



# Joint News Release

## **FUNDS URGENTLY NEEDED TO CONTINUE PROVIDING VITAL ASSISTANCE TO MALIAN REFUGEES**

**DAKAR, March 4, 2014** – Humanitarian assistance provided to some 167,000 Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger since 2012 has significantly improved living conditions in camps and has had a major impact on children's health. Without additional financial support, however, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) fear that the progress made last year may be lost.

Donor contributions played a key role in improving the living conditions of refugees, with significant progress seen in the areas of protection, food security, nutrition, shelter, water, sanitation, education and health in 2013.

Food rations have been distributed regularly to the 33,800 Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, 68,000 refugees in Mauritania and 50,000 refugees in Niger throughout 2013.

"Our collective efforts have saved the lives of many refugee children. However, without regular assistance, malnutrition can quickly wreak havoc on these extremely vulnerable families and can seriously compromise a child's physical and mental development," said Denise Brown, WFP Regional Director for West Africa.

In Mauritania, global acute malnutrition (GAM) rates in Mbera camp have declined significantly, from 20 percent in 2012 to 11.8 per cent in 2013. In Burkina Faso's Goudoubo camp, GAM rates have also decreased, from a critical 24.5 percent in 2012/2013 to 12 percent at the end of 2013. Refugee families are increasingly transitioning from a situation of severe food insecurity to moderate food insecurity.

While malnutrition rates have improved in both countries, they remain above the 10 percent alert threshold set by the World Health Organization (WHO). In Niger, surveys undertaken since 2012 in all refugee camps show that GAM rates among children under the age of five—which have at times been above the emergency threshold—have been significantly reduced.

“We are urgently calling on donors to help us continue to feed and provide shelter to these refugees, in addition to allowing their children to keep going to school in our camps and providing them with access to basic health services,” explained UNHCR regional coordinator for the Mali crisis Valentin Tapsoba.

“The Malian refugees are being forgotten as humanitarian crises unfold elsewhere in the world,” he added.

Refugees have been slow to return to Mali; while the Malian Government had registered 19,240 returnees as of February 15, UNHCR in countries of asylum can confirm that 7,143 refugees have departed camps and settlements. However, at this point, most refugees have chosen to stay in UNHCR run-camps, spontaneous settlements, or in urban settings in neighboring countries.

UNHCR and WFP need US\$130 million and US\$36 million, respectively, to assist Malian refugees and internally displaced people in Mali this year.

To date, UNHCR has only received US\$ 9.2 million for 2014, while WFP has received US\$4 million.

In 2013, UNHCR received US\$101 million - or 70 percent of its funding requirements – while WFP received US\$26 million – or 46 percent of its funding requirements.

**Contacts:**

*WFP: Elisabeth Byrs, WFP/Geneva, Elisabeth.Byrs@wfp.org tel: +41 22 917 8564, Mob. +41 79 473 4570*

*UNHCR: H el ene Caux, Senior Regional Public Information Officer, UNHCR Dakar, caux@unhcr.org, Mob: + 221 77 333 1291*