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# The impact of COVID-19 on the living and survival conditions of Internally Displaced Persons in Burkina Faso

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## Abstract

In recent years, as in other parts of the Sahel, the threat of terrorism has escalated in Burkina Faso. In 2019, this country hosted the fourth highest number of new conflict-related internal displaced persons (IDPs) in the world. These people have to cope simultaneously with the full spectrum of environmental, social and health-related stresses in the long, medium and short term, respectively. We seek to compare the living conditions of IDPs before and during the lockdown implemented by the authorities (between 27 March and 5 May 2020) to contain the spread of the virus. Interviews were conducted with 106 IDPs in Kongoussi (Central-Northern region). Although no respondent reported having been directly affected by the virus, 84.9% of the IDPs surveyed had no income-generating activities during the lockdown and the remaining 15.1% who continued to work reported that their activities had been greatly scaled-down. For a large majority of them, their living conditions, already described as difficult under ‘normal’

circumstances (insufficient food, insignificant financial assistance, or difficult access to health care), further deteriorated. In addition, IDPs were unable to leave the camps or regions where they were located to search for better living conditions or to return home. Lastly, 96.2% of respondents believed that the COVID-19 pandemic would have a negative impact on their future. These IDPs, like many in the sub-region and around the world, therefore require urgent assistance from the authorities and humanitarian NGOs, as the slightest new stress is likely to considerably worsen their already vulnerable state.

### **Keywords**

Burkina Faso, IDPs, COVID-19, terrorism, climate change, livelihoods

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## **The impact of COVID-19 on the living and survival conditions of Internally Displaced Persons in Burkina Faso**

### **Introduction**

Sahelian countries have had to cope with the proliferation of terrorist movements for over a decade (Namaïwa, 2017; Amao, 2020). On 4 April 2015, an expatriate was abducted by unidentified individuals at the Tambao manganese mine in Burkina Faso's Sahel region (SIG, 2015) (Fig. 1). From then on, terrorist attacks rapidly multiplied and intensified (e.g. Benedikter and Ouedraogo, 2018), leading to a sharp deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in five regions (Boucle du Mouhoun, Nord, Centre-Nord, Sahel and Est) (Fig. 1). As in other countries of the subregion (Olanrewaju et al., 2018; Ajakaye and Ibukunoluwa, 2020; Tijjani and Ma, 2020), this worsened situation led to a substantial increase in internal displacement, further aggravating the already very limited access to basic social services in localities affected by extreme poverty. For instance, in early March 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in Burkina Faso, 2,512 schools were closed due to insecurity, thus preventing the enrolment of nearly 350,000 pupils (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Still because of insecurity, as of 13 April 2020, 133 health facilities were closed, 54% of which were located in the Sahel region, while 156 others were operating at minimum capacity, those dysfunctional health-care structures ending up depriving nearly 1.6 million people of access to health care (Cluster Santé, 2020).

Figure 1: Location of Kongoussi in Burkina Faso. The 5 regions shown in grey also correspond to the areas most affected by terrorism.

Since 2020, terror has dramatically intensified. For instance, 36 civilians were killed in a terrorist attack in the Northern region on 21 January (Le Monde, 2020a), while a jihadist attack on a Protestant church killed at least 24 people on 16 February in the Sahel region (Le Monde, 2020b). At least 43 people were later massacred on 8 March in attacks perpetrated against three villages in Yatenga province in the Northern region (Douce, 2020a) (Fig. 1). On

May 30, 35 people were left dead and dozens wounded following two separate terrorist attacks, the former in a livestock market in the Eastern region and the latter targeting a humanitarian convoy delivering food to the population in the Central-Northern region (SIG, 2020a). Those attacks are regularly accompanied by kidnappings, usually targeting young men and women. At the time of writing, several dozen villages had come under the control of armed groups in the eastern part of the country. One survivor claimed: “*Soldiers of God planted a black flag at the entrance of my village and they would beat or execute those who do not obey Sharia law*” (Douce, 2020b).

This terror has caused population displacements in the country, and its amplification has led to a significant increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) over time. In 2019, Burkina Faso was among the countries with the highest number of new conflict-related internal displacements (513,000), just after Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia (IDMC, 2020). This already alarming situation has escalated since the beginning of 2020 due to the rise of terrorist threat. As of 22 April 2020, 848,329 people had been forced out of their homes (Fig. 2). As of 30 April 2020, 56% of IDPs in the Sahel (from Mauritania to Chad) were concentrated in Burkina Faso (UNHCR, 2020a).

Figure 2: Total number of IDPs in Burkina Faso from January 2019 to April 2020 (OCHA, 2020a).

By March 2020, 58% of IDPs had received assistance from the Food Security Cluster (2020). However, such assistance is unevenly distributed across the territory due to accessibility issues, and more specifically because of insecurity resulting from repeated terrorist acts.

Thus, assistance was made impossible in the Eastern region and less than 50% of IDPs were reached in the Northern and Sahel regions, the most distressed areas in the country.

Furthermore, 2.2 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance in Burkina Faso in February 2020 (OCHA, 2020b), one million more than the previous year (OCHA, 2019). The food situation quickly deteriorated in the space of six months. As of November 2019, 26 of Burkina Faso's 45 provinces were classified as 'food-insecure' (IPC Phase 2) and the situation was considered 'serious' (IPC Phase 3) in three other provinces. In March 2020, 21 provinces remained 'on alert' while the situation was deemed 'serious' in 8 provinces. The situation worsened the following month: 14 provinces were 'on alert', 11 were experiencing a 'serious' food situation and 4 were facing a 'critical' situation (IPC Phase 4).

### **The COVID-19 Pandemic**

On March 9, 2020, Burkina Faso's Health Minister announced the country's first two confirmed cases of COVID-19, a couple who had participated in an evangelical gathering organized by the Christian Open Door Church in Mulhouse (France) and who had returned to Burkina Faso on February 24 (Sarr, 2020). On 13 March, the Government started disseminating public-awareness messages on COVID-19 (regarding e.g. social distancing and basic hygiene rules) targeting the local population (SIG, 2020b). The following day, given the expansion of the pandemic, the Government announced the closure of education facilities – from pre-school to university levels – across the country from 16 March onwards (SIG, 2020c). Classes, initially suspended until 31 March, only resumed on 1 June for students in exam years (SIG, 2020d). On 20 March, as 64 cases of COVID-19 had been confirmed (Fig. 3), President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré addressed the nation, announcing a set of measures that were to come into effect the following day, including the closure of air and land borders,

the introduction of a curfew between 7 p.m. and 5 a.m., and a ban on gatherings of more than 50 people, including markets (SIG, 2020e). These markets were set to gradually reopen in the capital from 20 April in order to “*enable some 500,000 households in Ouagadougou to live in a dignified manner without falling into precarity and destitution*” and to relieve more than 90% of the population relying upon informal economy (Laoundiki, 2020).

Figure 3: Evolution of the COVID-19 epidemic in Burkina Faso from 9 March to 30 May 2020 (based on data from the Government of Burkina Faso: SIG, 2020f).

On 26 March, the Council of Ministers eventually declared a State of Health Alert entailing the immediate local lockdown of cities and towns where a case had tested positive for COVID-19, prohibiting the population from entering and/or exiting these locations, and imposing travel restrictions between and across cities (SIG, 2020g). These lockdown measures were lifted on May 5 (SIG, 2020h). As of 29 May 2020, the country had recorded 881 confirmed cases, including 53 deaths, 735 recoveries and 93 active cases (SIG, 2020i).

Such measures, although essential to contain the spread of the virus, have inevitably put a strain on the free movement of persons and goods. Internally displaced persons, who were already trying to survive on little food, in poor housing conditions and with inadequate health care, could no longer go about their business (for those who had one), move in search of better living conditions, nor return home (for those wishing to do so).

In light of these observations, we have sought to analyze the situation of IDPs located in Kongoussi, in Burkina Faso’s Central-Northern region (Fig. 1), who, in addition to their pre-existing vulnerabilities in their own country, are likely to be affected by COVID-19, just like

the rest of the population (Molobe et al., 2020). The aim of this paper is to determine the extent to which IDPs have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Methodology

The methodology used to carry out our study is mainly based on interviews conducted in the locality of Kongoussi, which is located 115 km north of the capital Ouagadougou (Fig. 1). This locality was selected because of the significant size of its IDP population (at the time of the survey, Kongoussi was home to 20,842 IDPs, including 5,363 women and 12,477 children<sup>1</sup>) and because it was affected by a local lockdown enforced by the authorities to limit the spread of COVID-19. It should be noted that since December 2019, the humanitarian situation there is deemed 'serious' (IPC Phase 3), meaning that urgent and early interventions are needed to reverse or contain a possible deterioration in the nutritional status of vulnerable populations (IPC, 2020). IDPs in Kongoussi are mainly sheltered in camps set up for this purpose by the authorities.

There is no institution or department dedicated to this cause at the level of the town hall. The mayor is primarily responsible for the camps, as it is located in his municipality. The social workers, like the "social action" department, are in charge of the IDPs. A request and an accompaniment were thus requested from these structures before starting the survey. This led to an exchange session between the mayor, the social workers and us. During these discussions, the objectives and expected results of our study were explained. They also

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<sup>1</sup> The proportion of children among IDPs is relatively the same as the most recent data on IDPs in Burkina Faso as of July 31, 2021. Of the 1,368,164 IDPs in the IDP population, 60.73% are children, 42.92% of whom are over 5 years old and 17.81% of whom are under 5 years old. It should be noted that households in rural areas of Burkina Faso have many more children. In the Kongoussi camp, in most cases, the heads of households have either been killed during security incidents or have abandoned the household in the camps in search of opportunities. As a result, mothers find themselves with their children and the children of other parents in the camps.



learned about the methodology and suggested that the identity of the respondents not to be disclosed. After having obtained permission to conduct research from Kongoussi's municipality, the selection of the person to be interviewed was done randomly from a list of IDPs available at the town hall. Due to the short time available, the period of the COVID-19 pandemic with its restrictive measures, and the limited material and financial means at our disposal, only a sample of 106 IDPs has been reached. The researchers were introduced to members of the internally displaced population by a town hall official and interviews were conducted with the agreement of the participants. This sample (n=106) was divided into 80% IDPs living in camps and 20% living outside the camps<sup>2</sup>. The interviewers were able to gain access to IDPs living outside the camps with the support of the town hall. After one day of pilot-testing the questionnaire, data was collected between 3 and 8 May 2020. It should be noted that the investigators' knowledge of the study area and the situation facilitated data collection.

The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions. The former allowed us to collect data on IDPs (e.g. nationality, ethnicity, household composition, sources of income), on the reasons that led them to leave their home places, on their living conditions in Kongoussi and, finally, on the different impacts that COVID-19 had on them. The latter were designed to allow participants to delve deeper into certain topics (such as their situation in their places of origin and destination, or how COVID-19 had impacted their current living conditions and future aspirations). Each person interviewed responded on behalf of their entire household, which consists of an average of seven members.

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<sup>2</sup> In reality, there are more IDPs in the cities than in the camps. However, they are scattered and there is no fixed idea of their numbers. It is therefore difficult to make a clear statistic about them. We have in the past tried to get access to more IDPs living outside the camps, but we have not been able to.

The main responses that came out of these interviews were anonymized and coded according to the objectives of our study. For the analysis, “flat sorting” and “cross sorting” operation were used. The first operation allowed the description of the variables by calculating the distribution of the numbers and percentages of the response modalities for each question. The second operation facilitated a good understanding of the responses, i.e. to examine whether the hypotheses formulated are acceptable or to compare the distribution of behaviors and opinions between the IDPs in the camps and those living outside the camps or to reveal associations between the responses.

## Results

Our sample ( $n = 106$ ) was composed of 64 men and 42 women whose average age was 47 and 40 years respectively. It included two main ethnic groups: the Mossis (85.8%) and the Peuhls (14.2%). 82.1% of the respondents had travelled to Kongoussi with their families.

Most of the respondents came from the Center-North region (64.2%) and the country's northernmost region bordering Mali and Niger (Sahel region, 34.9%). One respondent came from the Boucle du Mouhoun (0.9%) (Fig. 1).

The majority of IDPs surveyed (81.1%) had been displaced in the past year (May 2019 - May 2020), with the largest group (55.7%) having moved in the last six months. The remaining (5.7%) had left their place of origin 13-18 months earlier. 13.2% of respondents were unable to answer this question.

All respondents (100%) cited the threat of insecurity (terrorism) in their area of origin as the cause of their displacement. More specifically, related motives of displacement included the increasing risk of being killed for those refusing to join unidentified armed groups, or the

departure of state security forces offering terrorist groups ample latitude to impose their own rules. One respondent (a 41 year old man) stated: *“I did not want to flee and leave behind my field, my family and especially the bodies of my ancestors. The presence of law enforcement used to make us feel safe. But once they deserted, the jihadists destroyed our crops in the fields and forced us to either join them or leave the village before their return. We therefore decided to leave the village. I hope the ancestors will understand.”*

Moreover, before arriving in Kongoussi, 8.5% of the respondents (mainly those originating from the Sahel region) had transited through at least one locality which they had to abandon again because of insecurity. It should be noted that 38.7% of the respondents did not wish to answer this question, which could be evidence of the trauma caused by this forced and sudden displacement.

All interviewees had moved on their own. 60.4% of the respondents did not deliberately choose their final destination. When explaining their being in Kongoussi, the recurring answer was: *“My family and I are just trying to save our lives. It doesn't matter where we go, as long as we stay alive”*. For others, the choice of destination was motivated by the guarantee of finding safety or support from hosts who were either relatives (23.8%) or friends (15.8%).

IDPs are related to host communities. Most of the host households are farming families and live from vegetable growing, small jobs and artisanal gold mining. Even though there was some support from NGOs for these host households and internally displaced persons, these households were engaged in activities can provide a small income. It should be recalled that Kongoussi is a locality where market gardening is quite developed because of Lake “Bam” and also knows a development of several artisanal mines.

### **Life before the lockdown (before 27 March 2020)**

Staying in often precarious and/or temporary shelters (e.g. tents or shanties) provided by the government (51%), individual hosts (22.5%) or NGOs (2%), or left to their own devices (24.5%), IDP respondents lived with 9 people on average in dwellings that are, in Kongoussi's case, often located in flood-prone areas, described as "restricted", exposed to bad weather, without latrines and, in most cases, with no access to drinking water. Thus, 85.8% of the respondents considered that they were housed inadequately in Kongoussi.

The main challenges faced by IDPs in Kongoussi related to the occurrence of diseases, the absence of basic services (dilapidated or unsanitary housing, water unfit for consumption, open defecation) and hunger (Fig. 4). Although specific data related to diseases were not collected during the survey, it is well known that water related diseases (e.g. diarrhea), malnutrition and mental health are common health issues in IDP camps (Guerrier et al. 2009; Ramesh et al. 2015; Schramm et al. 2016, Moya et al. 2021).

Figure 4: Challenges faced by IDPs in Kongoussi prior to the lockdown

Most IDPs interviewed worked in the agriculture (83%), livestock farming (12.3%) and trade (4.7%) sectors prior to being displaced. Upon their arrival in Kongoussi, however, their activities changed significantly. Livestock farming disappeared, while agriculture employed only 17.9% of the respondents. Sectors that do not require qualifications (e.g. construction work, gold mining) employed 24.6% of IDPs, while 38.6% remained without a fixed income-generating activity (Tab. 1).

Table 1: Comparison of pre- and post-displacement income sources (n=106).

Income sources	Pre-displacement	Post-displacement
Agriculture	88 (83.0%)	19 (17.9%)
Trade	5 (4.7%)	20 (18.9%)
Livestock farming	13 (12.3%)	-
Construction	-	9 (8.5%)
Others (Laundry, security guard)	-	2 (1.9%)
Gold mininig	-	15 (14.2%)
No occupation	-	41 (38.6%)

It should be noted that IDPs still working in the agricultural sector in Kongoussi have experienced a sharp drop in their income as they no longer farm their own land but are now employed as agricultural labour.

Overall, assistance provided to IDPs was considered (largely) insufficient by the majority of respondents (75%), average by 16.7% and (fairly) good by a minority (8.3%) (Fig. 5).

Figure 5: Perception of assistance provided to IDPs prior to COVID-19.

Regarding IDPs' three main priority needs identified prior to the lockdown (Fig. 6), a majority of respondents cited insufficient food (88.7%), followed by insignificant financial assistance (59.4%) and difficulties to access to health care (28.3%). Other needs identified pertained to travel assistance essential to return to their places of origin (15.1%), housing assistance (14.2%), access to tools and/or equipment to engage in an economic activity (7.5%) and, finally, access to education (4.7%) and employment opportunities (4.7%). When comparing their current living conditions with their initial situation in their village of origin prior to the terrorists' arrival, 82% of the persons surveyed considered that their living conditions had (severely) deteriorated since their arrival, as indicated by the following account said a young man in his thirties: *"I think my situation was acceptable because I had food all the time. I did not need as much money to support myself and I had my family by my side. I was truly fulfilled"*,. 4% considered their living conditions to be similar while 14% felt that they had improved since arriving in Kongoussi as claimed by this respondent (a 25 year old man): *"My situation was disastrous in the village where I have always lived. If I could forget the moments I lived in that village, I would. In any case, I don't intend to go back there"*.

Figure 6: Priority needs expressed by IDPs prior to the lockdown

### **Life during the lockdown (27 March – 5 May 2020)**

While all respondents reported having heard of COVID-19, they also said that they did not know anyone who had been affected, despite the fact that Kongoussi had been placed under lockdown after two expatriate workers (one Australian and one South-African) who managed operations at the Bissa Gold mining site in an adjacent municipality tested positive to COVID-19. The lockdown profoundly changed the daily lives of every person interviewed,

whose mobility and income-generating activities were significantly reduced. During the period of the lockdown (from 27 March to 5 May 2020), 84.9% of the IDPs surveyed had no income-generating activities. The remaining 15.1% who continued to work however reported that their activities had been greatly scaled-down, notably due to reduced mobility which impacted their capacity to get to work but also as a result of the various governmental measures put in place to contain the virus. For instance, one woman (29 years old) reported: *“I help a lady sell attiéké. As this is a nocturnal activity, it is greatly disrupted by the curfew. I can no longer earn money to meet my expenses”*, while another woman (32 years old) shared the difficulties she faced whilst looking for work during COVID-19: *“In the mornings, I go around courtyards in the hope of finding clothes to wash or other household chores for money or food to support myself and my family. Because of this disease, people don't trust each other anymore. It really affects my source of income”*.

All respondents reported a decrease in the amount, quality and frequency of assistance received, resulting in fewer meals and food supplies. This concern is reflected in the following statements: *“We can no longer do anything and aid has decreased considerably”*; *“If they do not open markets, we are not going to die from COVID, but from empty pockets”*; *“If they do not suspend restrictive measures, we risk having no future at all, since we are soon all going to starve”*. In addition, 73.4% of those surveyed believed that food prices had increased.

In addition to this, Kongoussi's main IDP resettlement site was completely flooded following heavy rains on 19 April 2020 (in the middle of the lockdown) (Sawadogo, 2020), resulting in numerous losses, including 14 tons of cereals, hundreds of beds and kitchen sets, as well as many administrative documents and mobile phones (Kinda, 2020; RTB, 2020). These severe rains significantly affected more than a quarter of the people interviewed. The location

selected for this site was known to be in a flood zone (BF1 TV, 2020), as recalled by a local official (43 years old) in charge of a reception site: *“It is known that this place is a lowland. But the objective was not to leave the IDPs there permanently. And it still isn't. But the health situation caused by the appearance of coronavirus has disturbed and slowed down their relocation process. Also, it must be said that this rain [on April 19] caught everyone by surprise”*. The same site had already been flooded in August 2018, impacting more than 500 internally displaced persons (Ouédraogo, 2018).

The three main priority needs expressed by IDPs intensified and were significantly altered due to the lockdown (Fig. 7).

Figure 7: Priority needs expressed by IDPs during the lockdown.

For instance, the majority of respondents cited access to food as their first priority, which was still deemed insufficient (89.6% compared to 88.7% previously, see Fig. 6 for comparison), followed by financial aid, which was sorely lacking following the near-total halt of economic activity and the increase in food prices (80.2% compared to 59.4% previously), while the third priority became housing aid following the damage caused by the floods (41.5% compared to 14.2% before the lockdown).

Lastly, 96.2% of respondents believed that the COVID-19 pandemic would have a negative impact on their future: 69.8% thought that the health situation would impoverish them in the long term, while 26.4% feared that it would lead to famine. 3.8% of IDPs, however, said that it should not have an influence on their future.



Nine out of ten people surveyed said that they wanted to return to their hometown as soon as the security situation would allow it, stressing that they would however require assistance, at the very least logistical assistance, for their return. On the other hand, the remaining 10% were not thinking of returning to their localities of origin because “there is nothing left for us there”. However, they did not foresee any further move in the medium term, either because they had nowhere to go or because they could not afford to travel, and often because of a combination of the two.

## **Discussion**

To the best of our knowledge, this study is one of the first to explore how COVID-19 has affected the lives of IDPs in Burkina Faso. The survey was conducted live during the lockdown among people fleeing terror, what is a strength but can lead to some limitations (small sample size, overrepresentativity of respondents living in camps, and in some case, inability of those people under pressure to express feelings (Elklit and Brink, 2004)) of the study which may limit the representativity and the generalisability of the study findings.

Even though the COVID-19 statistics in Burkina Faso seem to indicate that the severity of the epidemic is rather limited in this country (especially when compared to the situation in other countries in the world), they reflect the general situation observed in Sahelian countries (Nguimkeu and Tadadjeu, 2020). The emergency measures implemented by the authorities, although necessary, inevitably hindered the free movement of people and goods. IDPs were particularly affected, as they were unable to leave the camps or regions where they were located to search for better living conditions or to return home for those wishing to do so.

In particular, the IDPs surveyed had to make a choice in the context of terrorism, which has taken a strong hold following the sudden withdrawal of the Burkinabe armed forces. By unwillingly abandoning their own resources, transmitted by their ancestors, most IDPs have

seen their living standards deteriorate. Although, according to local authorities met during the fieldwork, no cases of COVID-19 contamination were officially recorded among the IDPs present in Kongoussi municipality, their living conditions had significantly worsened due to the impact on their livelihoods of the measures taken to control the epidemic (mainly establishment of a curfew, the suspension of transports, the closure of markets and *yaars* as well as maquis and bars). Our results are similar to the very few papers we found on that topic: (1) a loss of income and/or education, primarily as a result of the strict public health measures, in Somalia (Braam et al. 2021), (2) losing jobs and livelihoods due to restricted movement and reduced access to markets, in the Sahel (UNHCR 2020b; Rohwerder 2021), (3) IDPs highly affected by lockdown, given their precarious situations, in Zimbabwe (Madziva et al. 2021).

The situation further deteriorated following the heavy rains which came early and caused severe flooding, and for which authorities, communities and humanitarian stakeholders were unprepared. The IDP population's increased exposure to flooding can be attributed to at least three factors, highlighted in the survey. The first factor is the precariousness of the dwellings and their location in flood-prone areas. In August 2018, flooding had already caused more than 500 flood victims among IDPs living on these sites (Ouédraogo, 2018), where the population was on the rise due to new arrivals. The second factor consisted in the early rains that surprised the authorities, who were unable to anticipate or prepare for flood risk. Lastly, the rapid spread of COVID-19 in the country led the authorities and humanitarian actors to focus on managing the sanitary crisis in order to limit the death toll. These three factors have thus delayed the resettlement of IDPs to areas that were not exposed to flood risk.

Finally, because of the pandemic and of general insecurity, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Red Cross had to reduce their IDP humanitarian assistance coverage by 20% between March and April 2020 (FEWS NET, 2020). Additionally, the funds raised to provide

humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons and refugees are being significantly reduced, a trend that is likely to continue in the coming months as donor countries have also been hard hit by COVID-19 (Kabir et al., 2020).

The populations of Burkina Faso, as in the rest of the Sahel, have had to adapt to the consequences of climate change ever since the “great drought” of the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, extreme climatic phenomena (such as droughts related to insufficient or unevenly distributed rainfall, floods following exceptional rainfall, and heat waves) have become more frequent and intense (De Longueville et al., 2016). Long-term adaptation strategies meant to cope with these environmental changes allow these populations to postpone their displacement – whether temporary, seasonal, or permanent – in search for improved living conditions (Henry et al., 2004; Gemenne et al., 2017; De Longueville et al., 2020).

In recent years – and even more intensely in recent months – terrorism has driven an ever-growing population to move within Burkina Faso in search of security. Within a few months, IDPs were trapped by a combination of new stresses: COVID-19, reduced humanitarian aid, and increasing malnutrition. This ‘domino effect’ resulted in mounting levels of insecurity and precariousness among the internally displaced population, which could in turn facilitate their recruitment by terrorist groups (Alupa et al., 2020; Omenma et al., 2020; Sirgy et al., 2018).

It is likely that this case study of IDPs in Kongoussi reflects the situation of many internally displaced persons around the world (Agbiboa, 2020; Orendain and Djalante, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

This study describes the impacts of lockdown measures put in place to contain the COVID-19 pandemic on precarious populations in Africa, through the case of IDPs in Burkina Faso.

These populations have to cope simultaneously with the full spectrum of environmental, social and health-related stresses in the long, medium and short term, respectively. Our findings indicate that the socio-economic and humanitarian situation of these populations has deteriorated substantially during the period of the lockdown (27 March – 5 May 2020). These IDPs therefore require urgent assistance from the authorities and humanitarian NGOs, as the slightest new stress is likely to considerably worsen their already vulnerable state. In October 2020, Burkina Faso was classified by the United Nations agencies (WFP & FAO, 2020) as one of the countries most at risk of food insecurity in the world. The continued cutbacks in international aid and the progress of jihadist groups are among the latest stresses identified in this West African country.

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- This study is one of the first to explore how COVID-19 has affected the lives of IDPs in Burkina Faso
- The socio-economic and humanitarian situation of IDPs has deteriorated substantially during the period of the lockdown
- Within a few months, IDPs were trapped by a combination of new stresses: COVID-19, reduced humanitarian aid, and increasing malnutrition.
- This ‘domino effect’ resulted in mounting levels of insecurity and precariousness among the IDPs, which could in turn facilitate their recruitment by terrorist group
- It is likely that this case study of IDPs in Kongoussi reflects the situation of many internally displaced persons around the world