

## Regional summary 1/2

## Context

Insecurity continues to severely impact the fragile protection environment of many communities in the Central Sahel and the Lac Province in Chad. Armed violence and attacks against civilians by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) expose communities to numerous protection risks and are the primary cause of forced population movements. The impact on vulnerable communities and their livelihoods is often catastrophic.

Conflicts and violence have also become the main drivers of needs and food insecurity. The vast majority of families, nearly 100% in the most affected communities, consider food as a top priority need. The locations worst affected by food insecurity, with populations in Phase 4 (emergency) according to the latest Cadre Harmonise, also have the highest risks of protection-related issues such as Gender-Based Violence (GBV), movement restrictions, difficulties in accessing education for children, and difficulties in accessing land. The food crisis exacerbates the protection crisis, and many families are forced to resort to negative coping strategies to survive and deal with food shortages, including children dropping out of school, child marriages, begging, theft, prostitution, and sexual exploitation, as well as reducing healthcare expenses.

Difficulties in accessing affected communities, security threats, movement restrictions, and insufficient access to services have increased since January 2023, and they are likely to exacerbate protection risks, especially during the upcoming lean season.

In eastern Chad, the crisis in Sudan has rapidly increased the already high number of displaced persons in the region. Within the first four weeks following the start of the crisis on 15 April 2023, approximately 90,000 refugees and returnees had already fled to Chad. Project 21 was able to establish protection monitoring mechanism at the onset of the crisis and has been collecting priority protection data from newly displaced households since the end of April.

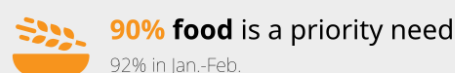
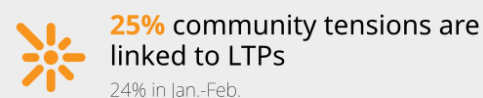
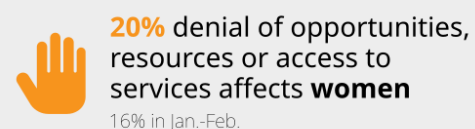
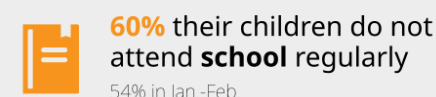
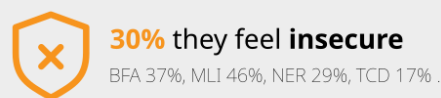
## Protection situation

March-April 2023, two main protection concerns persist:

- Intensification of activities by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) and military operations against armed groups, mainly in Mali and Burkina Faso, contribute to cross-border population movements, the expansion of violence into previously calm areas, and an increase in incidents of theft/looting and assaults/injuries. Women and children continue to be affected by protection risks, including abduction, rape, violations of liberties, property, and life.
- Food remains the primary priority need in a region where livelihoods are impacted by conflict and security risks. The communities most affected by food insecurity are also those experiencing a more severe security and protection crisis, as demonstrated by the Cadre Harmonise projections.

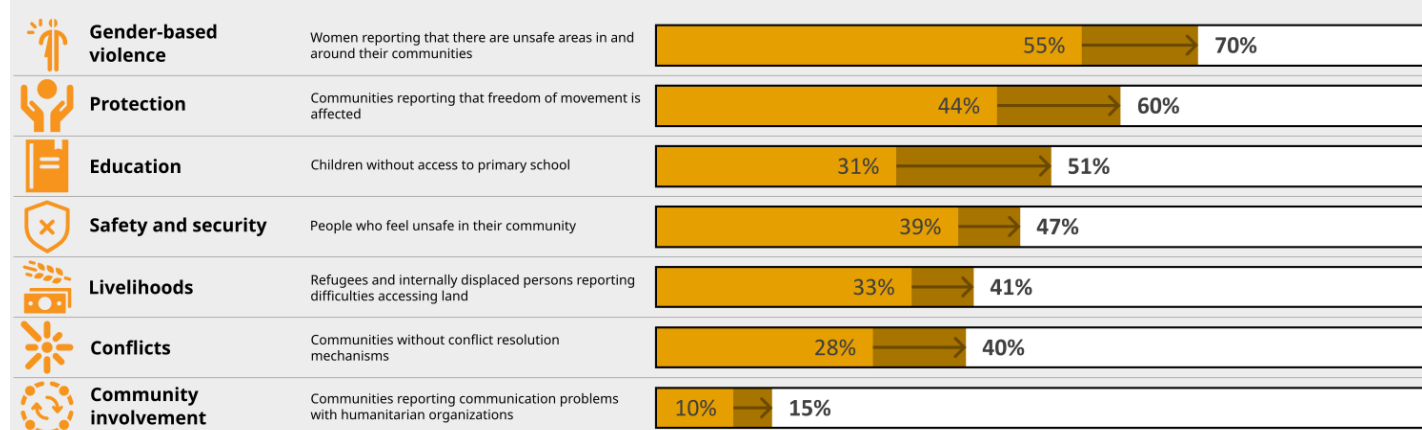
## Key figures

Rate of respondents stating that:



## Key protection indicators

in **communities most affected by food insecurity** compared to the **average situation** in regions affected by the crisis



## Regional summary 2/2

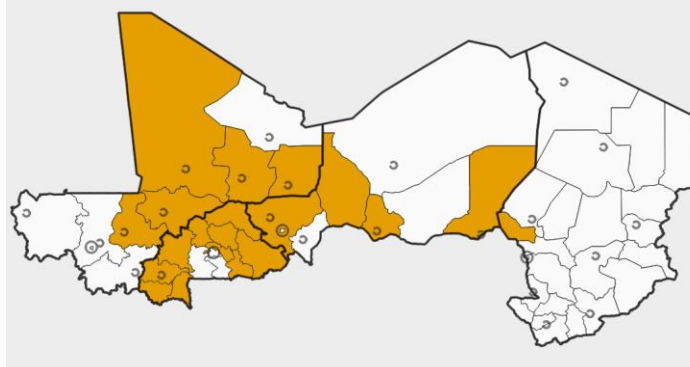
## Key Highlights (March-April 2023)

- The activities of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) remain the primary cause of displacement in the region.
- The crisis in Sudan is affecting the eastern region of Chad, causing an increasingly large number of refugees in a fragile protection environment, exposed to protection risks such as illegal detention and lack of access to documentation. Between March and April, 46% of respondents reported that the main reasons for not possessing birth certificates for children in the Lac Province were the distance from the civil registry office, lack of knowledge about birth registration procedures, and the closure of civil registration offices.
- Movement restrictions, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) activities particularly affect access to basic social services in a context where humanitarian access constraints and blockaded zones are observed in Burkina Faso and Mali. Between April and March, access to clean water became more restricted (45%), compared to January-February 2023 (35%). According to 65% of key informants, the main sources of access to water for communities are public (boreholes, wells, rivers, lakes, etc.), and the population, in light of the security situation, is exposed to protection risks related to access to water.
- Gender-Based Violence (GBV) continues to be significantly reported in the region. In Niger, in March, 23% of respondents indicated being aware of cases of rape within their community (20% in January, 19% in February). The increasing stress within households due to food insecurity, as well as the adoption of negative coping mechanisms (early marriage, engaging in sexual activities in exchange for food), continue to contribute to an increase in GBV. This situation is exacerbated by socio-cultural norms that are unfavorable to women and girls, preventing them from reporting violations and accessing basic services, despite the existence of policies and legislation.
- In over 60% of households, children do not attend school regularly (54% in January-February). At the same time, violations of children's rights, such as abduction/kidnapping, child marriage, child labor, and exploitation, remain serious risks to child protection.
- Food remains the top priority need for communities.

## Project 21 (P21)

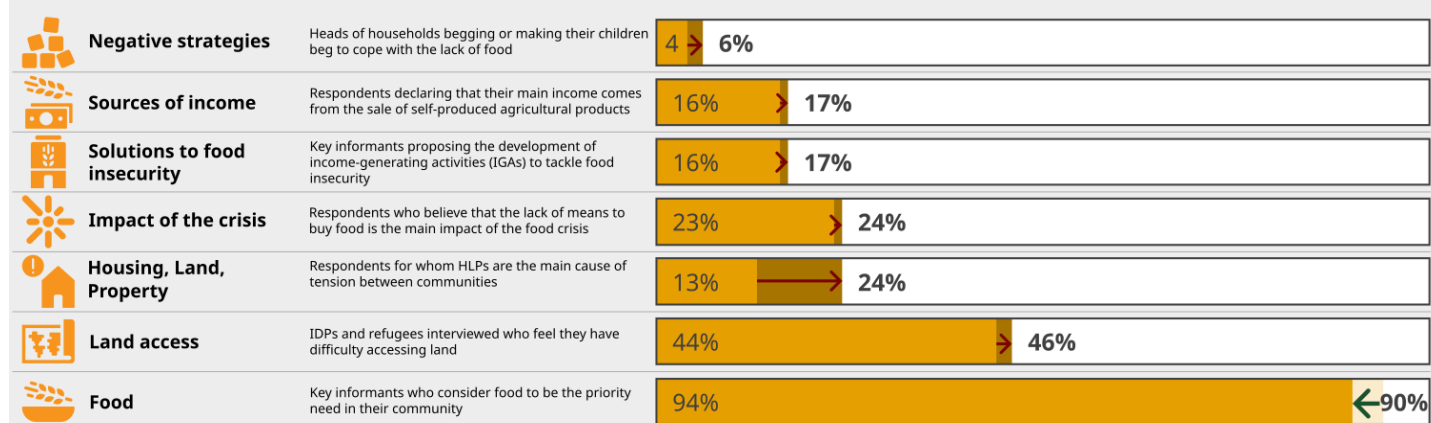
Project 21 is a harmonized, inter-agency, and multi-country Protection Monitoring tool ecosystem designed to regularly analyze the protection situation and risks in four Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and the Lake Chad region. Data collection from affected communities is carried out through interviews with key informants and heads of household among displaced populations and host communities. Data is collected monthly in villages by protection monitors and via phone in physically inaccessible areas. In 2022, P21 monitors conducted nearly **15,000 interviews** in **2,400 communes** across the region. The analysis for the period covered by this report is based on a total of **2,445 interviews** conducted between **March and April 2023** in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad (Lac Province).

## Coverage P21 | 2022 - 2023



## Key indicators on protection and food security

March-April 2023 compared to March-April 2022



## Burkina Faso

### Conflict dynamics

- Following the recruitment of 90,000 Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie - VDP), Burkina Faso continues its massive mobilization of forces to fight armed groups. The declaration of a state of emergency in 22 provinces, spanning 8 out of the country's 13 regions, as well as the general mobilization decree issued on 19 April 2023, pose additional threats to the protection environment of civilian populations if their implementation does not strictly adhere to human rights standards. The decree grants Burkinabe authorities the right to mobilize civilians within the Defense and Security Forces (FDS), their resources, and their assets to address the needs generated by the intensified "reconquest and securing of the territory" operations. Such a decree also carries additional risks of cross-border displacement, particularly towards coastal countries, for civilians who do not wish to be enlisted.
- During the reporting period, discrimination, stigmatization, and illegal impediments or restrictions on freedom of movement continue to represent contextual protection threats. As of March 2023, the number of registered internally displaced persons had exceeded 2,000,000, according to Burkina Faso's National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation (CONASUR).
  - Forced displacements continue to put pressure on the country's major urban centers, where essential public services were already insufficient, and disrupt the livelihoods of displaced households and host communities. This phenomenon of "uncontrolled urbanization" could further deteriorate social cohesion.
  - Between 20 and 23 April 2023, 220 civilians lost their lives in the northern region in an attack carried out by "men dressed in Burkinabe military uniforms", along with an airstrike. These events demonstrate an atmosphere of widespread mistrust and even intercommunity suspicion. The occurrence of "blind" and/or "indiscriminate" attacks in the coming months is likely to intensify resentment between communities.

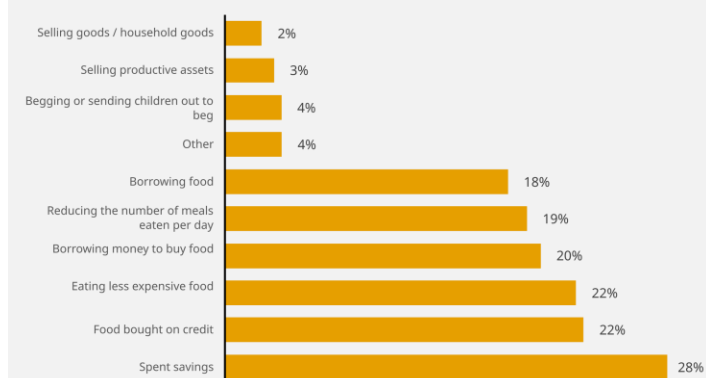
### Impact of protection incidents

Food insecurity is one of the principal impacts of the conflict on the surveyed displaced and host communities. From March to April 2023, the majority of respondents indicate that the lack of means to purchase food is the major impact of the crisis on their livelihoods. Households are forced to adopt harmful coping strategies in a context where Burkina Faso now has six regions with "enclaves" and 26 localities referred to as "enclaved areas", where: (i) civilian populations cannot move freely; (ii) traders cannot move freely; (iii) the parties to the conflict have demonstrated their clear intention to prevent civilian populations from moving freely.

#### Behaviours adopted in response to lack of food or lack of money to buy food

BFA | March - April 2023

% of behaviour notifications



### Main incidents and threats

186 protection incidents were documented between March and April 2023, affecting 208 civilians. These protection incidents can be attributed to five main threats: (i) attacks against civilians and civilian property; (ii) abductions, kidnappings, forced disappearances, arbitrary and/or illegal arrests and/or detentions; (iii) theft, extortion, forced evictions, and/or destruction of personal property; (iv) gender-based violence; (v) child marriages, early marriages, and/or forced marriages.

### Response, access to services

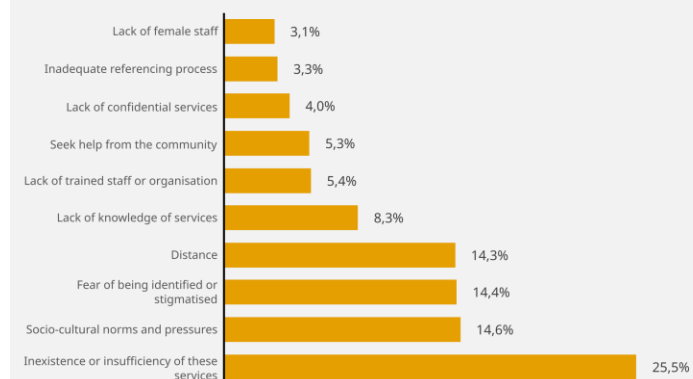
50% of respondents indicate that they have the capacity to accommodate new people within their community. However, the host capacity and solidarity of communities are diminishing due to the structural consequences of the conflict on the Burkinabe economy. In this context, it is important to further support host capacities, which also includes growing needs for shelter and essential household items.

It is necessary to better identify the response capacities of communities, and support and strengthen them, particularly mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, and peaceful resolution. As the conflict intensifies and resources for response do not increase, it is crucial to support community mechanisms that are sometimes preferred by at-risk individuals and survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), due to the lack of specialized and confidential services.

Response capacities remain largely insufficient in the protection sector, particularly due to increasing access constraints and the temporary suspension of assistance modalities through cash transfers in the two main regions hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Center-North, Sahel). Project 21 is aiming to address these challenges, particularly by building the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) that continue to have access within their communities.

#### Main reasons for lack of access to support services | BFA | March - April 2023

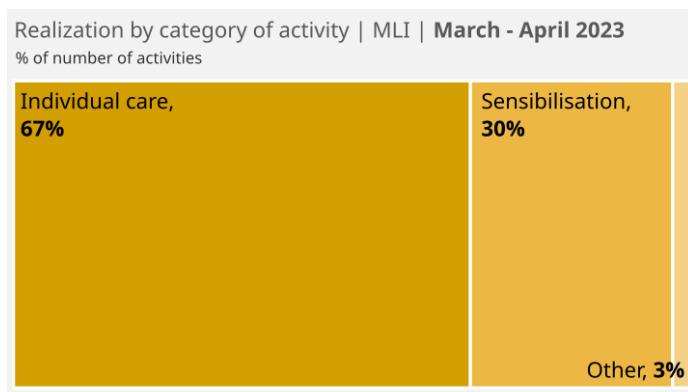
% of behaviour notifications



## Mali

### Conflict dynamics

- In Mali, there has been a significant increase in human rights violations with 763 cases of violations in April and 980 in March, compared to 584 in February and 500 in January. Mopti continues to record the highest number of violations.
- Population movements are also on the rise, especially in the regions of Ségou, following the arrival of a large number of Burkinabe refugees. On 3 April, 6,329 Burkinabe refugees from the municipality of Sindo moved to the municipality of Danderesso, in the Sikasso circle and region. The intensification of military operations by the Burkinabe army and the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland against non-state armed groups (NSAG) is the main cause of these displacements.
- NSAG attacks continue in Mopti. On April 22nd, the town of Sevaré was targeted in two attacks on the gendarmerie camp and the FAMA camp. The death toll is reported to be 11 civilians, including five children, with 66 people injured, including 17 children and around 30 women, including two pregnant women and 15 internally displaced persons (IDPs).
- Attacks persist in Ménaka, particularly in Inekar, Anderamboukane, and Tidermene. The region is estimated to have nearly 38,804 IDPs and 14,617 refugees. Cross-border movements continue due to the deteriorating situation in neighboring countries, despite restrictive control by the Nigerian government. The back-and-forth movements make it difficult to provide precise figures.



### Main incidents and threats

- Violations of property rights are the most reported incidents in March and April (765 in March/April compared to 487 in January/February). These mainly include cases of theft, extortion, looting, and the collection of Zakat by NSAGs on crops, livestock, or other belongings belonging to the population.
- Kidnappings and murders that could potentially be classified as targeted assassinations against economic operators, community leaders, and humanitarian workers have been reported in Gao, Kidal, and Ménaka.
- Cases of gender-based violence (GBV) are increasing (534 incidents in March compared to 392 in February), with a high prevalence of physical violence against women, sexual assaults, rape, and denial of resources. This increase has been reported in areas where clashes between armed groups have intensified and where institutional presence is weak (Ménaka and Gao).
- Threats related to explosive devices are a growing protection risk, particularly in areas of armed operations and confrontations between NSAGs, or between NSAGs and armed forces. Accidents have been reported in the regions of Mopti, Ségou, Gao, Koulikoro, Tombouctou, and Sikasso during the months of March and April.

### Impact of protection incidents

- Due to insecurity and increasing radicalization, most schools in the north are closed, exposing children to numerous risks such as abductions, recruitment into armed groups, child labor, sexual exploitation, and early marriages.
- In Mopti and Timbuktu, populations are weakened by the imposition of zakat by NSAGs on their harvests, as well as restrictions that limit their economic activities, impact market supplies, and contribute to the impoverishment of these communities which rely solely on livestock and agriculture. Such situations increase the risks of negative coping mechanisms, especially for the most vulnerable.

### Response, access to services

- In Ségou, basic social services such as municipal facilities, healthcare, public administration, and schools are difficult to access due to the activities of NSAGs. The services are also under pressure due to the increasing influx of refugees in the region.

## Niger

### Conflict dynamics

- During the months of March and April, there has been a resurgence of threats related to improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the regions of Diffa and Tillabéri. At least 11 IED incidents have been reported by protection monitoring sources in these two regions during the first four months of the year.
- Since the beginning of 2023, incidents related to the abduction of individuals, especially children, have been steadily increasing. There have been 8 abduction cases in Maradi and 17 cases in Diffa in the month of March, and 14 children abducted for ransom, including 6 girls and 8 boys, in the month of April. The victims/survivors of these incidents are between 7 and 16 years old. An increasing number of victims report having experienced violence, including cases of rape and sexual assault, at the hands of the abductors.
- The intensification of military operations in Mali and Burkina Faso has resulted in increased cross-border population movements towards the bordering municipalities of the Tillabéri region, thereby affecting previously peaceful areas. This situation has significant consequences for local communities, creating tensions and additional challenges in terms of protection and security.

### Main incidents and threats

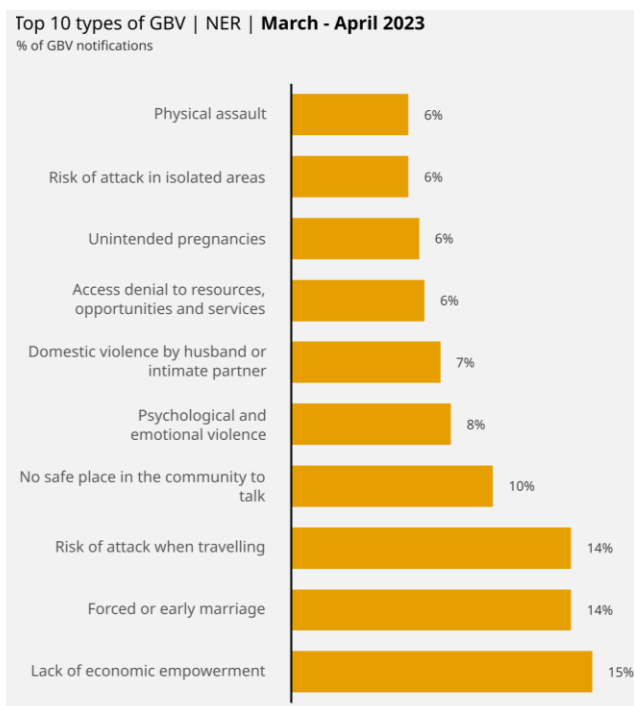
The most concerning protection incidents are related to gender-based violence (GBV), particularly the increase in cases of rape linked to abductions. Kidnapped individuals have become victims of sexual violence. Additionally, kidnappings and assassinations have been of particular significance in March. These trends indicate the need to strengthen protection measures by providing support to GBV survivors and advocating for effective measures to prevent and prosecute these crimes.

### Impact of protection incidents

- Women and girls are victims of abductions and sexual violence.
- Children are exposed to the threat of being kidnapped by armed groups or utilized by non-state armed actors to obtain ransoms.

### Response, access to services

- Responses regarding psychosocial support are being planned in the regions of Maradi and Tillabéri.
- Awareness initiatives should be encouraged with regard to Improvised Explosive Devices.



## Chad

### Conflict dynamics

- In the Lake province, attacks by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs), homicides, and community conflicts over natural resources marked the month of March. The population movement group confirmed 19 alerts, of which 11 were linked to security incidents.
- The crisis in Sudan has caused significant population displacements, including towards Chad. Since April, approximately 90,000 people have crossed the border into eastern Chad, over 90% being women and children. P21 tools have been urgently deployed in reception areas, enabling the monitoring and regular updates on the protection situation of Sudanese refugees fleeing violence in their country.

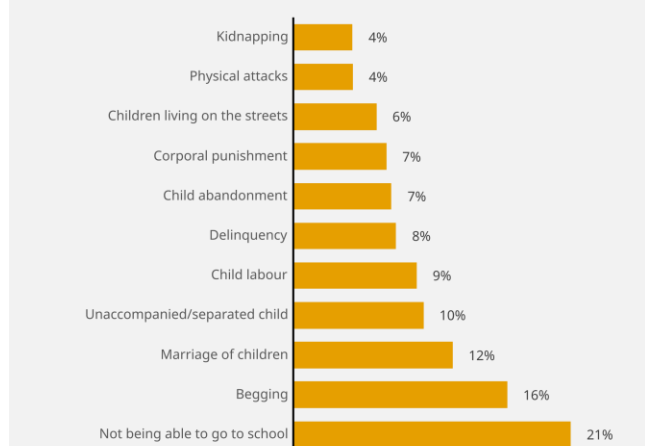
### Main incidents and threats

- In the Lake region, both P21 (72%) and GBVIMS (38%) indicate that physical assaults (non-sexual) are the most recurrent incidents in an area where abductions were the most frequent incident, targeting men, women, and children alike.
- Non-enrollment/dropout from school, child marriage, and child labor are the main protection incidents that children are exposed to. Non-enrollment/dropout leads to child labor and exploitation, as well as early and/or forced marriages. The main reason for the lack of access to education is the distance or remoteness of the school from their homes.

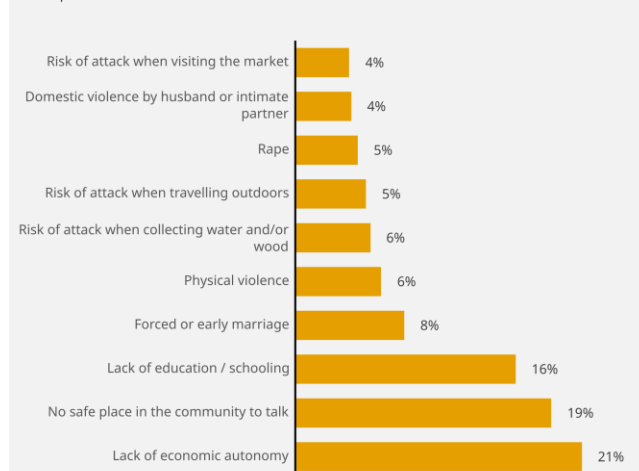
### Impact of protection incidents

- Children, both girls and boys, are the most affected by recurrent abductions, physical assaults, and other types of incidents.
- Women constitute a significant portion of individuals with specific needs (57%).

Top 10 types of child protection incidents | TCD  
March - April 2023  
% of incident notifications



Top 10 types of GBV | TCD | March - April 2023  
% of reports of GBV





March – April 2023

## Chad

### Response, access to services

- In the Lac region, the emergency response is provided by the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) operational group, supplemented by members of the protection cluster. In terms of the response to Gender-Based Violence (GBV), advocacy efforts continue to designate a dedicated GBV specialist for coordination activities within the working group. Capacity-building initiatives for administrative and military authorities are being prepared to enhance the protection environment.
- In the eastern part of the country, Project 21 has collected data from households newly arrived in the villages of Hayal Salam, Koufroun, Labane Dafak, Dizé Berté, Madjiguilta, Mesteré, Borota, and Goungour in the Ouaddai province, as well as in the locality of Tiné in the Wadi-Fira province.
- The data highlights the need for actors to support the authorities in urgently addressing the education needs of refugee children who are eligible for schooling (55%) through the construction of classrooms and other educational facilities, as well as the recruitment and training of teachers.
- 3,815 refugee individuals have already been relocated to existing camps.

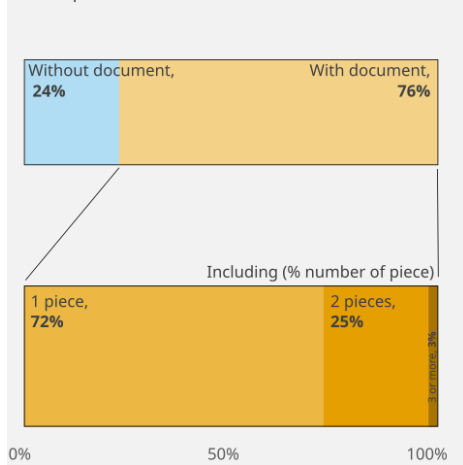
### Focus on the protection situation in the eastern part of the country

1830 interviewed households

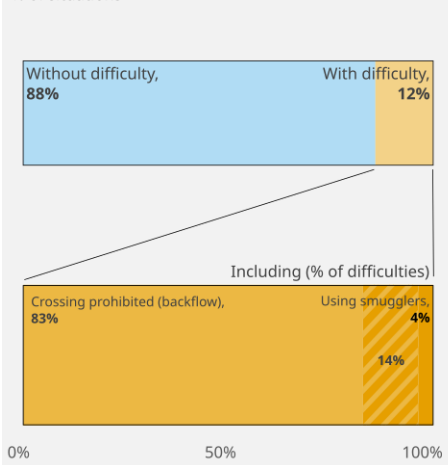
Reasons of displacement | East TCD | April - May 2023  
% of situations



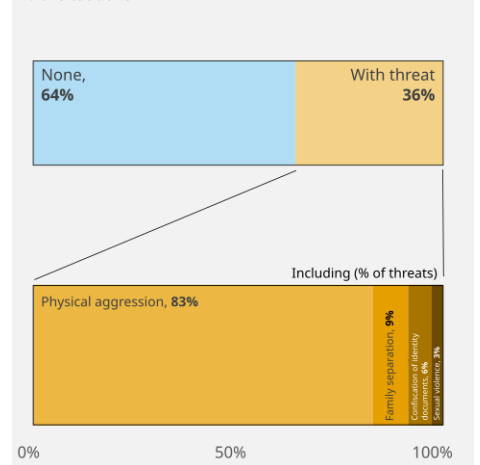
Identity documents available | East TCD  
April - May 2023  
% of respondents



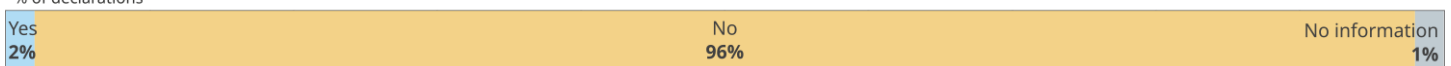
Problems encountered at the border | East TCD  
April - May 2023  
% of situations



Protection threats identified | East TCD  
April - May 2023  
% of situations



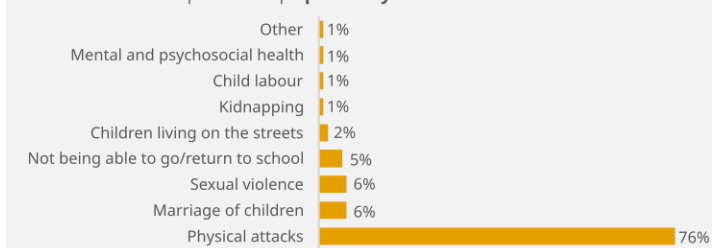
Perception of GBV risk | East TCD | April - May 2023  
% of declarations



Priority needs | East TCD | April - May 2023



Threats to children | East TCD | April - May 2023



Integration into host community | East TCD | April - May 2023  
% of declarations

