors selecting people to receive assistance at random. In this context some appear to win while others lose. Boys and girls find it difficult to understand why they have never received aid, while others have their names removed from lists without explanation. “Your name can be on the list and then they say your name is no longer there,” lamented a girl in Boussouma.

Other young people felt some people were favoured over others in their community. “The aid does not reach everyone. It is those who have already received who are still receiving,” explained a girl in Kaya. On the other hand, some young people said that

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What I would like is for the Ministry of Humanitarian Action to take care of the IDPs and the young people, because since we arrived, we have received nothing.

– Boy, Gorom-Gorom

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The aid does not reach everyone, it is those who have already received who are still receiving.

– Girl, Kaya



Boys in Ouhahigouya work on the socio-environmental mapping exercise. During this activity, the young people identified the most important elements of their daily life (people, places, things, and events) by drawing or writing them and positioning them on a map drawn by the group. Image: Terre des hommes Lausanne (2022)

³¹ Ground Truth Solutions. June 2023. “[When your immediate needs are met, you can fight harder to make a living: Perceptions of aid in Burkina Faso.](#)”

humanitarian actors prioritise their acquaintances when targeting. “What I don’t like is that when people register, they write the names of people they know. There are people from [redacted commune] who left the commune with us, but so far, they have not been registered. Meanwhile, there are people who have not yet left [redacted commune], but we already heard that their names on the list. This is not fair,” said one girl.

Several girls and boys shared cases of fraud, such as the diversion of distributed food, water, money, or school supplies, and these incidents of aid diversion were commonly cited in schools. In Kaya, one girl explained that “before giving to people, they cut off part of it,” while another noted that “at school, the teachers take away part of the aid before giving to the pupils.” Similarly, in Tougan, a boy explained that “if they send food, they give a little to the people and they keep the rest for themselves,” and in Fada N’Gourma a boy reported, “even in schools, they [the teachers] take away food to take home.”

Finally, Burkinabè youth viewed aid as mainly for adults and that they had no say. “I don’t like it when the agents who register beneficiaries pass through the courtyards,” one girl in Gorom-Gorom recounted, “and when they find young people they refuse to register us. They say that it is only the parents, that the young people are not concerned. Yet young people’s needs are often different from those of adults.” Young people identify their needs and those of their community and do not understand why they are seemingly excluded from receiving humanitarian assistance.

Many young people recognised that humanitarian actors “cannot serve everyone,” but others do not. One girl in Fada N’Gourma said: “I wish they would register and help everyone because [aid] is for everyone.” Although all young people expressed that fair and equal distribution of aid is important, girls were the most vocal on this point. This may be because they often go to distribution sites with their parents and therefore witness targeting inequalities first-hand. Girls are also often the main targets of aid programming, compared to boys, receiving goods such as hygiene kits and training on gender-based violence. In some communes, girls are also more targeted by education programmes. As one of the main targets, they may be more exposed to humanitarian actors and their decision-making processes than boys, leading them to mention the need for fair targeting more frequently.

Older participants (aged 14-17) were also more likely to talk about unequal targeting, with many mentioning that they had never received assistance. This may be because fairness becomes increasingly important to young people as they grow up, making them more aware of instances of unfairness.³² Teenagers may be targeted less frequently by school reintegration programmes, which account for a large proportion of the available assistance to young people in some communes, making them feel excluded from humanitarian assistance.

If young people experience prolonged periods of inequality and arbitrariness of aid provision, they will feel disrespected, impacting their psychosocial well-being.³³ To mitigate this risk, humanitarian actors should always take young people into account when determining and communicating the criteria for recipient selection. Humanitarian actors, even those just focused on providing assistance to adults, must involve young people in the targeting communication process. In this crisis context, young people are already playing a key role in supporting their households and will therefore be directly or indirectly impacted by aid targeting decisions.



If they send food, they give a little to the people and they keep the rest for themselves.

– Boy, Tougan



When they find young people they refuse to register us. They say that it is only the parents, that the young people are not concerned. Yet young people’s needs are often different from those of adults.

– Girl, Gorom-Gorom



I wish they would register and help everyone because [aid] is for everyone.

– Girl, Fada N’Gourma

³² Journal of Experiential Psychology: General. 2014. “Children Develop a Veil of Fairness.”

³³ Terre des hommes. November 2021. “Guide opérationnel: Vers la résilience psychosociale et le bien-être.”

9. Dangerous and degrading distribution sites

Young people wanted humanitarian actors to improve security at distribution sites. In almost all communes, with the exception of Boussouma, Kaya, and Kongoussi, young people mentioned cases of physical violence during distributions – either between people receiving aid or perpetrated by humanitarian actors and their intermediaries – where people were shoving and fighting. A boy in Gorom-Gorom described the situation: “People fight there for food, especially those who arrive late. They come late and they want to be in front.” Similarly, a girl in Ouahigouya lamented: “They distribute the aid, and it turns into a fight.” Young people with disabilities also said they had been pushed during the aid distribution. Seeing these cases of violence leads young people to call on humanitarian actors to maintain order and improve communication about the process. “What is lacking is order because people often shove each other during distributions,” one boy in Gorom-Gorom observed. Adults shared this view. Those interviewed who felt unsafe at distribution sites cited overcrowding as the main reason for their insecurity.³⁴

Girls and boys also frequently reported cases of verbal abuse from humanitarian actors or intermediaries who organise distributions. “They often shout at people,” was the complaint of a girl in Fada N’Gourma, while other young people reported that humanitarian actors had insulted them, lack patience and respect, or that they had been chased away. “When they come, they have to find that people are well seated otherwise they get angry and leave,” said a boy in Kaya. A boy in Ouahigouya noted

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People fight there for food, especially those who arrive late. They come late and they want to be in front.

– Boy, Gorom-Gorom

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They often shout at people.

– Girl, Fada N’Gourma



Girls in Ouahigouya working on their socio-environmental map. During this activity, young people identified the most important elements of their daily life (people, places, things, and events) by drawing or writing them down and then positioning them on a map designed by the group. Image: Terre des hommes Lausanne (2022)

³⁴ Ground Truth Solutions. June 2023. “[When your immediate needs are met, you can fight harder to make a living: Perceptions of aid in Burkina Faso.](#)”

that some humanitarian actors “are in a bad mood and have no patience with the young people, so some young people are afraid of these older people.” Young people were also aware that this mistreatment had to be addressed: “We must sensitise the people who work there on living together,” suggested one boy in Gorom-Gorom, otherwise violent and aggressive behaviour will lead young people to lose trust in humanitarian actors.

Boys and girls also reported undignified conditions during aid distributions. A girl in Boussouma explained: “They tell you to come. You come and spend the whole day under the sun and in the end you get nothing. Then you go back home and you have nothing to eat.” A girl in Gorom-Gorom said that there was “too much suffering at aid distribution sites and then nothing in return.”

Experiencing such undignified conditions risks further eroding young people’s trust in humanitarian actors and may lead to feelings of disillusionment and resentment towards humanitarian actors, which could exacerbate security issues and jeopardise young people’s emotional well-being.



We must sensitise the people who work there on living together.

– Boy, Gorom-Gorom



They tell you to come. You come and spend the whole day under the sun and in the end you get nothing. Then you go back home and you have nothing to eat.

– Girl, Boussouma

Next steps

Concerns about addressing essential personal and community needs, getting access to educational opportunities, securing work, and remaining physically and mentally safe and secure emerged as the key priorities for young people in this study. Despite the challenging crisis context, Burkinabè boys and girls reported that family, friends, community, religion, government, and humanitarian actors served as a source of hope to them. While boys and girls said humanitarian actors helped them, most young people did not know that they had a voice and felt that their opinions did not count. Such negative perceptions of humanitarian actors could lead to a loss of trust and resentment against them.

As a starting point, humanitarian actors are encouraged to consider this study's [recommendations](#) to better support the immediate needs and long-term aspirations of young people. Doing so will not only improve aid quality, but it will ensure young people's right to participate in aid programming that directly impacts their lives. If humanitarian actors improve young people's sense of security, justice, and equity, as well as support them with educational and livelihood opportunities, they will concurrently help young people to feel that they have agency and can positively contribute toward transforming and improving the difficult context in which they live.

As a next step, the Child Protection sub-cluster in Burkina Faso will develop an action plan based on these findings, but the recommendations are cross-sectoral and apply to all humanitarian actors (national and international organisations, UN agencies, civil society and the government), not only to Child Protection sub-cluster members. As a result, these findings will be presented to the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group in Burkina Faso with the aim that concrete actions will be taken by all clusters and coordinating entities to address the young people's needs and aspirations.

Ground Truth Solutions and Terre des hommes Lausanne plan to adapt this methodology for collecting young people's perceptions to a process that humanitarian actors could integrate into their work as a means of engaging with young people, collecting their feedback, and acting on their views.

The specific research focus of this next project has not yet been determined, but it will be based on young people's priorities described in this report. Based on the feedback and limitations of this study, further research could explore the following topics:

1. Young people with disabilities seemed to agree that earning an income and playing/socialising was important to them. Further research could explore these young people's preferences and the support they need to earn a living, play, and socialise in this crisis context.
2. Girls rarely spoke about the desire to play or socialise with others, sometimes laughing when play was mentioned because they had household responsibilities that prohibited them from doing so. Further research could explore how humanitarian actors might help girls find time to play and socialise, despite a crisis context that tends to increase pressure on girls to take on household responsibilities.
3. Some young people mentioned psychosocial support, but it is not clear in this study how they identified and managed their own personal and community trauma. Future research could explore how young people perceive trauma, the

multiple ways it affects them, and what help they need (from their community, humanitarian actors, or others) to support their mental well-being.

4. While young people mentioned various types of violence they had experienced, gender-based violence was likely underreported by girls. Further research could explore perceptions of violence and its many forms in more detail, as well as how young people would like to be supported. Yet this research should only be conducted if strong child protection measures are in place.
5. Some comments on workplaces indicated that young people were working in dangerous or difficult conditions. Further research could explore those conditions, their impact, and how they suggest humanitarian actors should support them to improve this situation.
6. Some young people mentioned armed groups and the police but did not mention a connection between their community and the ongoing violent context. Further research could explore how young people perceive the security situation, its link to their communities and families, its impact on them, and their recommendations for how humanitarian actors could ensure a safer and more stable future.

Methodology

Design

The methodology for this study was developed jointly by Ground Truth Solutions and Terre de hommes Lausanne, using a youth-friendly qualitative approach. The methodology was based on the belief that this project could not impose preconceived research priorities on young people. The team was committed to understanding first what young people found most important in their daily lives and what aspects they wanted to see improved by humanitarians. For this reason, this research project is considered an exploratory phase.

A semi-structured focus group discussion guide, using a variety of facilitation techniques, was developed based on the following process:

1. Designed by Ground Truth Solutions and Terre des hommes Lausanne, including child protection specialists;
2. Tested with a group of young people involved in Terre des hommes Lausanne projects;
3. Reviewed by a Humanity and Inclusion inclusive communication specialist and adapted based on feedback;
4. Adjusted based on feedback received during the facilitator training.

The facilitation techniques were based on activities involving play and movement, as well as graphic visualisation (socio-environmental mapping).

Facilitators encouraged conversation around the activities and a set of open-ended questions but did not focus the conversation on humanitarian aid at the outset. This approach allowed young people to talk about the topics in their daily lives, both past and present, that were most important to them and to share why they were important. The method also aimed to understand the extent to which humanitarian intervention and actors played an important role in everyday life – if they were mentioned spontaneously by the young people and not prompted by a leading question – and then to gradually introduce a discussion around humanitarian aid and topics related to aid accountability. This approach was designed to build trust within each focus group, reduce social desirability bias, and ensure the discussion focused on issues that were of consequence to young people.

The discussions were divided into six parts:

1. Introduction and a playful ice-breaker activity to get to know each other and to ensure that the objectives and ground rules were well understood;
2. Socio-environmental mapping activity where young people identified the most important elements of their daily life (people, places, things, events) by drawing or writing them and positioning them on a map created as a group;
3. Discussion about why these elements were important;
4. Discussion about humanitarian assistance based on what the young people identified in the previous section, what the young people liked about aid programming, what they did not like, and what they would like to see changed;

5. Discussion of ways in which young people could or would like to communicate with humanitarians;
6. Final feedback exercise where young people could anonymously submit their comments to the team by placing a notecard in a box or sharing the feedback verbally yet privately with the facilitator.

Sampling: geographical selection and group composition

The sites selected for this study were chosen based on where partnering organisations had ongoing programmes. This was essential for an exploratory study on young people's perceptions of humanitarian aid in Burkina Faso because the organisations needed to have a trusting relationship with the community and to be able to communicate the objectives with the parents and young people in a clear and transparent way in order to better reduce risks and ensure accountability of the activity.

Each partnering organisation conducted the study in one or two communes, holding between three to eight focus group discussions each. In total, the six regions mainly targeted by humanitarian assistance in Burkina Faso were covered by the study, including urban and rural communes, as well as hard-to-reach communes.

The focus groups consisted of four to eight young people and were always divided by gender. All groups were supposed to be divided by age (10-13 and 14-17), as current guidelines suggest dividing activities by these age groups due to different levels of maturity (see [Limits](#)). All groups included a mix of displaced and non-displaced young people to ensure inclusiveness and with the aim of having equal representation of both status groups.

Partners were strongly encouraged to identify young people living with disabilities (physically disabled, visually impaired/blind, hearing impaired/deaf, and/or those with learning or intellectual difficulties) to participate in the activity. The activity was adapted so that young people with differing abilities could participate in the same focus group, in line with best practice for inclusion. All facilitators received training from a Humanity and Inclusion specialist during the three-day workshop (see [Training of facilitators](#)) on how to adapt activities to the abilities of each child.

Finally, the groups included young people who had and had not received humanitarian assistance. Young people and their caregivers were asked individually whether the young person had received assistance and whether their household had received assistance. Sometimes the young people's answers differed from those of their caregivers, so it is not clear which young people and which of their households had received humanitarian assistance.

Training of facilitators

All facilitators attended a three-day training course covering the purpose of the study; focus group methodology; communication and facilitation techniques to encourage young people to participate; participant selection and group composition; ethical considerations in research with young people; application of the Do No Harm approach to this study; referral mechanisms to be used in the event of a protection incident; inclusion of young people with disabilities; and data quality expectations.

All facilitators were staff members of one of the partner organisations and all had experience in child protection and/or were social workers.

Safeguarding and Do No Harm

For this activity, it was essential to build trust between the community and the facilitation team by ensuring the location was accessible, safe, and comfortable and by making certain that young people felt respected and valued. Steps were taken before, during, and after the focus group discussions to achieve this objective.

A long design phase (for more than four months) preceded the implementation of the activity, which gave the team time to identify partnering organisations with strong backgrounds in child protection; develop a youth-friendly methodology; identify accessible, safe and comfortable location for the activity; and share information about the activity with the community well before the first focus group discussion.

During the facilitator training, participants identified potential risks to young people's participation and ways to minimise such risks. They also discussed young people's right to participate and the skills the facilitators needed to encourage participation.

All partnering organisations that implemented the focus group discussions had internal referral mechanisms and ensured that all facilitators were trained to use their mechanisms in the case that a child mentioned a protection incident during the conversations.

All teams made sure that informed consent was obtained from parents and young people, explaining the activity in detail (duration and purpose) and managing expectations about the outcome. Terre des hommes Lausanne facilitators received consent from young people and parents on taking photos during the activity, so only photos from the Terre des hommes activity were used in this report.

During the activity, the facilitators moderated the conversations according to the following principles: respecting young people (not judging, criticising, interrupting, getting angry, dominating); listening, giving time for young people to develop their thoughts; using simple and accessible language and rephrasing when necessary without directing the conversation; paying attention to non-verbal communication (neutral and warm); focusing on being at young people's level to mitigate power relationships; being ready to deal with unexpected comments or changes in the room (emotions, tiredness) and to re-energise or support young people, if necessary; ending the conversation on a positive note; and thanking the young people for their time and participation.

After the activity, the facilitators were available to answer any questions the young people had. They were also responsible for reporting any protection incidents mentioned. All facilitators anonymised, stored, and transferred the transcripts in accordance with Ground Truth Solutions' confidentiality and data protection requirements. Data analysis and report writing were carried out in accordance with Ground Truth Solutions' protocols to ensure that no one could identify the young people who participated.

Language

The focus groups were conducted in languages that all young people could understand and speak. Even with mixed groups of displaced and non-displaced young people, facilitators reported that they were able to choose a common language understood by all young people.

Data quality

One facilitator was responsible for taking notes during the focus group discussions, while another person led the conversation. The note taker was required to write down verbatim what each young person said. Each participant's name was anonymised using initials. All conversations were recorded so that the teams could ensure that the transcripts were complete. Following a focus group, the transcripts were shared with Ground Truth Solutions for their review and feedback to ensure data quality standards were met.

Analysis

The analysis was carried out using MAXQDA. The 31 focus group discussion transcripts were divided between three researchers. Codes were created based on the young people's responses (no preconceived coding structure), and there were iterative cycles of code development and refinement, as well as iterative cycles of coding. Researchers checked each other's codes to ensure that the coding methods were standardised. The iterative analysis process was guided by a frequency analysis (the number of times a young person mentioned a given code). After a preliminary analysis, the research team consulted with each of the facilitator teams to share the analysis and gather their views. The Child Protection sub-cluster coordinators, Terre des hommes Lausanne child rights specialists, Humanity and inclusion specialists, and Ground Truth Solutions accountability specialists provided additional comments and analysis. The analysis was also cross-referenced with secondary data.

Limits

The sample was limited to locations where partnering organisations had ongoing activities, thus limiting the geographical scope.

This project was carried out using each partner's own funds or integrated their ongoing activities, which resulted in a much longer time frame than expected and also in a somewhat smaller sample size than initially planned.

The combination of a semi-structured interview guide and different teams of facilitators meant that facilitators asked different probing questions depending on what the young people said. This may have prompted some groups to talk about certain things more than others. This could mean that the differences identified between each focus group were not based on demographic differences but on the different ways in which facilitators conducted the discussions.

Some young people were more talkative than others and/or some facilitators seemed to be better at facilitating discussions than others, so the detail of the transcripts varied considerably from group to group. This means that a frequency analysis has its limitations, as it is difficult to discern whether certain items were mentioned by young people because they were important to them or because some groups simply talked more than others. Understanding this limitation, the analysis also focused on what was mentioned spontaneously by the young people and how they formulated it. In this way, any element, even if mentioned only once, was considered important.

This activity was not designed to address sensitive issues because of child safeguarding and Do No Harm concerns. Sensitive issues important to young people were probably not sufficiently captured or explored in this study. Secondary data and the facilitator's background knowledge were used to understand which issues were

likely to be important to Burkinabè young people, but very sensitive. Thus, sensitive issues that were raised even once were highlighted in this report and supported by this secondary data.

This activity attempted to include young people living with disabilities in the same conversations with young people who did not live with a disability. However, the small number of participants with disabilities made it difficult to analyse trends among this demographic group. In addition, most of the young people had a physical disability and there were few other types of disabilities represented (e.g. visually impaired/blind, hearing impaired/deaf, learning disabled, or intellectual), making it impossible to analyse by type of disability.

Three focus groups did not divide the young people by age correctly (10-13 and 14-17), so the analysis by age groups did not include the comments from the incorrectly mixed groups. It is unclear if findings by age groups presented in this report would have changed if young people's feedback from these three focus groups could have been included in the age analysis. Please note that these young people's comments were analysed in the aggregate and gender analyses.



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