Each year, Sida conducts a humanitarian allocation exercise in which a large part of its humanitarian budget is allocated to emergencies worldwide. The allocation and subsequent disbursement of funds takes place in the beginning of the year to ensure predictability for humanitarian organizations and to allow for best possible operational planning. In an effort to truly adhere to the humanitarian principles, Sida’s humanitarian assistance is grounded in the four humanitarian principles, and in particular impartiality, with its compelling urge to ensure that humanitarian action is carried out based on “needs alone”, giving priority to the “most urgent cases of distress”. Therefore, Sida’s allocation methodology is grounded in several objective indicators such as: the scale of humanitarian needs (number of people in need), the severity of humanitarian needs (including food insecurity/IPC levels), the number of people targeted for the humanitarian response, the financial coverage of the respective humanitarian appeal, national capacities to respond and underlying risks, as well as distinct indicators related to forgotten crises. Sida also strongly supports the humanitarian coordination structures. Besides this initial allocation, another part of the humanitarian budget is set aside as an emergency reserve for sudden onset emergencies and deteriorating humanitarian situations. This reserve allows Sida to quickly allocate funding to any humanitarian situation throughout the year, including additional funding to the Sahel.

For 2020, the Sahel crisis is allocated an initial (100,6 MSEK) between Mauretania, Burkina Faso and Mali. Close monitoring and analysis of the situation in the Sahel will continue throughout the year and will inform possible decisions on additional funding.

1. CRISIS OVERVIEW

1.1. Type of crisis

Conflict

- **Regional crisis (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger):** The security situation in the Northern and Central Mali is a growing concern and in the last year attention has been given to the increase in violence in the Liptako Gourma area; the border-areas between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Previous insurgency in this area has been seen as a spill-over conflict from Mali but is developing into a regional hot-spot. Conflict is spreading in parts of Mali, Burkina Faso and western Niger with a rapid increase in violence and insecurity, leading to displacements, limitations in food productions, serious protection concerns and a steep increase in humanitarian need. Armed groups are moving over borders and there has been a sharp increase in inter-communal tensions and conflicts. The underlying reasons are numerous but include historic competition over resources (water and land), increased pressure on natural resources (due to demographic growth and land and water degradation), the increased presence of armed groups, decreasing confidence in traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and lack of opportunities, especially for youth. Armed groups and criminal networks also control trans Sahara transit routes for arms, migrants and illicit drugs. The three countries are responding with their national armies but also in a collective effort since a few years, the G5 Sahel joint forces to combat terrorism and cross border trafficking (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauretania, Niger and Chad). There are also the Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), French Sahel operation Barkhane and other foreign forces present in the region.

- The people in the Sahel region are faced with multiple challenges such as extreme poverty, weak governance, unfavorable policy, rapid demographic growth, armed conflicts, climatic shocks, natural hazards, food and nutrition shortages, and increasing insecurity.

- In November 2019, 749 000 people were internally displaced in the region and 109 000 refugees were moving across the borders within the region (OCHA). Over 6 million people in the region needed support, figures that continue to increase.

**Trends:** Security has further deteriorated in the region with a trend of increasing incidents including civilians, increasing protection concerns and needs and large-scale displacement, challenging resilience of the populations including both displaced and host communities. The close-to absence of the state in the worst affected geographical areas makes violations continue in impunity. The high levels of insecurity affect agropastoral activities and lead to displacement and food insecurity. It is particularly difficult for the increasing number of displaced people to keep their livelihood; food assistance and livelihood support will be needed for the years to come. Schools and health centres are also affected and many closed, due to attacks or threats of attacks. Schools are used as shelter for IDPs or used by armed groups present in the area. Insecurity risks affecting traditional pastoralist migration movements occurring at the end of each year, as well as hinder access to natural resources. Additional forced displacements are expected as well as further reduction in the access to
basic services by the local population in conflict affected areas. The crisis is likely to have long-lasting effects on the population in the three countries and risks spreading to Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. The overall resilience of the population in the Sahel region is decreasing since several years due to years with extremely low rainfall (2011 and 2018) as well as increased violence. The need for humanitarian and development interventions will remain for years to come.

**Natural disaster**

- **Nature of disaster**: The Sahel has a climatic and geological specificity of being particularly prone to droughts and floods. Heavy rains in the semi-humid, tropical parts of the region as well as heavy rains that are concentrated during the months of July and August, result in flooding along the Senegal river, the Volta River and the Niger River. The population lives from pastoralism and agriculture, which is heavily dependent on the seasonal rains ranging from 4 to 1 month of rain per year (in the northern most inhabited areas of the Sahel). The nature of the rains, often being too heavy, or being late or early affects the harvests of the two main cultivated grains in the region, Millet and Sorghum. In the areas where the rainfalls are generally higher, rice and maize are also important crops but very sensitive to rainfall variations. The agricultural land is often along river basins, which also makes the harvests sensitive to flooding. Challenges are also serious for the population living mainly from pastoralism. High stocking densities and overgrazing are common, which affects the growth pattern of grasses. There is also a competition for land and water resources between pastoralist and agriculturalist populations that in the time of the seasonal migrations generate conflicts. Such conflicts have increased over the years, especially in central Mali, along with a decreased trust in traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution. Overall weak governance and state presence, lack of investments, poverty and lack of resources and services is the main underlying cause to vulnerability of the people in the Sahel.

- **Frequency**: The Sahel climate pattern has historically been shifting and the population has been experiencing regular food and nutrition crises over the past years. Climate chocks coupled with increased violence and insecurity contribute to increasingly recurrent severe food insecurity.

- **Resilience and coping mechanisms**: Local knowledge, diversification and migration strategies like the yearly transhumance make people survive in conditions that are very harsh. Remittances from family members working in other countries of the West Africa (ECOWAS) region or in Europe, USA or Gulf States is an important resilience mechanism for many households. Over the recent years, negative coping strategies, such as joining armed groups or criminal networks, have become more common. As the number of IDPs increase so is also the burden of host families (a large majority of IDPs are in host families) and there is a risk that the resilience and coping mechanisms of a much larger number of people is depleted; resulting in an increased risk of negative coping mechanisms of families.

### 1.2. Geographical areas and affected population

- The insecurity has dramatically increased in central Mali (Mopti region) that has been affected by intercommunity conflict and the expansion of armed groups leading to an increase in forced displacement. In Mali there are now over 187,000 people displaced, mainly in Mopti region, and 138,954 are refugees in neighbouring countries. The north of the country continues to be affected by the presence of armed groups and criminal networks (Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, Menaka). Overall, the food security and nutrition needs have not decreased in the northern areas while they have increased in the centre and it will be important to continue assistance in the north while scaling up in the centre of the country.

- The deterioration of security in Burkina Faso (mainly East, Central North, North, Sahel and Boucle du Mouhoun regions) led to a rapidly growing humanitarian crisis with over 480,000 people internally displaced by the end of 2019 and the spill over to Niger in the region of Tillabery and Tahoua. The region between the three countries (Liptako Gourma) is becoming a hotspot. Attention in this area also needs to be kept on migratory routes and protection and rescue needs of migrants and asylum seekers.

- Men and boys are affected directly by violence but the longer the crisis continues women and children are also increasingly vulnerable. Children are vulnerable not only due to displacement and recent increase in violence towards children, but also due to the closure of schools, which makes children more likely to be affected by recruitment, child marriage, sexual violence and even trafficking. Both schools and health centres have been closed due to attacks, lack of staff and use of schools as shelters for IDPs. Youth are vulnerable due to the lack of opportunities and are targeted for recruitment into various armed groups. Civilians in general are vulnerable to explosive ordinance, sexual violence, killings, arbitrary arrests and destruction of civilian property. The use of explosive devises is increasing and at many places affecting the civilian population, limiting freedom of
movement and increases the burden on weak health infrastructure. Tensions around natural resources, including water, between different groups, with an ethnic dimension, is on the increase and needs to be taken into consideration in humanitarian interventions. There is also a need to look at the needs of the population that are remaining in the areas most difficult to access (left behind when most of the population in those villages leave) and to improve inclusion of people living with disabilities.

1.3. Critical assumptions, risks and threats

- The rapidly deteriorating security environment continues to negatively impact communities’ livelihoods, employment opportunities and their access to markets, schools and health centers. Millions of people will continue to suffer from food insecurity and malnutrition while protection concerns increase.

- The Sahel crisis is exacerbated by the general low-level development/high poverty level in the region. Economic development is at risk of fuelling conflict related crisis, as the resources generated are not equitably distributed among the population. The weak presence of state actors in border areas and operational difficulties for humanitarian actors to access these areas hampers humanitarian efforts and leave people in need unserved. The system reform of the UN is both a risk and opportunity as development actors may become more active in working in conflict areas, but it is also a risk that humanitarian assistance will become more and more politicised which will seriously limit access to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance.

- Humanitarian access is increasingly threatened by insecurity and criminality, affecting the population at a large but also humanitarian staff and organizations. It is important to highlight the value of upholding and respecting the humanitarian principles as a basis for humanitarian response and access. Despite the importance of the humanitarian principles in the context of an increasingly militarized region, there is a limited understanding of the humanitarian mandate by many non-humanitarian actors active in the region. All humanitarian assistance needs to follow a principled approach and it is important to learn how humanitarian can link to peace and development actors without jeopardizing the distinct mandate of humanitarian action by maintaining a separation between mandates and functions of the various actors.

1.4. Strategic objectives and priorities of the Humanitarian Response Plans

- There will be no regional HRP 2020, but one for Niger, one for Burkina Faso and one for Mali (multi-year in Mali). Many humanitarian actors are increasingly discussing a regional approach and Sida follows closely the developments in the region, with a particular focus on increased insecurity, protection concerns and displacements and for the food security situation.

- More on each country in separate Sida HCA, Niger is also part of the Lake Chad Basin Crisis analysis.

- Mauritania is affected by chronic vulnerability, which is reflected in the high prevalence of neonatal and infant mortality, malnutrition, food insecurity and limited access to basic services. This vulnerability is compounded by shocks, which can quickly turn into a humanitarian crisis affecting a large part of the population. Poor agro-pastoral conditions and production deficits in 2019 will strongly affect the pastoral and agro-pastoral populations of the regions of Gorgol and Guidimakha. The poor 2019 rainy season in Mauritania has resulted in dramatic biomass and water deficits, which are extreme in some areas.

IN COUNTRY HUMANITARIAN CAPACITIES

2.1 National and local capacities and constraints

- In general, the capacity of respective Government to respond to the humanitarian needs is very low. The areas most affected by conflict are areas where the state have had little presence and access to basic social services and justice is very low. Government structures have been attacked and halted and are increasingly under threat. Much of the Governments resources are also used for military purposes to stop armed groups from expanding in the region.

- The capacity of local organisations and civil society will be discussed in each individual HCA. Due to access challenges, the humanitarian response is dependent on community acceptance and trust and local organisations are key in this strategy. There is a need to develop partnerships (and not only transfer risks) and build the capacity of local organisations with regards to a principled humanitarian response, especially in Burkina Faso where the work has been mainly development oriented until 2019.
2.2 International and regional capacities

- Important regional organisations are ECOWAS, ECOWAP, G5, CILSS and ALG. Several regional structures for development, security and humanitarian action are in place. All major UN agencies have a regional presence and programmes. Many INGOs are also present in the region and are increasingly looking at having strategies and approaches that cover Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, for the moment more with regards to learning from other than true cross border programming. Many INGO and UN organisations have their regional offices in Dakar.

- Sida, through its Regional Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, is supporting several regional programmes: this includes support to pastoralist civil society organisations and a joint UN programme for development in support of regional authority l’Autorité de Développement Intégré des États Membres du Liptako-Gourma (ALG) in support of UNs Integrated Sahel Strategy.

SIDA’s HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN

3.1. Response Priorities 2019

- Humanitarian Focus: The Sahel HCA serves as a general introduction to Sidas engagement in Central Sahel including a small amount to Mauretania. Under this wider introduction focusing on Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, individual HCA are developed; one on Mali and one on Burkina Faso. One HCA is also developed for Niger (part of both Central Sahel and Lake Chad Basin crises). Other humanitarian needs in other Sahel and West African countries, will be covered through Swedish core funding to UN agencies and/or the CERF. In the event of a rapid onset crises or an increase of humanitarian needs in the existing crises, Sida RRM (Rapid Response Mechanism) resources will be availed, as well as surge capacity humanitarian experts to the UN through MSB. Protection analysis, monitoring and needs will be highlighted in 2020. Protection, access and coordination will continue to be central to the Sida allocation in the Sahel. Sida monitors each partner’s adherence to gender marker codes, conflict sensitivity, resilience, and accountability as well as their capacity to contribute to the protection of people affected by the crisis irrespective of their sector-specific expertise.

- Field follow-up: The plan for 2020 are two in depth field visits with a combination of countries to ensure visits to Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali. Visits are to cover deeper understanding and advocacy on protection, monitoring of access and compliance with humanitarian principles and IHL. Both field visits are planned as joint field monitoring between Sida HUM and the SE Embassy. There will possibly be one visit to Mauretania to follow up on Sida’s support to the country during the year.

- In Mauretania, Sida will have a very limited support to two strategic partners as part of the initial allocation but will continue to closely monitor the situation, with a focus on food security and nutrition over the year with a potential to scale up support.

- AAH: The regions targeted by this project are the wilayas of Gorgol and Guidimakha, located in the south of the country. These regions are characterized by the presence of chronically poor populations with very high rates of food and nutrition insecurity. AAH will improve food and nutrition security by providing humanitarian and livestock assistance during the 2020 lean season to the populations most affected by rainfall deficits and low agro-pastoral production.

- SMR: The project will target the departments of Kobeni (Hodh el Gharbi) and Moudjéria (Tagant), both of which are experiencing high levels of food and nutrition insecurity situation. According to the 2019 SMART Survey, Kobeni (Hodh el Gharbi) and Moudjeria (Tagant) are among the 21 Moughataas in which the nutrition situation is critical. The geographical areas are also chosen due to the lack of intervening humanitarian actors in the regions. The aim of this project is to save lives and alleviate suffering by providing timely humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable households suffering from food insecurity, build local capacities and promote resilience among target communities in the Tagant and Hodh el Gharbi regions. The response focus is aligned with key strategic priorities of the national policy on food security and sustainable development, the priorities of the 2019 Food Security and Nutrition Response Plan and will be aligned with the response plan for 2020.
Recommended partner for Sida support | Sector/focus of work (incl. cross sectoral/ multipurpose programming) and response modalities (e.g. in-kind, services, CVP or a mix) | Proposed amount
--- | --- | ---
AAH | Mauretania | 4 000 000
SMR | Mauretania | 4 600 000
See separate HCA | Mali | 58 000 000
See separate HCA | Burkina Faso | 34 000 000
See separate HCA part of LCB crisis | Niger | 37 000 000

TOTAL: 100 600

3.2. **Synergies and Nexus**

- In cooperation with the Embassies in Mali and Burkina Faso and within respective development strategy, areas for nexus programming are discussed. When possible, Sida aims to ensure that development interventions are covering the conflict affected regions and the most vulnerable population. It is important that development gains are maintained as much as possible despite a deteriorating humanitarian situation.

- Within Sida’s development support, through the Regional Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, several regional programmes are supported that include countries that receive humanitarian assistance such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Sida is for example supporting a UN joint program for integrated development in Liptako-Gourma in support of the United Nations Integrated Sahel Strategy (UNISS) to improve living condition of the most vulnerable population in the region. The programme is implemented in close cooperation and in support of the regional authority l’Autorité de Développement Intégré des Etats Membres du Liptako-Gourma (ALG). Another regional contribution aims to promote peaceful coexistence between livestock, agro-pastoralist and agricultural farmers in the Western Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, but also Benin and Togo) and to strengthen consensus on how limited natural resources such as water, land and grazing can benefit all groups and how conflicts around them can be prevented and resolved. There is an on-going discussion and analysis of the situation and identification of potential links between humanitarian and development programmes in the region between colleagues in Stockholm and Embassies. This analysis will be strengthened during the year to identify opportunities but also risks based on very contextualised information and experiences by partners active in delivering humanitarian response. The Global strategy for peace and security also supports initiatives implemented by partners in the region.