

# Needs grow as funding falls

## Perceptions of aid in Burkina Faso

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Burkina Faso • December 2023

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GROUND TRUTH  
SOLUTIONS



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## Lead author

Capucine Tibi

## Research partners



For more information on our projects in Burkina Faso, please contact Marie-Françoise Sitnam at [marie-francoise@groundtruthsolutions.org](mailto:marie-francoise@groundtruthsolutions.org) or visit our [website](#).

# Background

Burkina Faso, one of the most vibrant cultural and artistic hubs in western Africa, faces a multifaceted crisis, including environmental shocks exacerbated by climate change and increasing violence from non-state armed groups. Since 2019, the frequency of attacks and abductions by these groups has escalated considerably, thrusting the country into one of the world's most urgent displacement crises. Approximately two million people, predominantly women and children, have been forcibly displaced from their homes. As of 2023, the number of individuals in need of humanitarian assistance has risen to 4.7 million.<sup>1</sup>

The control of nearly 40% of Burkina Faso's territory by non-state armed groups poses great challenges to humanitarian operations. Close to 800,000 people live in the 26 cities under armed blockade. Their movements are limited and they have almost no access to basic services. Humanitarian organisations depend heavily on United Nations air bridges to reach communities cut off from the rest of the country. Along with these challenges, Burkina Faso faces the highest level of inflation among the members of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, a repercussion of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, from whom Burkina Faso used to import most of its wheat.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the worsening security situation and deepening humanitarian crisis in Burkina Faso, attention from the international community has remained disconcertingly low. The Norwegian Refugee Council designated Burkina Faso as the most neglected crisis in the world in 2022, given the lack of humanitarian funding, media coverage, and diplomatic initiatives.<sup>3</sup> Alarmingly, only 30% of the 2023 response plan appeal for USD 876.7 million has been met, leaving millions of Burkinabe without urgently needed support.

# About the process

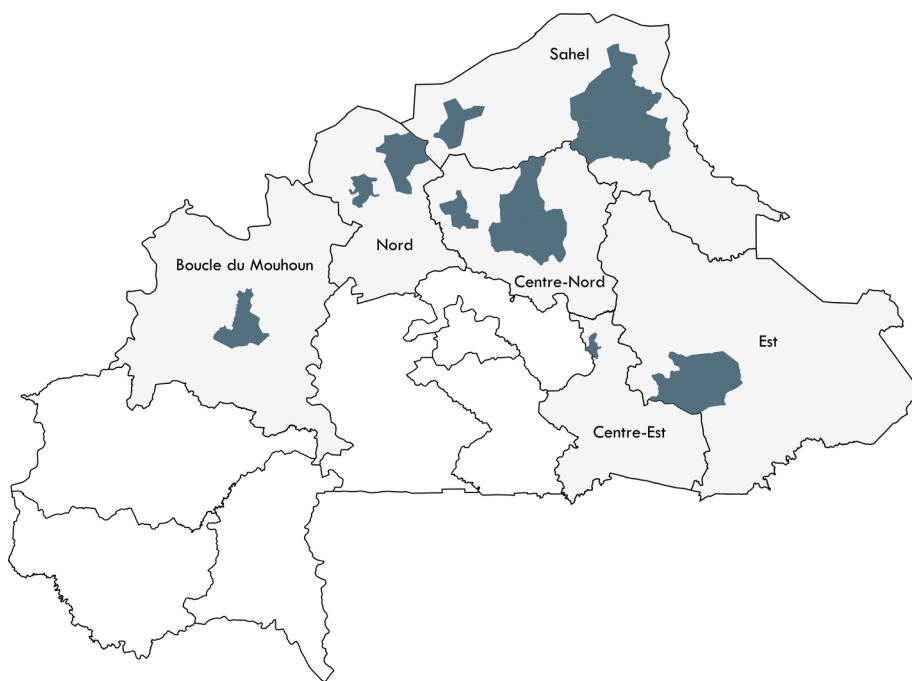
Ground Truth Solutions has been tracking perceptions of individuals affected by the crisis in Burkina Faso since 2020, amplifying their voices and providing insight to inform decision-making related to humanitarian aid and services. In this report, we present the findings from the fourth iterative round of data collection and dialogue with both communities and humanitarian actors.

This year, we strengthened our approach by designing our survey with community members. We engaged with 48 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and members of the host community in Ouahigouya, in the north of the country. This allowed us to do two things: first, it helped us understand how relevant the suggested survey themes were for those we are listening to; and second, it helped identify additional aspects of people's lives to be covered in our work.

Between July and August 2023, we conducted the survey using the co-designed questions, talking to over 1,300 displaced and non-displaced people in the six main regions of the humanitarian response (Sahel, Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-Nord, Nord, Centre-Est, and Est) to understand their perceptions of humanitarian assistance. We then returned to Ouahigouya in October 2023 to share our survey results with those who participated in the design process. We organised a result presentation session that brought together co-design participants and humanitarian actors, creating a platform for dialogue. In the days following this session, we held individual interviews to delve deeper into the findings and gather people's feedback on the co-design experience.

<sup>1</sup> OCHA. March 2023. [“Burkina Faso Plan de Réponse Humanitaire 2023.”](#)  
<sup>2</sup> CALP. July 2023. [“Adapting Cash Programming to Inflation, Depreciation and Economic Volatility in Burkina Faso.”](#)  
<sup>3</sup> NRC. June 2023. [“The world's most neglected displacement crises in 2022.”](#)

In parallel to this year's data collection, we collaborated with the Community Engagement and Accountability Working Group (CEAWG) to form a taskforce operational between September and October 2023. This taskforce, comprising CEAWG members, developed a detailed action plan to put into effect recommendations from our previous reports on adult and young people's perceptions. This action plan, which also aligns with this year's findings, was presented to the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group in November 2023 for review, and key recommendations have been shared broadly with donors with the aim of ensuring key recommendations will be submitted to the Humanitarian Country Team.



The map shows, in blue, the communes where we spoke to crisis-affected people across the six main region of the humanitarian response in Burkina Faso. Further details on the people we spoke with can be found in the side bar.

## Demographics

We spoke to 1,305 people

### Region\*

- 📍 40% Sahel (522)
- 📍 27% Centre-Nord (345)
- 📍 18% Nord (238)
- 📍 12% Est (159)
- 📍 2% Centre-Est (23)
- 📍 1% Boucle du Mouhoun (18)

### Communes\*

- 📍 24% Djiibo (317)
- 📍 13% Ouahigouya (171)
- 📍 12% Fada N’Gourma (159)
- 📍 11% Kaya (137)
- 📍 8% Barsalogo (108)
- 📍 7% Dori (90)
- 📍 5% Gorom-Gorom (68)
- 📍 5% Pissila (70)
- 📍 5% Titao (67)
- 📍 4% Gorgadji (47)
- 📍 2% Dedougou (18)
- 📍 2% Kongoussi (30)
- 📍 2% Poutyenga (23)

### Gender

- 👤 57% Women (744)
- 👤 43% Men (561)

### Status

- 👣 84% Internally displaced people (1,102)
- 🏠 16% Host community members (203)

### Age

- 👥 15% Aged 18-30 (203)
- 👥 74% Aged 31-60 (960)
- 👥 11% Aged 61 and older (142)

### Disability

- ♿ 16% People with disabilities (208)

\*The sample size per commune (and therefore per region) was allocated proportional to the IDP distribution in the country reported by Conseil National de Secours d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation (CONASUR) for February 2023.

# Key findings and questions

As we write this report, humanitarian actors are in the process of preparing their programmes for the upcoming year. The primary objective of this research is to amplify the voices of those affected by the crisis and to help aid providers consider these when making decisions on the aid and services they provide.

This overview includes questions for decision-makers based on suggestions from communities and humanitarian staff.

## Unmet needs exacerbate people's sense of insecurity

The presence of armed groups contributes to widespread feelings of insecurity, exacerbated by a lack of adequate infrastructure to protect people from external threats. People are asking for more durable shelter and adequate lighting – concerns they identified as their main security risks following the presence of armed groups.

- **Can humanitarian organisations provide shelters resistant to heavy rains and adequate lighting inside and outside shelters?**

Beyond immediate physical harm, people – especially IDPs – are concerned about the psychological wellbeing of their community, underscoring the need for further psychological support.

- **Can aid providers establish and expand psychological support programmes targeted at IDPs to help them better cope with the lingering effects of previous trauma?**

People closely connect their sense of safety to their ability to fulfil their basic needs. The humanitarian response in Burkina Faso is severely underfunded, preventing organisations from adequately covering the growing needs of affected people. Fights over scarce resources lead to tensions among internally displaced people, as well as between IDPs and host communities. People are feeling anxious when visiting distribution sites and fear not receiving sufficient quantities of aid.

## People are not equally informed about humanitarian processes

Insufficient information regarding registration and distribution hinders efficient, dignified, and safe access to assistance. This is especially the case for vulnerable groups such as older people, widows, and people with disabilities, who are often excluded from information exchange due to their reduced social interaction, sometimes driven by stigma.

- **Can humanitarian actors give particular consideration to the information needs of vulnerable groups within communities at the onset of interventions?**
- **Can aid providers ensure the appointment of dedicated representatives for vulnerable groups with the ability to establish direct communication with humanitarian actors?**
- **Can humanitarian actors increase collaboration with organisations specialising in supporting people with disabilities through consultation or links to their programming?**

People do not know how humanitarian actors decide who receives assistance and who does not. Beyond just a lack of clarity regarding selection criteria, people find that the process between initial registration and the final recipient list lacks transparency. This contributes to misconceptions like the belief that registration automatically guarantees receiving aid.

- **Can aid providers ensure that crisis affected people receive clear information about the targeting process, ensuring they understand decision-making at each stage and who is responsible for what?**

People complain about instances of fraud and favouritism at distribution sites and call for an increased presence, as well as checks and balances, from humanitarian organisations to ensure transparency, especially when community members are involved in distributions.

- Can humanitarian organisations cross-check information with the community (beyond community leaders) before conducting aid distributions to ensure accuracy and fairness?
- Can aid providers ensure community involvement in distribution monitoring to guarantee aid reaches the intended recipients?

### Humanitarian actors' dual impact on social cohesion

People identify humanitarian actors as key players in enhancing social cohesion within their community, with strong appreciation for sensitisation programmes that promote harmonious coexistence. But people also see aid providers as distorting community relations through unfair distributions of goods and services. When people are left uninformed about why certain individuals receive assistance, it can create the perception that aid allocation is completely arbitrary or influenced by favouritism, leading to strong feelings of injustice.

- Can humanitarian actors sustain programmes that foster social cohesion within communities across different demographic groups?
- Can aid providers include community representatives in discussions about selection criteria to ensure they align as much as possible with the values and norms of the community?

### People want to plan for their future

Most resources allocated to the response are primarily geared towards immediate life-saving assistance. However, people are expressing a need for longer-term solutions, as they seek to regain their autonomy. In some cases, people acknowledge that long-term solutions may not be feasible, especially in hard-to-reach areas, and consequently view regular and reliable assistance as a crucial means to better plan for the future.

- Can donors, aid and development actors better collaborate to plan area-based programmes that foster resilience?

Parents are deeply concerned for their children's future: access to education is their top priority. They see education as not only essential for building a promising future for children, but also for enhancing their current well-being by providing a safer and more structured environment. Numerous obstacles, notably school fees and the challenges of providing meals for children, hinder the pursuit of this goal.

- Can humanitarian organisations increase financial support to parents to address the challenges of paying school fees?
- Can aid providers further implement initiatives for nutritional support, such as school meals programmes, to guarantee children have access to food, thereby maximising their ability to learn?

### Participation beyond reactive feedback mechanisms

The vast majority of people we spoke to have never participated in decisions related to the aid they receive and are unsure about whether humanitarian actors act on their suggestions. Yet, they believe that their perspectives must be acknowledged in order for aid and services to reflect their experiences and to address their unique needs and priorities. Humanitarian actors revealed their challenges in aligning with community preferences, particularly when there are strong incentives to meet binding commitments to donors.

- Can humanitarian actors, together with donors, identify systems and processes that uphold flexibility and adaptability to ensure organisations can better align with community priorities and respond to their evolving needs?
- Can humanitarian organisations close the feedback loop by keeping communities informed about how their input is considered and informs programming?

People encounter challenges in sharing their opinions with humanitarian organisations as they do not know how to use feedback mechanisms. Reactive feedback mechanisms may also prove insufficient in situations where aid is sporadic, and the impact of feedback often goes unseen. People told us they value sustained two-way communication with humanitarian actors, through which they can share their perspectives but also ask questions and gain insight into the inner workings of humanitarian organisations.

- Can humanitarian organisations establish proactive feedback mechanisms that actively solicit the perspectives of affected people and create opportunities for two-way exchanges be promoted?

# Unmet needs exacerbate people's sense of insecurity

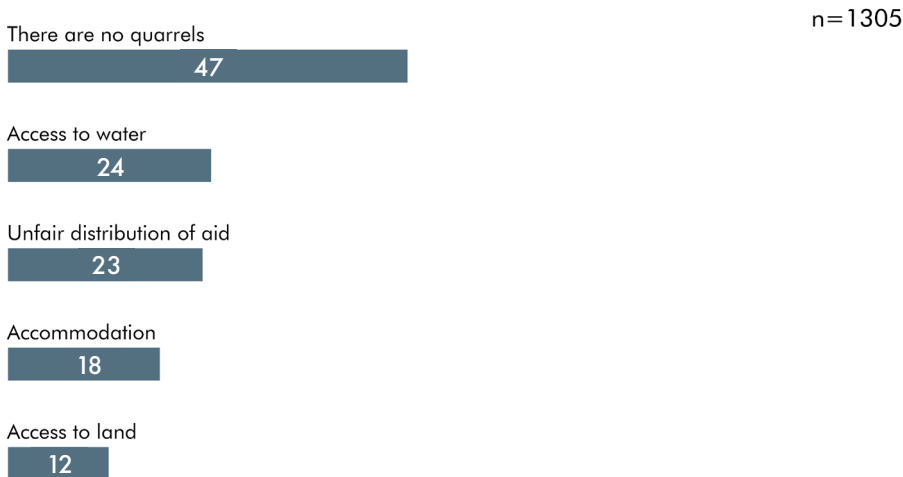
## Competition for resources leads to social upheavals

Recurrent tensions between the host community and IDPs surfaced as a key concern during the co-design activities held in Ouahigouya. Participants explained that the influx of IDPs into the commune added pressure on already scarce resources, namely firewood and water. Host community members described what they perceived as improper practices by certain displaced women, who were uprooting trees while collecting firewood. They saw such behaviour as a lack of consideration for the shared environment, prompting one woman from the host community to ask, “They’re going to return home, but how will we handle all this deforestation?” Displaced women highlighted their lack of alternatives: “We know that excessive logging is not good. But we have to do it. People should know we have no choice. What can we do without any money or gas?” The tensions can extend beyond mere disagreement, with displaced women reporting instances of violence, when their peers were chased away and injured by stone-throwing.

The concerns and severity of the tensions shared by participants prompted us to delve deeper into the issue of social cohesion in our survey. At a national level, the overall picture is more nuanced. Almost half of those surveyed felt that conflict between host and IDP communities does not exist. Many respondents attest to the strong solidarity and resilience displayed by people in the midst of the crisis. An internally displaced man in Ouahigouya noted, “We know there's no point in quarrels and disagreements, otherwise we'd be stuck fighting with those who chased us away, only to die in the end. So we stick together through good times and bad; we know the value of living together.”

However, as the accounts from Ouahigouya highlight, tensions can quickly escalate to alarming levels of violence, warranting serious attention. One of the most common perceived causes of disputes, along with unfair distribution of assistance (discussed more in detail in Section 3), is access to water, especially between the host community and IDPs. Despite organisations’ efforts to provide water points within IDP sites, these installations often fall short of meeting everyone’s needs. Consequently, IDPs often have to rely on water sources owned by host community members. In areas with water scarcity, crowded water points, coupled with women and girls traveling long distances and waiting in line for hours, escalate the potential for arguments. Data from REACH underscores this issue, revealing that 33% of households have reported a rise in tensions at water points, with 93% attributing these tensions to disputes between users.<sup>4</sup>

**What do you think is behind the quarrels between IDPs and the host community in your community?\***



“

We know that excessive logging is not good. But we have to do it. People should know we have no choice. What can we do without any money or gas?

– Internally displaced woman in Ouahigouya

“

We know there's no point in quarrels and disagreements, otherwise we'd be stuck fighting with those who chased us away, only to die in the end. So we stick together through good times and bad; we know the value of living together.

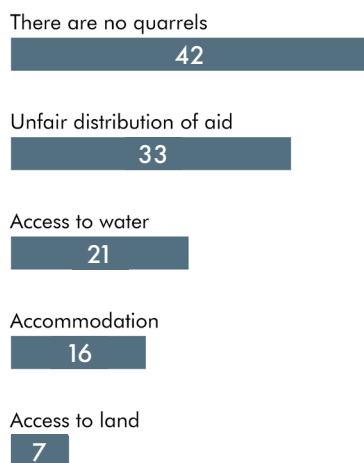
– Internally displaced man in Ouahigouya

<sup>4</sup> REACH. September 2023. “Burkina Faso – Evaluation Multisectorielle des Besoins (MSNA).”



## What do you think is behind the quarrels between IDPs in your community?\*

n=1305



Results in %

\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.

In certain cases, host community members look to assert their priority access to resources ahead of displaced people. A displaced woman in Ouahigouya expressed her frustration: **“We need water points nearby. We travel long distances to fetch water and the host community jumps ahead of us in the queue.”** Similarly, another displaced woman in Kaya highlighted her concern: **“We need a solution so we can have water after the rainy season. During the dry period, the host community would not allow us to access their water, and we couldn't complain because it wasn't ours.”** These challenges can force some women to venture out in the middle of the night to fetch water, when waiting times are shorter and interactions with host community members less likely. However, journeys to water points in the evenings expose them to greater risks of sexual and gender-based violence.<sup>5</sup>

The consequences of competition over resources show how security within communities is linked to peoples' ability to meet their most important needs. As discussed in the next section, this perspective is shared by the broader Burkinabe population. They perceive their safety not only in terms of protection from immediate physical harm, but also in the context of their psychological well-being and their ability to satisfy their fundamental needs.

## Safety beyond immediate physical wellbeing

Are there times during the day when you do not feel safe where you live?



mean=2.8, n=1304

Results in %

● I don't feel safe at all ● I don't really feel safe ● Neutral ● I feel mostly safe ● I feel very safe

More than half (53%) the people we spoke with do not feel safe in their day-to-day lives. Among the contributing factors, 42% of respondents point to the presence of armed groups and the threats of armed attacks. The fear experienced by people in the presence of armed groups goes beyond immediate concerns for physical security; it leaves a profound and lasting psychosocial impact on the community. A displaced woman in Dédougou noted, **“We are all constantly afraid because of the day we had to leave our homes. There were shots that still haunt us, even in our sleep.”** Similarly, many people shared experiences of severe trauma and how events from the past continue to disrupt their lives, manifesting through constant anxiety, difficulties with sleep, and lack of motivation.

“

We need a solution so we can have water after the rainy season. During the dry period, the host community would not allow us to access their water, and we couldn't complain because it wasn't ours.

– Internally displaced woman in Kaya

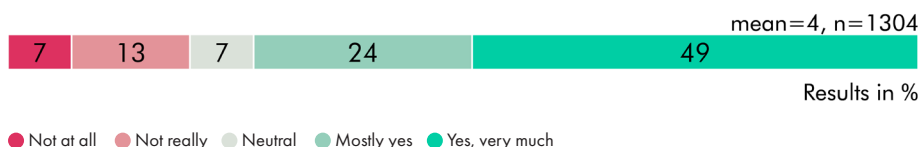
“

We are all constantly afraid because of the day we had to leave our homes. There were shots that still haunt us, even in our sleep.

– Internally displaced woman in Dédougou

<sup>5</sup> ICRC. October 2023. [“Burkina Faso: l'accès à la nourriture, à l'eau et la santé est un défi majeur.”](#)

## Do you think that you or your community need more psychological support?



● Not at all ● Not really ● Neutral ● Mostly yes ● Yes, very much

Affected people acknowledge the psychological toll the crisis has taken on their peers. One man from the host community in Ouahigouya remarked, **“One of my family members attended his brother's execution. Every time he hears a similar noise, he is troubled. People like that need psychological support to bring them back into balance.”** The majority share this perspective: 7 out of 10 people believe that either they or their community require increased psychological support. Co-design participants in Ouahigouya suggested that this support should take the form of consultations with specialists. More generally, they would encourage humanitarian actors to create spaces for people to talk about their traumatic experiences and to heal from the past.



One of my family members attended his brother's execution. Every time he hears a similar noise, he is troubled. People like that need psychological support to bring them back into balance.

– Man from the host community in Ouahigouya

## What are the main risks in your daily life?\*



\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.

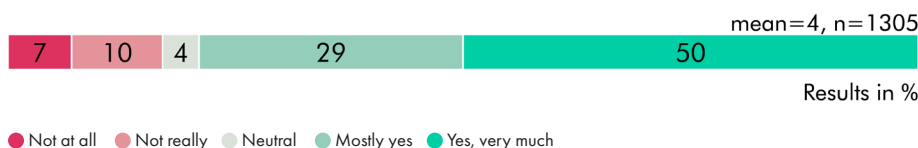
Besides the presence of armed groups, people also link their feelings of insecurity to the lack of basic infrastructure, such as safe shelter and adequate lighting. During co-design, displaced people highlighted the critical importance of shelters as the initial requirement to ensure their security upon arriving in a new village. While expressing regret that tents were not provided to everyone, they also noted the issue of their durability, especially during the rainy season. A displaced woman in Ouahigouya recounted a recent incident: **“The last time, the wind destroyed our tents and we were left in the rain.”** People also mentioned the fact that shelter without adequate lighting might expose them to more risks. In the 2023 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment carried out by REACH, 33% of households living in shelters identified torches and solar lamps as essential items they lacked that could help enhance their sense of safety.<sup>6</sup>



The last time, the wind destroyed our tents and we were left in the rain.

– Internally displaced woman in Ouahigouya

## Do you feel safe when accessing humanitarian assistance (whether on the way to or during distribution, or on the way home)?

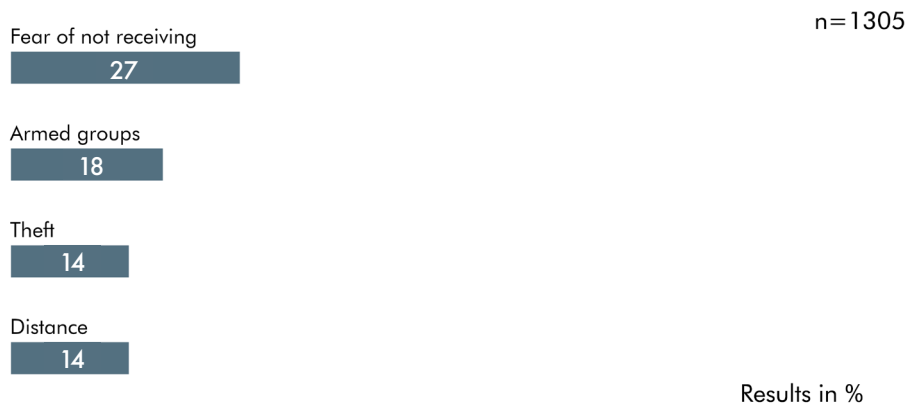


● Not at all ● Not really ● Neutral ● Mostly yes ● Yes, very much

<sup>6</sup> REACH. September 2023. [“Burkina Faso – Evaluation Multisectorielle des Besoins \(MSNA\).”](#)

In this highly insecure context, 8 out of 10 of people feel safe when accessing their humanitarian assistance. This reflects the positive outcomes of protection efforts and mainstreaming within the humanitarian response. However, when asked about the main risks associated with receiving assistance, the most common concern people voice is the fear of receiving insufficient or no aid. A displaced woman in Dédougou articulated this fear, saying, “I am not only afraid of insecurity due to attacks; my fear is primarily about food and health. If we run out of food, how will I survive? If either I or my child get sick, what will I do?”

### What are the main risks when accessing assistance?\*

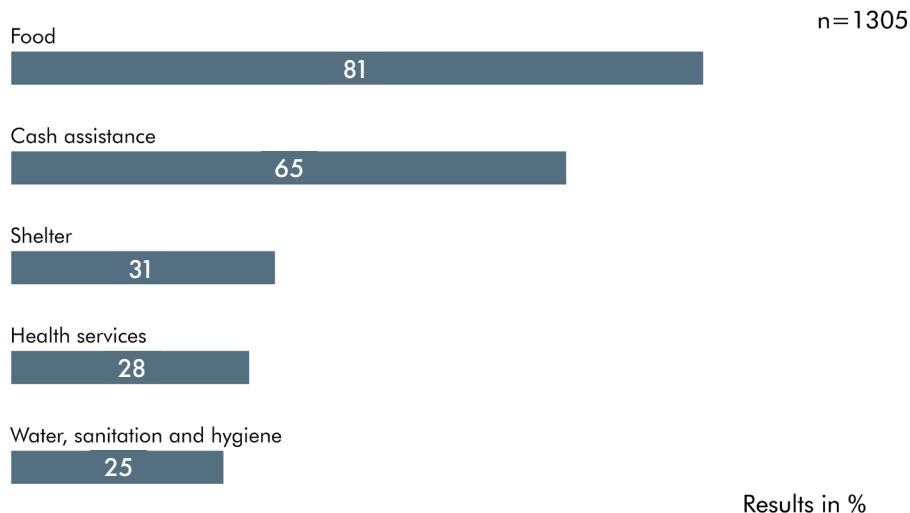


\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.

People’s sense of safety is closely tied to their ability to meet essential needs. Yet, the humanitarian response has faced severe underfunding over the years, securing only 30% of the total funds needed in 2023. With a current 80% deficit in funding of its food security programming, ensuring that basic needs are properly met is difficult.<sup>7</sup> In the evaluation of its strategic response plan, the World Food Programme, for instance, acknowledges having had to reduce ration sizes by half to ensure broader coverage.<sup>8</sup> People feel this strain and their most common response to the question of how humanitarian organisations could improve aid delivery is that aid, especially food, should be provided in larger quantities. A displaced man in Gorom-Gorom said, “The amount of food is very inadequate, just enough for a few days.” REACH data echoes these findings: 80% of the people who are dissatisfied with their assistance attribute their discontent to insufficient quantity.<sup>9</sup>

In a context of high inflation,<sup>10</sup> food and cash remain top priorities, as people see these goods as complementary. An internally displaced man in Kaya noted, “The food we receive is very good, but it is not enough for our day-to-day problems. Because we often have to pay rent and we don't have enough money, some often sell the food they receive.”

### What are your most important needs that are not being met?\*



\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.



I am not only afraid of insecurity due to attacks; my fear is primarily about food and health. If we run out of food, how will I survive? If either I or my child get sick, what will I do?

– Internally displaced woman in Ouahigouya



The amount of food is very inadequate, just enough for a few days.

– Internally displaced man in Gorom-Gorom



The food we receive is very good, but it is not enough for our day-to-day problems. Because we often have to pay rent and we don't have enough money, some often sell the food they receive.

– Internally displaced man in Kaya

<sup>7</sup> OCHA. August 2023. “Burkina Faso: HRP 2023 – Funding Overview as of 31 July 2023.”

<sup>8</sup> WFP. October 2023. “Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Burkina Faso.”

<sup>9</sup> REACH. September 2023. “Burkina Faso – Evaluation Multisectorielle des Besoins (MSNA).”

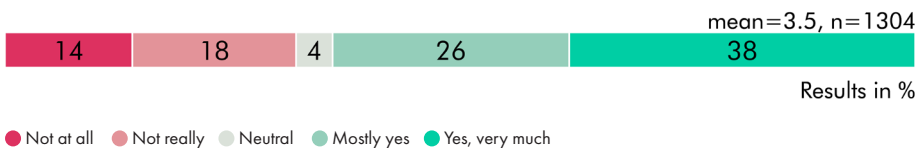
<sup>10</sup> CALP. July 2023. “Adapting Cash Programming to Inflation, Depreciation and Economic Volatility in Burkina Faso.”

## 02 People are not equally informed about humanitarian processes

### Insufficient information hinders efficient, dignified, and safe access to assistance

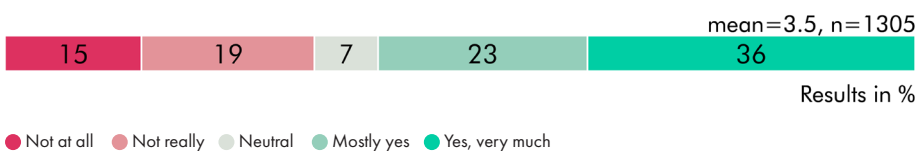
While the apprehension of individuals arriving at distribution sites is largely fuelled by insufficient aid supplies, the information gap experienced by aid recipients also contributes to their worries. Those who feel less informed about dates and times of activities tend to be those who worry about not receiving aid during distributions. In total, almost one-third of people (32%) do not feel adequately informed about scheduled distributions.

#### Do you feel informed about distribution dates and times?



Some people emphasise a need for clarity in how distributions are announced: at times, every resident of a locality is called upon on distribution days, although not everyone is on the recipient list. A displaced man in Dori expressed his frustrations, **“All we hear is that there's assistance available, and you can spend 14 days waiting from 5am to 6pm without any updates. If they had just let us know, those who weren't on the list wouldn't have wasted their time waiting with false hopes.”** Other people raise concerns about the undignified conditions at distributions sites, where they spend long hours waiting under the sun with their children, resulting in adverse effects on their health. The wait is psychologically draining as people do not know if it is even worth it. A displaced woman in Ouahigouya noted, **“You can spend the whole day in the sun and return empty-handed. You don't know if it's because your name wasn't on the list or because you didn't hear it. Those who call out the names don't speak loudly.”**

#### Do you feel informed about where and how to register for aid and services?



Information regarding registrations is also a source of concern. Although more than half (59%) of individuals feel adequately informed about the registration process, it is essential to bear in mind that our sample includes individuals who have already benefited from some form of humanitarian assistance over the previous six months and, for the most part, have successfully registered with the Action Sociale.<sup>11</sup> Supplementing what people told us, REACH findings underscore that 65% individuals who have never received assistance cite the lack of information about the registration process as the primary reason for their exclusion.<sup>12</sup>

Lack of clear information puts people at risk of exploitation. During co-design sessions in Ouahigouya, some people shared instances of imposters posing as humanitarian workers, conducting counterfeit registration and demanding money in return. A displaced man explained, **“People came to register displaced individuals in the name of [organisation name] for a fee between CFA 200 and CFA 500 per person. After people inquired with the organisation, the registration turned out to be false.”** Had the affected individuals been better informed about the legitimate registration processes, they would have been better equipped to avoid this type of deception. Such incidents are likely to erode trust in humanitarian actors and aid interventions.



All we hear is that there's assistance available, and you can spend 14 days waiting from 5am to 6pm without any updates. If they had just let us know, those who weren't on the list wouldn't have wasted their time waiting with false hopes.

– Internally displaced man in Dori



You can spend the whole day in the sun and return empty-handed. You don't know if it's because your name wasn't on the list or because you didn't hear it. Those who call out the names don't speak loudly.

– Internally displaced woman in Ouahigouya

<sup>11</sup> The Ministry for Humanitarian Action (Ministère de la Solidarité, de l'Action humanitaire, de la Réconciliation nationale, du Genre et de la Famille) is commonly referred to as “Action Sociale”.

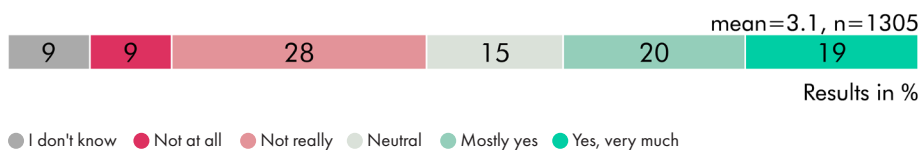
<sup>12</sup> REACH. September 2023. “Burkina Faso – Evaluation Multisectorielle des Besoins (MSNA).”

While most people we spoke to feel informed about how and where to register, this does not mean that the process is devoid of challenges. Some people mention having to endure long delays before registering with the Action Sociale: **“Please allow us to register. Each time we come, we wait until 4pm, only to be told to return tomorrow, because they have finished their day.”** Some women show concern regarding the prevalent practice of registering only the head of the household, who is typically a man. They warn that this approach can pose complications, especially when only original documents are accepted. An internally displaced woman in Ouahigouya pointed out, **“The registration process needs to be simplified. Some women only have photocopies of their husbands’ documents. As a result, when husbands are away, women are refused assistance because the original document is required.”**

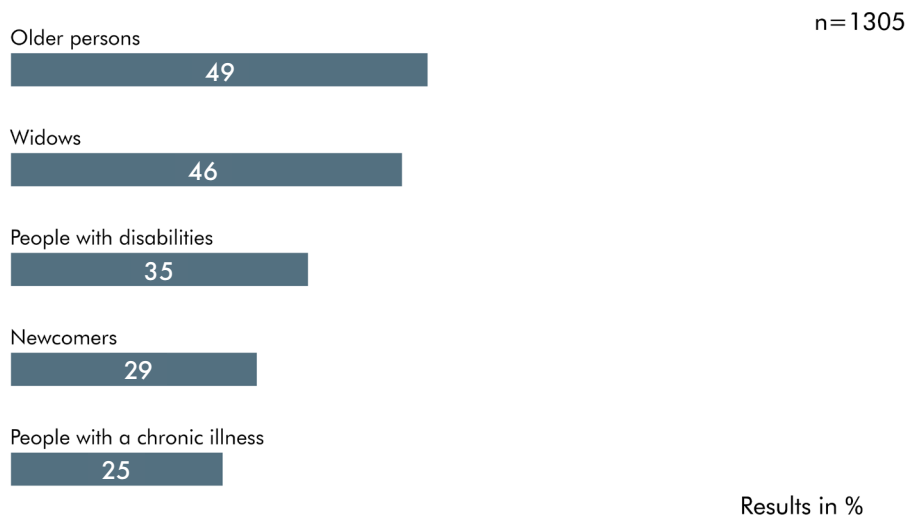
### Interplay between information and social exclusion

Only 39% of people we spoke to believe that aid reaches those who need it most, and people identified older persons and widows as the most neglected. Co-design participants attributed this exclusion to the challenges faced by these groups in obtaining information, which is mostly shared through informal means like word of mouth or community gatherings. Both older persons and widows are less likely to be integrated into these social networks. For older persons, this is primarily due to reduced mobility and their greater confinement to their homes. Widows face additional barriers. A woman from the host community explained, **“Most of them no longer have their husbands by their sides, while much of the information is often conveyed by men.”** While married women receive information through their husbands, widows are more likely to be left out because they lack a man who can access the networks and spaces where people exchange essential information.

### Do aid and services go to those who need them most?



### Which groups of people need aid the most but are left out?\*



\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.

While other people identify widows and older persons as left out, people with disabilities are the group that feels the least informed about assistance.<sup>13</sup> Forty four percent of people with disabilities do not feel informed about the registration process, compared with only one-third (32%) of people without. Similarly, more than half (55%) of people with disabilities feel insufficiently informed regarding distribution schedules, compared to one-third (31%) of those without disabilities.



People came to register displaced individuals in the name of [organisation name] for a fee between CFA 200 and CFA 500 per person. After people inquired with the organisation, the registration turned out to be false.

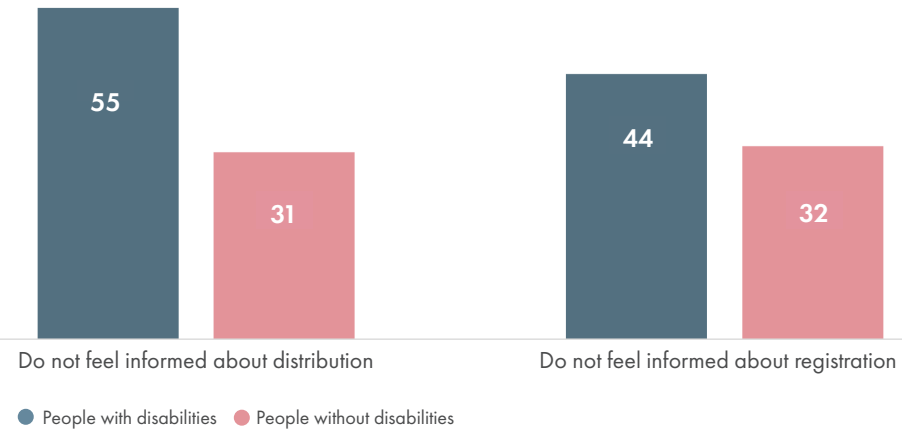
– Internally displaced man in Ouahigouya



Most of them no longer have their husbands by their sides, while much of the information is often conveyed by men.

– Woman from the host community in Ouahigouya

<sup>13</sup> Demographic groups compared include residency status, gender, age, and disability. We did not check for marital status.



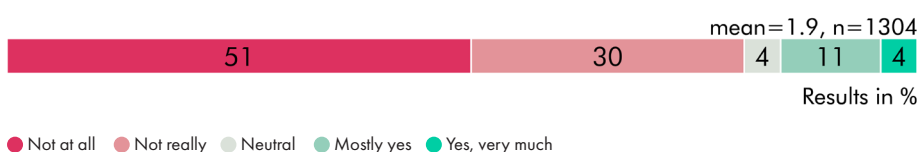
During qualitative interviews, we asked why people with disabilities might find it more challenging to access information about aid. Similarly to older persons and widows, the central issue seems to be reduced social interaction. Individuals with disabilities are often at a greater disadvantage due to limited mobility, which frequently results in exclusion from crucial social settings. An account from a displaced woman with disabilities in Ouahigouya illustrates this issue: **“I haven’t received any information since I arrived. I can’t see or hear very well. I am always at home.”** In addition, community stigma attached to people with disabilities can exacerbate their exclusion, as people – and notably leaders – might be less inclined to go out of their way to share information with them. A woman from the host community pointed this out: **“People with disabilities lack information because they are not considered; they are marginalised.”**

To avoid this exclusion, some interviewees stressed the importance of people with disabilities having their own representatives to maintain direct contact with humanitarian organisations. Others suggested that humanitarian actors pay closer attention to people with disabilities from the start of their interventions. A displaced woman said, **“When humanitarian workers arrive, they should inquire about individuals with disabilities. Once they are identified, the humanitarians should ensure they can access information.”**

### Opaque decision-making erodes trust

A staggering 81% of people do not know how humanitarian actors decide who receives assistance. Humanitarian organisations can be reluctant to disclose information regarding their selection criteria due to concerns that individuals might exploit their understanding of the system for personal gain. These concerns are not unfounded. Affected people themselves observe instances of information manipulation within their community. A displaced woman in Kaya explained, **“We notice that in Kaya, everyone has become an IDP. When people hear that aid is available, they rush to register, although they are not IDPs themselves.”** However, withholding information is not a viable solution. When people are left uninformed about why certain individuals receive assistance while others do not, it can create the perception that aid allocation is arbitrary or influenced by favouritism, leading to strong feelings of injustice, as discussed in [Section 3](#).

**Do you know how aid providers decide who receives aid and services and who does not?**



I haven’t received any information since I arrived. I can’t see or hear very well. I am always at home.

– Internally displaced woman in Ouahigouya



When humanitarian workers arrive, they should enquire about individuals with disabilities. Once they are identified, the humanitarians should ensure they can access information.

– Internally displaced woman in Ouahigouya



We notice that in Kaya, everyone has become an IDP. When people hear that aid is available, they rush to register, although they are not IDPs themselves.

– Internally displaced woman in Kaya

In addition to selection criteria, a source of much confusion seems to be the lack of transparency in the decision-making process between the initial registration phase and the compilation of the final recipient list. In Burkina Faso, the responsibility for registering IDPs and maintaining a national database falls under the purview of the Action Sociale. Some humanitarian actors explained to us that when NGOs plan their intervention, they provide specific assistance criteria to the Action Sociale, which then returns a list of pre-registered IDPs meeting these criteria. NGOs can conduct subsequent verification, such as on-site visits to pre-selected households, and additional inquiries to finalise the recipient list.

This multi-step selection process is intended to enhance coordination and avoid duplication between organisations. However, it can also lead to confusion and false hopes when not clearly explained to communities. One prevalent misconception is that registration automatically guarantees assistance. Many individuals express frustration about the fact that they have registered but still received nothing. A displaced woman in Titao pleaded, **“Please make sure that everyone who signs up has a food voucher, because we sign up but don’t receive any help.”** Meanwhile a displaced man in Ouahigouya said, **“If you're planning a distribution, you should come and count the exact number of people who will benefit. There's no point in counting 100 people if you're only going to help 20.”** These accounts highlight the importance of explaining not only how to register, but also the reasoning behind the registration process. Ultimately, it falls upon humanitarian actors to ensure that they do not create false hopes and that people grasp the underlying purpose of each interaction within the humanitarian system.

## Information needs to match reality

Even when information is effectively communicated to individuals, they may still feel uninformed if the information they receive does not match the reality they observe. One man’s experience in Ouahigouya was as follows: **“This organisation is supposed to select people based on vulnerability. Regrettably, it did not follow these criteria strictly – I witnessed this personally. During the distribution, a teacher was able to benefit from assistance and my protests made no difference.”** Echoing this, several participants in Ouahigouya mentioned cases of fraud occurring at distribution sites, where they witnessed the same individuals repeatedly receiving assistance, or the selection of people who did not meet the established vulnerability criteria. One host community member from Ouahigouya shared, **“Many [humanitarian actors] come and rush into things. But it's important to involve community leaders, traditional chiefs, neighbourhood representatives, and religious figures. They live with the people. If we involve them, the work will be better.”** This suggestion highlights the importance of humanitarian actors consistently involving the community in the review of the final list of recipients from the Action Sociale. Although the lists are valuable in reducing duplication, they should not obviate an organisation’s engagement with the community to identify vulnerable individuals and those most aligned with the selection criteria.

Beyond potential errors on recipient lists, people suspect favouritism when members of the community are responsible for distributions, instead of humanitarian actors. In Ouahigouya, a displaced woman warned, **“They need to change aid distributors because they always give to their personal contacts. Often, your name may be on the list, but you still won't receive any assistance.”** Others noted fraudulent behaviour in the absence of humanitarian actors: **“Humanitarian actors should oversee the distributions because distributors are not honest and often make us pay CFA 100 to access our rice bags”,** said a displaced man in Titao. To avoid these abuses of power, people call for an increased presence of humanitarian organisations during distributions to ensure a fair and transparent process. A displaced man in Dédougou advised, **“When aid arrives, serious monitors with moral integrity should ensure that goods and services are distributed to everyone fairly.”** People also emphasise the need for post-distribution follow-up to confirm that those on the recipient lists have received their entitled assistance.



**If you're planning a distribution, you should come and count the exact number of people who will benefit. There's no point in counting 100 people if you're only going to help 20.**

*– Internally displaced woman in Ouahigouya*



**Many [humanitarian actors] come and rush into things. But it's important to involve community leaders, traditional chiefs, neighbourhood representatives, and religious figures. They live with the people. If we involve them, the work will be better.**

*– Man from the host community in Ouahigouya*

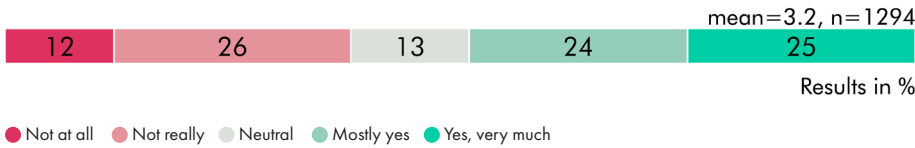


**Humanitarian actors should oversee the distributions because distributors are not honest and often make us pay CFA 100 to access our rice bags.**

*– Internally displaced man in Titao*

# 03 Humanitarian actors' dual impact on social cohesion

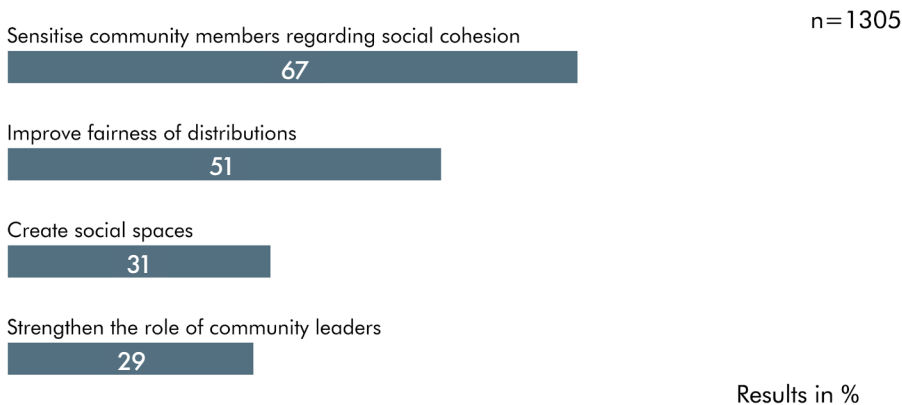
Are aid and services provided in a fair way in your community?



More than one-third (38%) of the people we spoke to think the current way aid is distributed is unfair. This is not to be taken lightly, as people (33%) think unfair distribution is the primary catalyst for tensions among IDPs. An internally displaced woman in Dédougou explained, **“We need a more appropriate system for distributing goods and services. Walking miles and miles for nothing while the same people always receive [...] this will eventually lead to revolts. Tensions are already high.”** Another man in Ouahigouya noted, **“Nothing can promote good relations here if aid is unfair. We're all IDPs, yet the same people – who are less needy – benefit every time; look at this and tell me if we can live on good terms in these conditions.”** These accounts highlight the importance of transparent and well-communicated decision-making about aid allocation. When people perceive assistance as arbitrary or biased, it is likely to breed frustration and resentment, creating fertile ground for conflict in an already tense environment.

Although a smaller proportion of respondents identify unfair assistance as a source of tension between the host community and IDPs (23%), it remains a noteworthy concern. Host community members often show strong solidarity with IDPs, but they also highlight the sacrifice they make in lending this assistance. For instance, a man in Ouahigouya recounted, **“We had a well drilled, and users were supposed to pay for it, but due to the massive arrival of IDPs, we were forced to suspend the charges so that IDPs could benefit from it for free.”** The direct impact of welcoming internally displaced people on the livelihoods of host community members can lead to a sense of injustice. Host community members emphasise that they too suffer from the impacts of the conflict, sometime just as much as internally displaced people. Yet, because they have not been forced to move, they are usually excluded from assistance. Some advocate for a more equitable distribution of aid. A woman from the host community in Kaya emphasised, **“There needs to be fairness because our fields have been turned into IDP sites. This makes us just as vulnerable as the IDPs. But when the aid arrives, we're not involved and that creates frustration.”**

What could humanitarian actors do to improve social cohesion in your community?\*



\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.

“We need a more appropriate system for distributing goods and services. Walking miles and miles for nothing while the same people always receive [...] this will eventually lead to revolts. Tensions are already high.”  
– Internally displaced woman in Dédougou

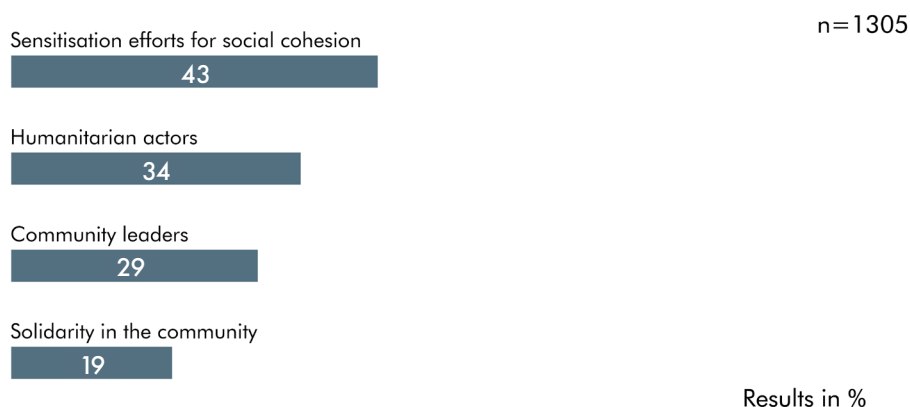
“There needs to be fairness because our fields have been turned into IDP sites. This makes us just as vulnerable as the IDPs. But when the aid arrives, we're not involved and that creates frustration.”  
– Woman from the host community in Kaya

“We must continue to support hosts who have IDPs in their care. It's not at all easy to take on someone you don't know just out of the kindness of your heart.”  
– Woman from the host community in Ouahigouya



Well aware of the impact that aid can have on their community, around (51%) of people recommend that humanitarian actors improve the fairness of aid distributions to bolster social cohesion. Fairness is a subjective concept, and its meaning is likely to change from one community to another. Although humanitarian actors often rely on vulnerability metrics to determine aid recipients, affected people may not always find these criteria meaningful, especially when they perceive their entire community to be facing severe hardship. Instead, some people prefer a more inclusive approach through which everyone receives assistance, even if it means receiving smaller quantities.<sup>14</sup> Because fairness has no universal understanding, including crisis-affected people in discussions surrounding selection criteria is imperative for programmes to align as much as possible with the values and norms of the community, and thereby ensure acceptance and effective assistance.

### What are the existing factors within your community that enhance social cohesion?\*



\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.

People can perceive assistance as a source of tension, but there is a widespread belief that humanitarian organisations play a key role in enhancing social cohesion. When asked about the factors that contribute to positive relationships in their community. In fact, more than two-thirds (67%) believe that humanitarian organisations can enhance social cohesion through sensitisation activities, which many have already encountered in various forms, ranging from one-on-one advice to community gatherings involving tea debates, theatre, and board games. Community members demonstrate high-level awareness and appreciation of these initiatives. A displaced woman in Djibo said, **“We are fortunate to have NGOs here promoting understanding through meetings and theatre.”**

Humanitarian actors and their efforts are widely acknowledged and valued by communities as elements that promote coexistence. Still, as discussed in the next section, the resilience of a community depends on its internal strengths, which people are eager to enhance as they aim for a future in which they can sustain themselves.

## 04 People want to plan for their future

**“May the help not make us slaves but assist us in rebuilding our lives and the future of our children”.** Like the displaced man in Dédougou who said this, almost all the people we spoke to (96%) expect humanitarian assistance to help them plan for their future. Yet only 18% of respondents believe it does. This is not surprising, considering that the majority of the resources allocated to the humanitarian response are mostly directed towards delivering life-saving assistance, prioritising those who have been recently displaced. While this assistance is undeniably crucial, people are ready for longer-term solutions.



We are fortunate to have NGOs here promoting understanding through meetings and theatre.

– Internally displaced woman in Djibo

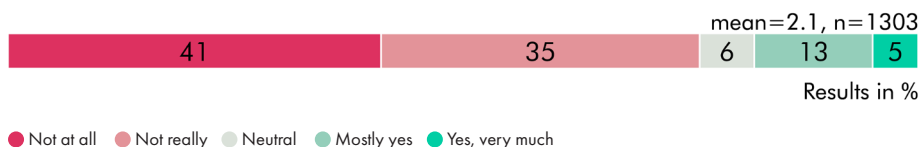


May the help not make us slaves but assist us in rebuilding our lives and the future of our children.

– Internally displaced man in Dédougou

<sup>14</sup> CALP. September 2023. [“Rethinking vulnerability, fairness, and CVA targeting – what if we let people decide?”](#)

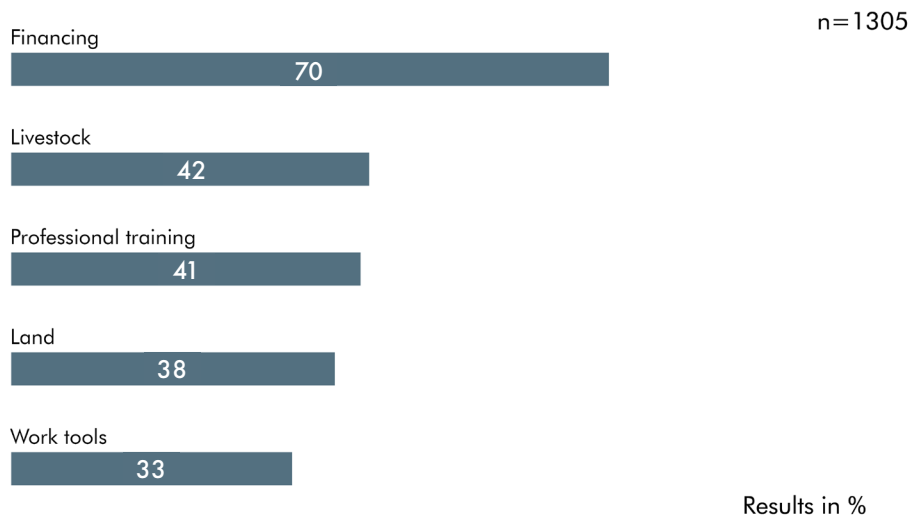
## Do you think the humanitarian goods and services in your community help you to make long-term plans?



Burkina Faso's volatile context poses great challenges for organisations to plan sustainable solutions in areas where attacks are hard to predict and can reverse progress. Yet, after almost five years of a crisis without signs of improvement, people are asking for solutions that not only address the immediate symptoms but also delve into its root causes. As expressed by a displaced woman in Fada N'Gourma, "Aid could be improved by investigating the root cause of poverty and providing solutions to this poverty." This can only be achieved if donors provide additional funding beyond immediate assistance, supporting initiatives that aim to achieve long-term development. While many development initiatives existed before the conflict, they have largely ceased, not only due to security obstacles but also as a result of scarcity and shifts in funding priorities.

Affected people actively seek ways to regain autonomy and turn to humanitarian actors for support. A man from Ouahigouya suggested, "Humanitarian organisations can help us become self-sufficient by supporting our initiatives. I am a labourer, and if I receive support for my project, I believe that within two-to-three years, I can be self-reliant." Like him, 70% of people believe that the most efficient way humanitarian actors can help them become autonomous is by financing their initiatives. Forty percent of people value the direct provision of livestock and access to workable land, as well as professional training, to establish small businesses.

## What would be most useful to you in becoming self-sufficient?\*



\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.

While humanitarian actors should encourage and support affected people in their efforts to regain autonomy, in some instances people note the limitations of achieving self-sufficiency. In Djibo, a commune enduring over a year of blockade by non-state armed groups, a displaced woman observed, "There are no income-generating activities that we can carry out here, so we need to think about financial support to meet at least some of our important expenses." In cities subject to blockades like Djibo, armed groups often restrict residents from engaging in farming and livestock grazing.<sup>15</sup> In such situations, helping people plan for the future may not entail creating new livelihood opportunities but rather ensuring the frequency and reliability of aid delivery. In hard-to-reach areas where markets are still functional, cash transfers can be a pertinent approach as they reduce logistical and operational barriers that contribute to the unpredictability of aid delivery.



Aid could be improved by investigating the root cause of poverty and providing solutions to this poverty.

– Internally displaced woman in Fada N'Gourma



What humanitarian organisations can do to benefit us is provide professional training in various trades. I believe that if everyone has a profession to practice, even if they earn as little as CFA 25 or 50, they could be self-reliant.

– Internally displaced woman in Ouahigouya

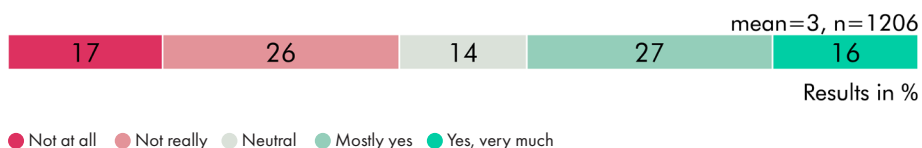
<sup>15</sup> Amnesty International. November 2023. "Death was slowly creeping on us": Living under siege in Burkina Faso."

While cash assistance is banned in the Sahel, 90% of people in Djibo identify it as one of their top three unmet needs. A displaced woman underscored, **“Stopping cash distribution has had a huge negative impact on us. They need to think about restarting it.”**

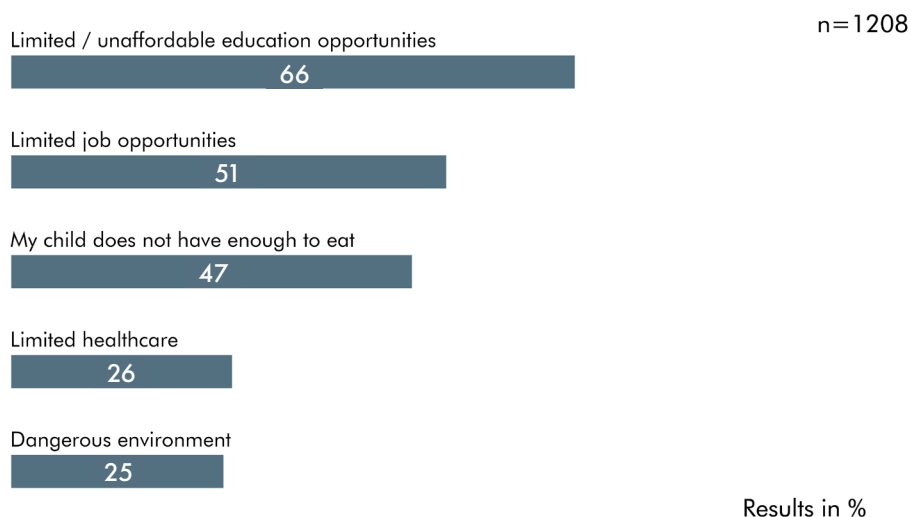
### Children’s futures are a priority

People’s desire for self-sufficiency is deeply intertwined with their determination to secure a better future for their children, a prospect that only 43% of parents are optimistic about. In our conversations with parents, 69% say humanitarian actors could assist them in better supporting their children by reinforcing parents’ livelihood opportunities. Additionally, 67% of parents express the need for assistance in securing their children’s access to education.

#### Are you optimistic about the future of your children?

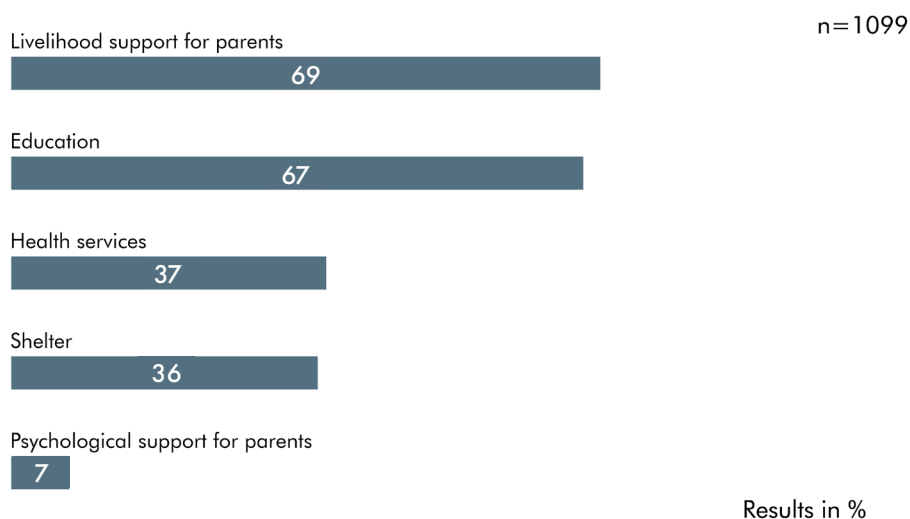


#### What are your main concerns about the future of your child or children?\*



\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.

#### What humanitarian support do you need, as parents, to deal with your concerns about your children?\*



\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.



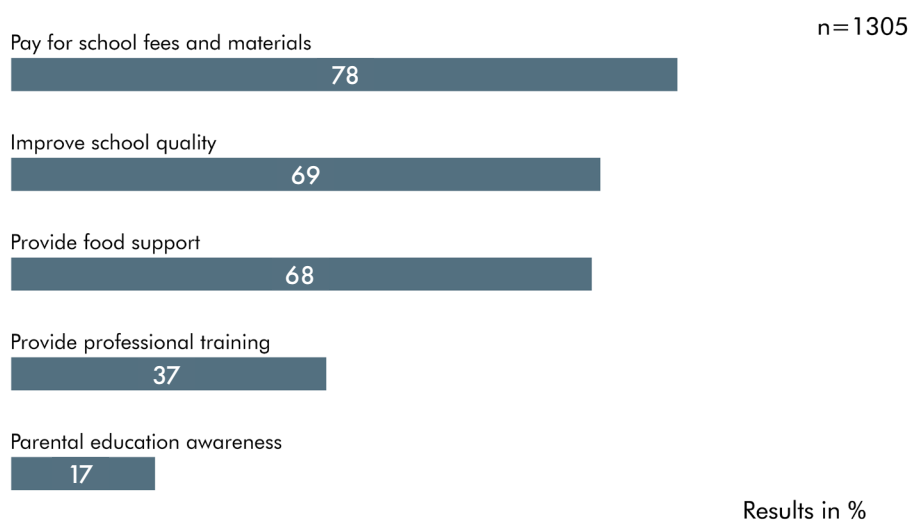
Stopping cash distribution has had a huge negative impact on us. They need to think about restarting it.

– Internally displaced woman in Djibo

People mention educational expenses as the first barrier to schooling. Our findings are consistent with REACH data, which highlights that 37% of parents are unable to enrol their children in school due to financial constraints, while 20% cite school fees as the primary factor behind their child dropping out.<sup>16</sup> Girls particularly fall victim to the pressure of unpaid fees, possibly because boys' education tends to be prioritised by families with limited resources.<sup>17</sup>

While parents see school fees as the primary obstacle, they perceive challenges to education as multifaceted. Their concerns encompass the quality of school teaching and infrastructure, which are affected by the crisis and attacks on educational institutions. Additionally, parents emphasise the importance of food for facilitating effective learning. As one displaced woman in Gorom-Gorom put it, **"We need to provide food to children so they can study effectively."** REACH data shows that 50% of parents with children attending school have received assistance from a food programme.<sup>18</sup> While this assistance is meaningful, it falls short of meeting the needs of Burkinabe children.

### What could humanitarian actors do today to support children's education in your community?\*



\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.

People are also concerned about their children's education because they perceive schools as providing children with a structured and safer environment. During the co-design session, some participants drew attention to the idea that children who abandon school are more likely to end up working in gold mines. Some people also raised the concern that children are more likely to be left unsupervised during school breaks, which can put them in danger. A displaced woman in Kaya expressed this sentiment: **"It is important to ensure help with our children's education. On the site, monitoring children is not as it was in our village, and we struggle to keep an eye on them and ensure their safety."**

To address this issue, some people, like a woman in Ouahigouya, suggest the creation of **"play spaces to prevent children from venturing into the wilderness during their holidays."** This echoes the findings of our recent study on the perceptions of young people, which highlighted the scarcity of play opportunities, especially for girls and older boys, despite their critical role in children's wellbeing.<sup>19</sup>



We need to provide food to children so they can study effectively.

– Internally displaced woman in Gorom-Gorom



It is important to ensure help with our children's education. On the site, monitoring children is not as it was in our village, and we struggle to keep an eye on them and ensure their safety.

– Internally displaced woman in Kaya

<sup>16</sup> REACH. September 2023. ["Burkina Faso – Evaluation Multisectorielle des Besoins \(MSNA\)."](#)

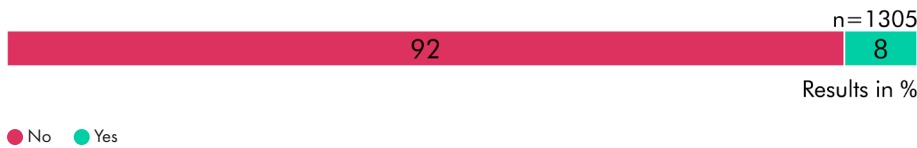
<sup>17</sup> Ground Truth Solutions. June 2023. ["Burkina Faso's youth speak up: Boys and girls share their needs and expectations of the humanitarian response."](#)

<sup>18</sup> REACH. September 2023. ["Burkina Faso – Evaluation Multisectorielle des Besoins \(MSNA\)."](#)

<sup>19</sup> Ground Truth Solutions. June 2023. ["Burkina Faso's youth speak up: Boys and girls share their needs and expectations of the humanitarian response."](#)

## 05 Participation beyond reactive feedback mechanisms

Have you participated in decisions, implementation, or monitoring of aid and services, or participated in any other way?



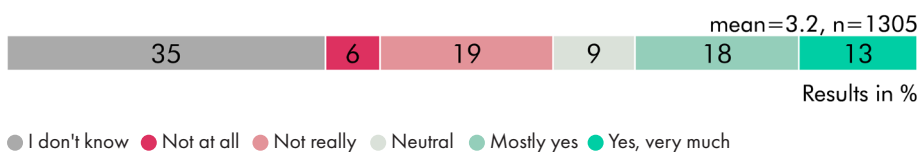
Is it important for you to be able to participate in decisions regarding the humanitarian aid and services you receive?



Including crisis-affected people – both adults and children – in decisions concerning their future is essential to creating sustainable solutions tailored to their needs and aspirations. Yet only 8% of the people we spoke to have ever participated in decisions regarding aid and services. This figure contrasts with the 87% of people who believe they should have a voice in the matter. People say that more engagement between aid recipients and humanitarian actors is needed to ensure that assistance truly recognises their realities and priorities. **“Humanitarian staff must always take our opinions into account before bringing assistance”**, affirmed a displaced woman in Barsalogho. As emphasised by a displaced woman in Kaya, regular consultations are essential because the needs of affected people are not static: **“Today, we may have a problem that will not necessarily remain in a few months. For example, currently, it’s raining and many people need shelters. But in a few months, this won’t be as much of a problem.”**

While many believe they can contribute to decision-making, they are not convinced that their opinions matter to humanitarian actors. Only one-third (33%) of the people we spoke to think that humanitarian organisations use community suggestions. Discussions with humanitarian field staff reveal challenges in aligning with community preferences, especially when strong incentives exist to meet binding commitments to donors. Maintaining flexibility and adaptability remains essential; otherwise, the act of consulting communities serves little purpose. Accountability goes beyond merely listening to people: it entails demonstrating how their voices are valued. Consultations are unlikely to be perceived as meaningful participation by crisis-affected people if they do not see tangible results from their input. Another concern is that 35% of people reply “I don’t know” when asked about the use of their community suggestions. This indicates that communities often do not receive any feedback about how their contributions are considered, and again underscores the need for improved communication about humanitarian processes with affected people, as discussed in [Section 2](#).

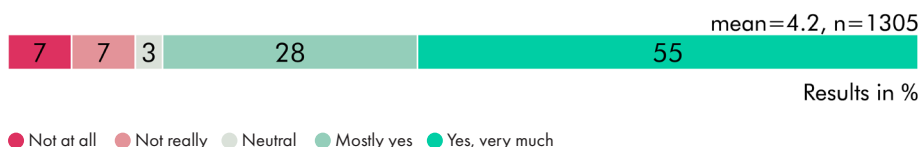
Do aid providers act on the suggestions your community shares?



Humanitarian staff must always take our opinions into account before bringing assistance.

– Internally displaced woman in Barsalogho

## Is it important to include children in decisions about humanitarian aid?



● Not at all ● Not really ● Neutral ● Mostly yes ● Yes, very much

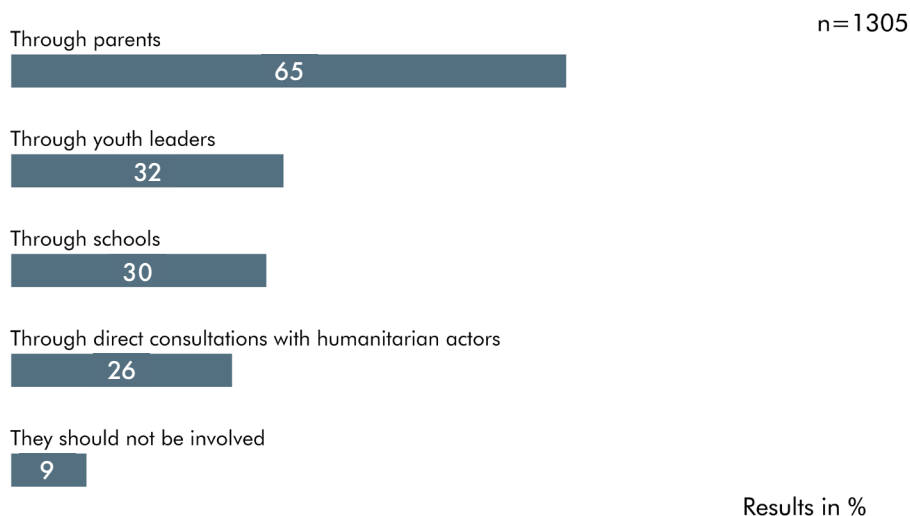
The overwhelming majority of respondents (88%) think that young people should also influence decisions regarding humanitarian aid. A displaced man in Dédougou noted, **“There are children in their teens who are already very responsible and aware of the essentials. I think we should include them in decisions about humanitarian aid.”** People commonly perceive parents as the most suitable intermediaries to relay children’s concerns and gather their suggestions, but also acknowledge youth leaders and schools as viable alternatives for including children in decision-making. Fewer people (26%) mention direct consultations with humanitarian actors as appropriate. Notably, those who identify parents as the most suitable intermediaries are less inclined to suggest direct consultations with humanitarian staff. Thus, while people recognise the value of young people’s voices, some parents may hesitate or be understandably sceptical about letting people from outside the community approach their children. This underscores the importance of establishing continuous engagement and trust-building with caregivers, even when aid is primarily intended for children. These findings also align with young people’s preferences. Our latest study on young people’s perceptions revealed that young people prefer to receive information and provide feedback about aid programming through members of their community, particularly their adult caregivers.<sup>20</sup>



There are children in their teens who are already very responsible and aware of the essentials. I think we should include them in decisions about humanitarian aid.

– Internally displaced man in Dédougou

## What is the best way for aid workers to involve children in decision-making about humanitarian aid?\*

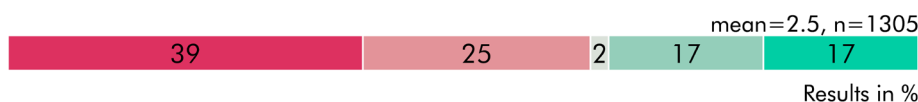


\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.

However, capturing children’s feedback through parents is unlikely to happen when only one-third of adults (34%) know how to share a suggestion or concern with aid providers. Primarily due to this information gap, a mere 22% of the people we spoke to have submitted a complaint or shared suggestions about aid. Among those who have offered feedback, only 37% received a response. Among those who have received a response to their feedback, only 20% express satisfaction with the answers provided. Thus, out of 1,305 people we spoke to, only 145 (11%) found existing feedback mechanisms satisfactory, casting doubts on their effectiveness and highlighting the need to broaden participation beyond reactive methods.

<sup>20</sup> Ground Truth Solutions. June 2023. [“Burkina Faso’s youth speak up: Boys and girls share their needs and expectations of the humanitarian response.”](#)

## Do you know how to share suggestions or concerns with aid providers?



● Not at all ● Not really ● Neutral ● Mostly yes ● Yes, very much

## Have you shared a suggestion or concern about aid and services?



● No ● Yes

## Did you receive a response to your suggestion or concern?



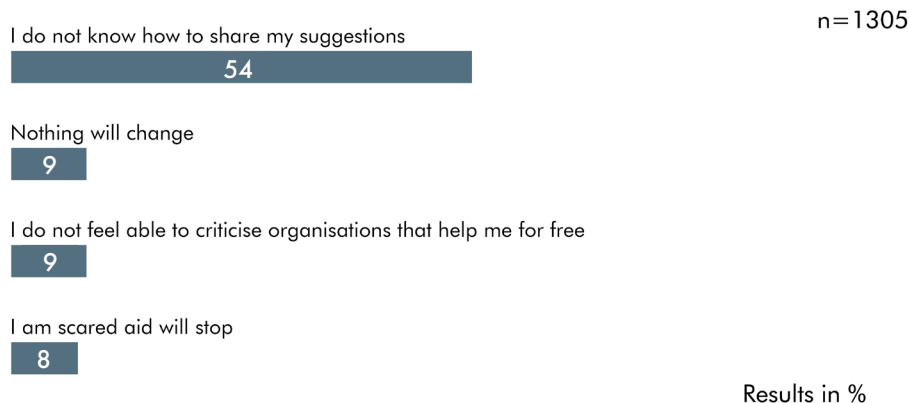
● Not at all ● Not really ● Neutral ● Mostly yes ● Yes, very much

## Are you satisfied with the response to your suggestion or concern?



● Not at all ● Not really ● Neutral ● Mostly yes ● Yes, very much

## Why do you not (or not always) share your suggestions?\*



\*Percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose multiple answer options.\*

While it is crucial to have reactive feedback mechanisms in place to allow community members to express their concerns promptly, it is equally essential to proactively complement them with meaningful exchanges. When looking back at their co-design experience, participants greatly valued having a space for two-way communication: one where they could share their opinions and also ask questions to better understand the inner workings of humanitarian organisations. **“The humanitarian workers explained how things work. We also explained what we experience on our sites, and I think this was constructive”**, shared an internally displaced woman. The repeated and in-depth consultations played a key role in enabling this dynamic. One participant underscored how sufficient time is needed to allow comprehensive exchanges of ideas and concerns: **“I believe that with the humanitarian workers, the discussion should not last just for a single day. It should last at least three days so that we can share everything we have to say.”**



I believe that with the humanitarian workers, the discussion should not last just for a single day. It should last at least three days so that we can share everything we have to say.

– Internally displaced woman in Ouahigouya

Having meaningful discussions about how people experience humanitarian aid is a process that takes time. It entails providing people with insight into humanitarian interventions and processes so they can express informed opinions. It also requires trust-building so people truly feel like they have the right to participate and share their concerns, a right that some participants thought they did not have. One host community member expressed this shift in perspective: **“Before the sessions, we believed that everything you are given, you should just accept and say nothing. But we learned that we can engage with humanitarian actors by saying, for example, ‘you give us this, but we want that.’ We didn't even think this was possible.”** Such engagement has the potential to create virtuous circles within communities: many participants told us that they shared what they learned with their peers. One participant from the host community shared how following the co-design sessions, he gained confidence and was able to speak up, ultimately intervening to assist internally displaced people in registering during a government-subsidised distribution. In emergency programming, the constraints on time and resources often limit in-depth community engagement. However, organisations could derive valuable insights through increased collaboration on best practices within the response. Establishing a robust community of practice, in which organisations share examples and guidelines for effective community engagement, could help replicate successful initiatives at lower cost, contributing to continuous improvement without compromising efficiency.



Before the sessions, we believed that everything you are given, you should just accept and say nothing. But we learned that we can engage with humanitarian actors by saying, for example, ‘you give us this, but we want that.’ We didn't even think this was possible.

– Man from the host community in Ouahigouya



# Methodology

## Qualitative methodology

This year, we piloted a new methodology for co-designing our survey tool with crisis-affected people. Our overarching goal was to place the perspectives of communities at the core of our research efforts from the start. In doing so, we refined our research tools, gained a deeper understanding of crucial issues from affected people's viewpoints, and ensured that our questionnaire effectively captured their concerns.

### Data collection partners

We partnered with two organisations based in Burkina Faso to facilitate our qualitative research.

- [GRET](#), an international solidarity organisation that aims to improve vulnerable populations' conditions, promote social justice, and conserve our planet, supported development of the co-design methodology, participant recruitment, and the facilitation of focus group discussions of our survey tools. Additionally, they organised and facilitated a presentation of our survey results that brought together humanitarian actors operating in Ouahigouya with co-design participants.
- [Fama Films](#), a Burkina Faso-based production company specialising in participatory media, facilitated the final stage of the co-design process, which involved conducting individual interviews to gain deeper insight into our findings and collect feedback on the co-design experience.

### Sample

We recruited 48 co-design participants in Ouahigouya through our partner Le GRET's operational presence. We organised participants into six groups, each comprising eight individuals split by gender and status. This division was deliberate, considering social dynamics, to establish a safe and inclusive environment that encouraged participants to freely share their views.

Status	Gender	Number of participants
Displaced person living in a camp	Women	8
	Men	8
Displaced person living outside a camp	Women	8
	Men	8
Host community member	Women	8
	Men	8

### Design

The co-design process was iterative, encompassing multiple activities between June 2023 and October 2023.

#### Activity 1: Reflection on Ground Truth Solutions survey themes

In June 2023, each group participated in two 3-hour sessions, conducted on two separate days. In these sessions, they discussed their understanding and prioritisation of the central themes of the Ground Truth Solutions survey, which includes aid quality, information-sharing, protection, fairness, participation, and resilience.

During the first session, we introduced participants to the purpose and objectives of the co-design process. Subsequently, they engaged in in-depth discussions about each survey theme, and articulated their own understanding and definition of these topics.

The second session concentrated on delving deeper into community-driven definitions. It explored topics of interest that emerged during the first session and required further discussion. We encouraged participants to identify any new themes that were missing, and to discuss which themes held particular importance to them.

The insight gathered from these two sessions led to an adaptation of the questionnaire, guided subsequent data analysis, and informed advocacy efforts.

### Activity 2: Result presentation and dialogue with the community

In October 2023, we invited co-design participants and humanitarian actors working in Ouahigouya to a restitution session, during which we presented the preliminary survey findings to them. This event served as a platform for participants to interact directly with humanitarian actors, allowing them to react to the findings, ask questions, and express their perspectives on various facets of humanitarian programming. In return, the humanitarian actors had the chance to respond to these inquiries and elucidate any constraints they faced in specific areas. This exchange of information and dialogue facilitated a better understanding of the perspectives and challenges on both sides.

### Activity 3: Individual interviews regarding survey results

The day following the restitution and dialogue session, we interviewed eight co-design participants individually to further discuss their perspectives on the survey results. To ensure a diversity of perspectives, we split the sample equally between men and women, as well as between displaced people and host community members.

Status	Gender	Number of participants
Displaced person	Women	2
	Men	2
Host community member	Women	2
	Men	2

In a semi-structured format, the interview questions centred on two main themes:

- 1) Resilience: this theme explored how participants envision their future, the role of humanitarian actors in supporting these visions, and the potential for collaborative initiatives between crisis-affected communities and humanitarian actors in the pursuit of these goals. It also addressed perceptions of how psychological support could enhance resilience and the appropriate forms for such support.
- 2) Two-way communication: this theme aimed to identify specific barriers to effective information exchange, explore the role of communities in improving information dissemination, and understand the factors contributing to limited information access for specific groups.

### Activity 4: Feedback on the co-design experience

The final activity involved collecting feedback from participants about their experience of the co-design process. Although this activity took place on the same day as activity 3, we conducted it with six distinct participants to ensure we did not take too much of people's time.

Status	Gender	Number of participants
Displaced person	Women	2
	Men	2
Host community member	Women	1
	Men	1

The format of this feedback gathering involved semi-structured interviews, in which we asked participants to share their thoughts on their participation, highlight positive and negative aspects, and provide suggestions for improvement. These interviews were filmed.

## Data analysis

We coded both focus group discussions and individual interviews with MAXQDA qualitative analysis software, utilising mixed inductive and deductive methods.

Concurrently with the analysis of the co-design activity, we conducted individual consultations with humanitarian actors in Burkina Faso to discuss initial results. This approach aimed to triangulate findings, enhance overall contextual understanding, and heighten awareness of operational challenges faced by humanitarian organisations operating in the field.

## Limitations

Budget and time constraints imposed certain limitations on our methodology in the following ways:

- We were only able to conduct qualitative activities in one commune within Burkina Faso. Consequently, the survey tools were informed by the perspective of this particular community. Although we ensured the survey questions could be applied across the country, the co-design process would have been enriched by incorporating viewpoints from diverse regions.
- Following the activity to review the Ground Truth Solutions survey with community members, we were not able to present and gather the feedback of the same participants regarding the final survey tools that we deployed at the national level.
- Feedback on the co-design process was restricted to just six participants, out of forty-eight, due to time and security constraints.

## Quantitative survey methodology

### Survey design

This survey targeted people with the following characteristics:

- Internally displaced persons and host community members;
- People who had received humanitarian assistance in the previous six months;
- People at least 18 years of age;
- Individuals living in communities, in temporary reception sites (planned and spontaneous sites), and collective centres (e.g. schools, public buildings).

### Sampling

Considering the diverse patterns of displacement experienced by the Burkinabe population across the country, we directed our sampling approach towards 13 communes. We selected these communes based on analysis of data provided by CONASUR, which indicated that they collectively accommodate over 85% of the total internally displaced population within the country. Our focus centred on communes in six key regions: Sahel, Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-Nord, Nord, Centre-Est, and Est.

This selection aligns with insight drawn from data provided by the Humanitarian Needs Assessment, the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan, and the presence of operational humanitarian organisations, collectively reflecting the areas where the majority of humanitarian efforts are concentrated.

In line with our approach in the previous survey round, we intended our survey sample to comprise 85% aid recipients among IDPs, and 15% aid recipients from the host community within each commune. Additionally, our objective was for at least 15% of the respondents per commune to be individuals with disabilities.

We determined the allocation of the sample size for both IDPs and the host community in each commune in proportion to the size of the IDP population, as per the available data from CONASUR. Although precise and exhaustive data on the number of aid recipients in the host community is not directly available, we used the number of IDPs as a proxy for estimating the scale of humanitarian activities in the area and, consequently, the number of aid recipients.

According to the CCCM Cluster, IDPs are settled either in temporary reception sites (referred to as SAT, both planned and spontaneous) and in reception zones (referred to as ZAD) or in the host communities and collective centres (e.g. schools, public buildings).<sup>21</sup>

To ensure correct representativeness of IDPs living in different facilities and locations, we further distributed the IDP sample into two subsamples:

- 1) IDPs living inside sites (i.e. SAT or ZAD);
- 2) IDPs living outside sites.

We allocated the IDP sample size based on the proportion of people living outside and inside the sites, using site profile data from the CCCM cluster.<sup>22</sup>

Since the sites (i.e. SAT and ZAD) are geographically localised, we were able to identify respondents from these samples using a random walk approach.

Locating respondents within the host community and IDPs living outside the sites posed a more complex challenge. We tasked data collectors with spending two days in the field to generate maps through survey CTO of the areas where IDPs were mostly concentrated. Within the provided areas, Ground Truth Solutions generated random GPS coordinates for each respondent, and instructed enumerators to conduct interviews at, or in close proximity to, these GPS coordinates.

The total planned sample size was 1,215 (with 1,035 IDPs and 180 host community members).

The allocation of sample sizes for men and women among IDPs adheres to the demographic data provided by CONASUR for the IDP population. In contrast, a 50–50 split was applied for the host community to ensure an even representation of both genders.

With some oversampling at some locations we interviewed 1,305 respondents (with 1,102 IDPs and 203 host community members).

## Data collection

Data was collected between July and August 2023 by our local research partner Nazan Consulting (based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso).

## Weighting

Given the sampling allocation based on probability proportional to size, we have incorporated design weights to compensate for the slight over and underrepresentation in certain designated locations. Subsequently, we adjusted the design-based weights to align with the age and disability percentages found in the demographic data sourced from CONASUR's records on IDPs and from the Humanitarian Response Plan 2023.

## Precision of estimates

To calculate margins of error per question we used the "Survey" R package (statistical software used in R programming), specifying our survey design and the raking adopted as specified above. Note that precision of our estimates varies from question to question, and sample size also varies per question (as some questions are follow-up questions asked to a subset of the total sample).

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<sup>21</sup> CCCM Cluster. September 2020. "[Types de sites et d'établissements similaires au Burkina Faso.](#)"

<sup>22</sup> CCCM Cluster. January 2023. "[OPSMAP Burkina Faso.](#)"

For questions asked to at least 90% of all respondents, margins of error range between 1.1% and 3.2% points for Likert questions and between 2.2% and 3.2% points for binary question.

### **Limitations**

Considering the security and access limitations within Djibo, a commune where a substantial portion of the area remains inaccessible, we had to revise our sampling strategy in the area. We identified the aid distribution site where Action Sociale operates and serves approximately 100 people daily. We carried out all interviews at this location.



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