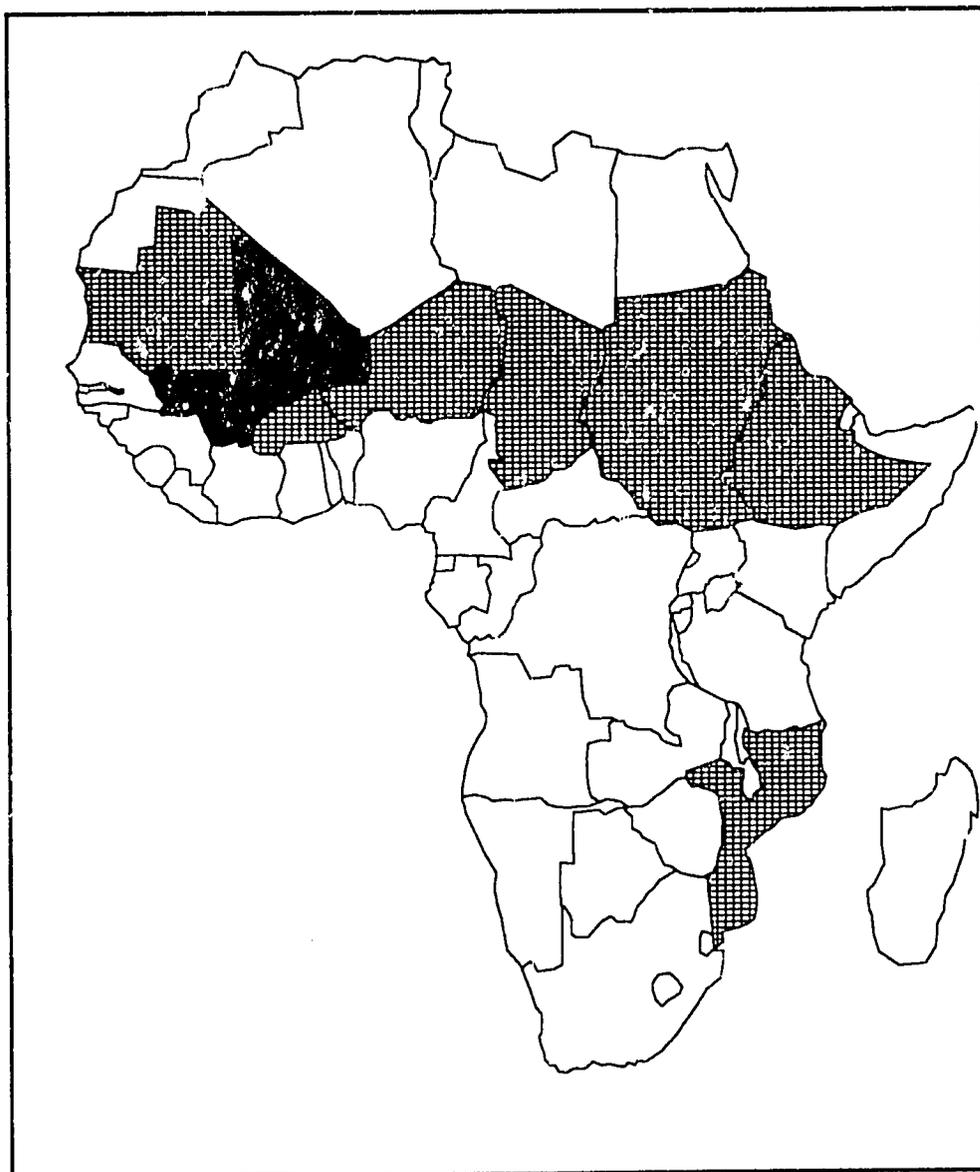


Report Number 8

January 1987

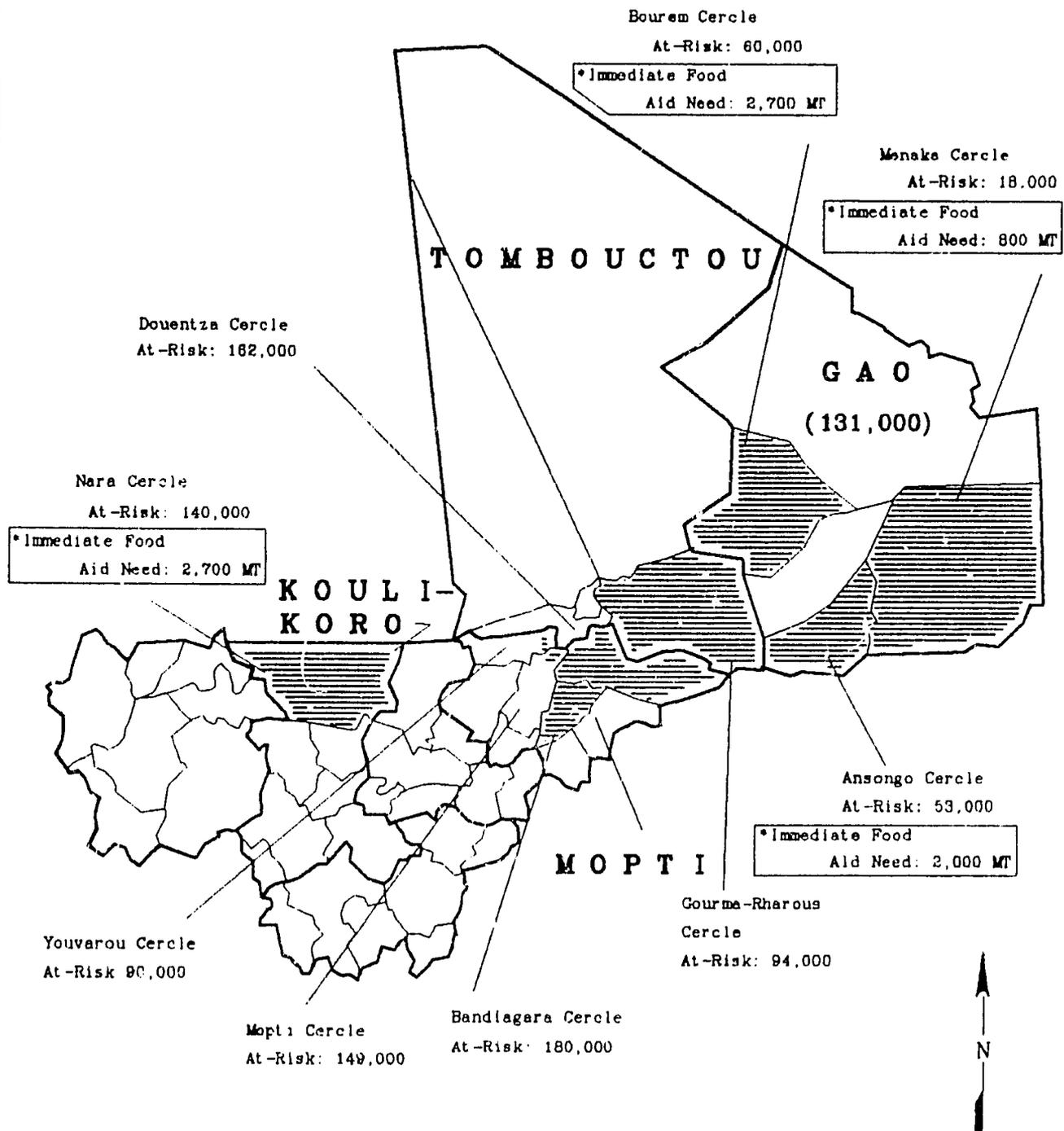
FEWS Country Report

MALI



Africa Bureau
U.S. Agency
for International
Development

Summary Map



* Immediate food aid need computed at 42kg per person for 3 month period.

MALI

At-Risk Update: Focus on Gao

Prepared for the
Africa Bureau of the
U.S. Agency for
International Development

Prepared by
Price, Williams & Associates, Inc.
January 1987

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INTRODUCTION

This is the eighth of a series of monthly reports issued by the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) on Mali, current as of January 10, 1987. It is designed to provide decisionmakers with current information and analysis on existing and potential nutrition emergency situations. Each situation identified is described in terms of geographical extent and the number of people involved, or at-risk, and the proximate causes insofar as they have been discerned.

Use of the term "at-risk" to identify vulnerable populations is problematical since no generally agreed upon definition exists. Yet it is necessary to identify or "target" populations in-need or "at-risk" in order to determine appropriate forms and levels of intervention. Thus for the present, until a better usage can be found, FEWS reports will employ the term "at-risk" to mean...

...those persons lacking sufficient food, or resources to acquire sufficient food, to avert a nutritional crisis, i.e., a progressive deterioration in their health or nutritional condition below the status quo and who, as a result, require specific intervention to avoid a life-threatening situation.

Perhaps of most importance to decisionmakers, the process underlying the deteriorating situation is highlighted by the FEWS effort, hopefully with enough specificity and forwarning to permit alternative intervention strategies to be examined and implemented. Food assistance strategies are key to famine avoidance. However, other types of intervention can be of major importance both in the short-term and in the long-run, including medical, transport, storage, economic development policy change, etc.

Where possible, food needs estimates are included in the FEWS reports. It is important to understand, however, that no direct relation exists between numbers of persons at-risk and the quantity of food assistance needed. This is because famines are the culmination of slow-onset disaster processes which can be complex in the extreme.

The food needs of individual populations at-risk depend upon when in the disaster process identification is made and the extent of its cumulative impact on the individuals concerned. Further, the amount of food assistance required, whether from internal or external sources, depends upon a host of considerations. Thus the food needs estimates presented periodically in FEWS reports should not be interpreted to mean food aid needs, e.g., as under PL480 or other donor programs.

FEWS is operated by AID's Office of Technical Resources in the Bureau for Africa in cooperation with numerous USG and other organizations.

SUMMARY

The at-risk populations in Mali remain generally unchanged since last month, except in some cercles of Gao Region. It appears that the residents of Gao and Kidal Cercles may still be able to cope with a food situation which, although harsh, is no more so than normal. Monitoring of these two cercles is, however, still necessary. The situation is more critical in the neighboring cercles of Bourem, Ansongo, and Menaka. There, people are being forced to leave their homes, seek free food distributions, and take other emergency action to protect themselves from a nutritional crisis. The number of displaced persons in Gao town is again rising, largely fed by the return of those who left the town to harvest wild grains in the surrounding areas, and by migrants from Ansongo and Bourem. Estimates of food aid required in at-risk areas are being developed by appropriate governmental and international agencies. The Systeme d'Alerte Precoce (SAP), the early warning unit of the National Committee for Aid to Victims of the Drought (CNAVS), estimates that Bourem, Ansongo, Menaka, and Nara Cercles immediately need approximately 7,500 metric tons of food aid for the next three months.

Issues

- A second survey in Almoustarat Arrondissement found dramatically fewer children suffering from severe malnutrition than indicated by an earlier survey. While the organizational umbrella under which this estimate and re-evaluation were carried out suggests a robust process, the magnitude of the differences between the two surveys suggests critical problems with methodology or with other, as yet undetermined factors.
- The SAP recommendation to provide a three month ration of food aid to the at-risk populations in the cercles of Bourem, Ansongo, Menaka, and Nara would allow time for further food assessment and nutrition surveys to be carried out. A plan for additional short-term, and appropriate middle-term interventions for these populations could then be planned in a non-crisis atmosphere.
- A common criteria for intervention in areas at-risk needs to be agreed upon by donors and regional and national authorities. The Drought Relief Office of the USAID mission in Mali suggests that general food distributions be carried out in areas which have a malnutrition rate of over 15% among children. This would require regular anthropometric surveys in areas identified as at-risk in order to decide whether intervention is needed, whether it should continue, or should be stopped.

Key January Events

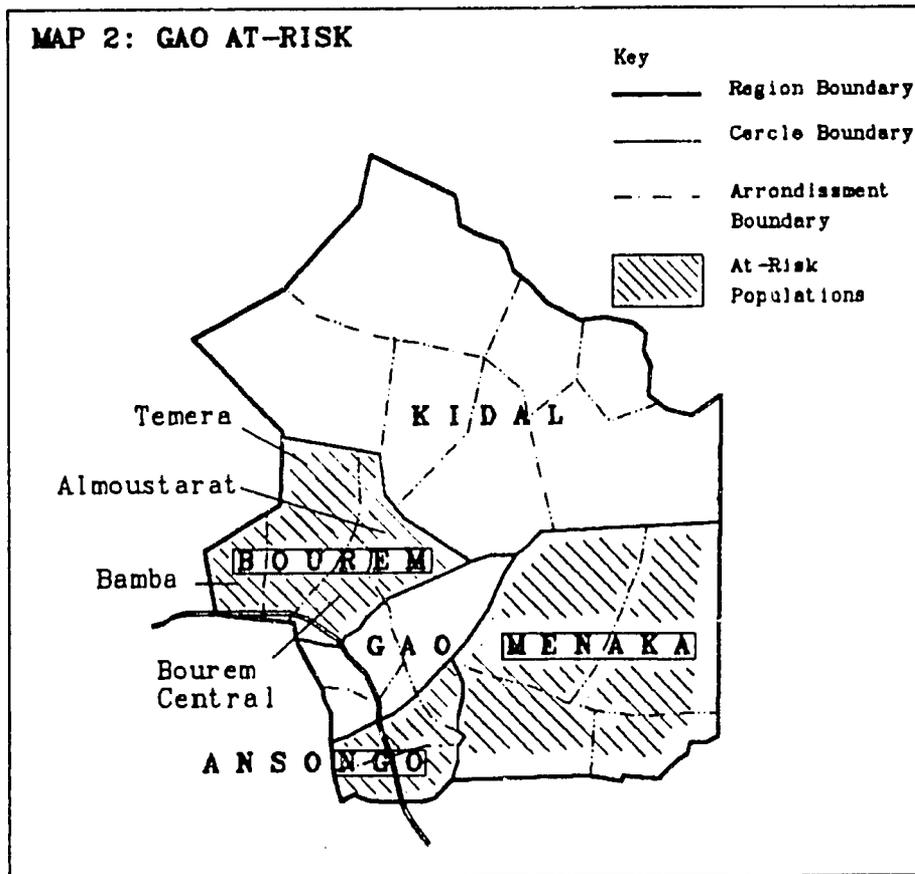
- Ten grasshopper survey teams returned from the field in early January. Results of their egg-pod counts should be available shortly.
- A second agricultural production estimate should be released soon by the DNSI (National Statistical and Information Science Department).

POPULATIONS AT-RISK

The December FEWS report discussed the divergent opinions in the donor community concerning the severity of food shortages in Gao Region. Several measures of nutritional stress there (stable feeding center attendance, mixed nutrition survey results, unusual population movements) presented conflicting indications. A more consistent picture is emerging from further study and receipt of additional information.

Gao Region

The specific areas of Gao Region with people at-risk include Bourem and Ansongo Cercles, and, to a lesser extent, Menaka Cercle. The chronic food problems currently visible in the Cercles of Gao and Kidal require monitoring, but are not yet critical.



The cercle of Bourem is the most severely at-risk in the region for several reasons. As mentioned in previous FEWS reports, the cercle, with a total estimated population of 60,000, was one of the most seriously affected by the drought of 1984-1985. A large percentage of the residents of this cercle are herders, and great numbers of their animals died during this period. Many people were forced to leave Bourem to seek food distribution in the town of Gao. A large number of these same people are still not able to sustain themselves economically.

Agricultural production in the cercle has been hurt by other factors. In Fall of 1985, even though the Niger River was well below its usual levels, dikes near Bourem failed and waters destroyed a large portion of the area's meager rice crop. Rainfall throughout 1985 was insufficient to support the few agricultural activities of this cercle. In 1986, the rains continued light, the low crest of the river reduced planting areas along its shore, and rodent infestations were widespread. These elements all combined to produce a catastrophic effect on the crops; this year's harvest is expected to be nil.

The rodent problems and poor rains this year also severely diminished the size of the wild grain harvest, eliminating a major food security cushion that could have softened the impact of the harvest failure. The final, and perhaps most severe blow this year was the impact of the poor rains on pastureland. Grasses are insufficient for normal herding needs in most arrondissements of the cercle.

In November, the SAP medical team surveyed 277 families in the Bourem Central, Bamba, and Temera arrondissements. SAP reports that food stocks at the family level are almost nonexistent, many people have already left the area, and an out-migration of thousands of people should be expected in the coming months.

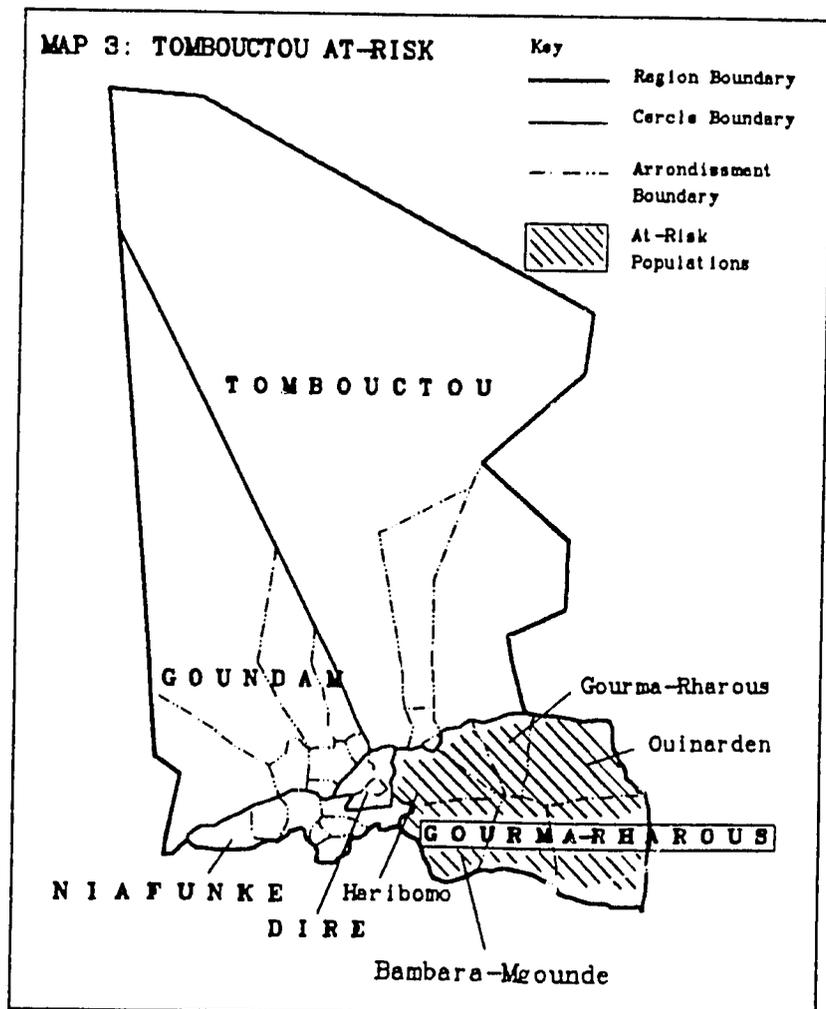
Another area of great concern is the Cercle of Ansongo (estimated total population 56,000), where both the rainy season and irrigated crop harvests are poor, and livestock conditions are difficult. Again, the combined effects of insufficient rainfall and rodent infestation have had a devastating effect on both cultivated crops and wild grains. Wild grain traditionally constitutes an important part of the diet of the people in Ansongo Cercle at this time of year. Perhaps the most significant indicator of the level of hardship prevailing in the cercle is the unusually large migration of population out of the area toward Niger. This migration

involves not only nomads and their herds, but also sedentary people. The number involved is not yet known, but reports from local authorities indicate that the exodus may be large enough to create a political strain at the border with Niger, and will certainly create additional hardship for those leaving, as available transport resources become overburdened.

Other cercles in Gao Region are also suffering from the effects of poor rains and rodent infestation, but to a lesser degree. Menaka Cercle had a very bad harvest this year, but the presence of World Vision and its food distribution and development-related programs have helped the population maintain a relatively stable food supply.

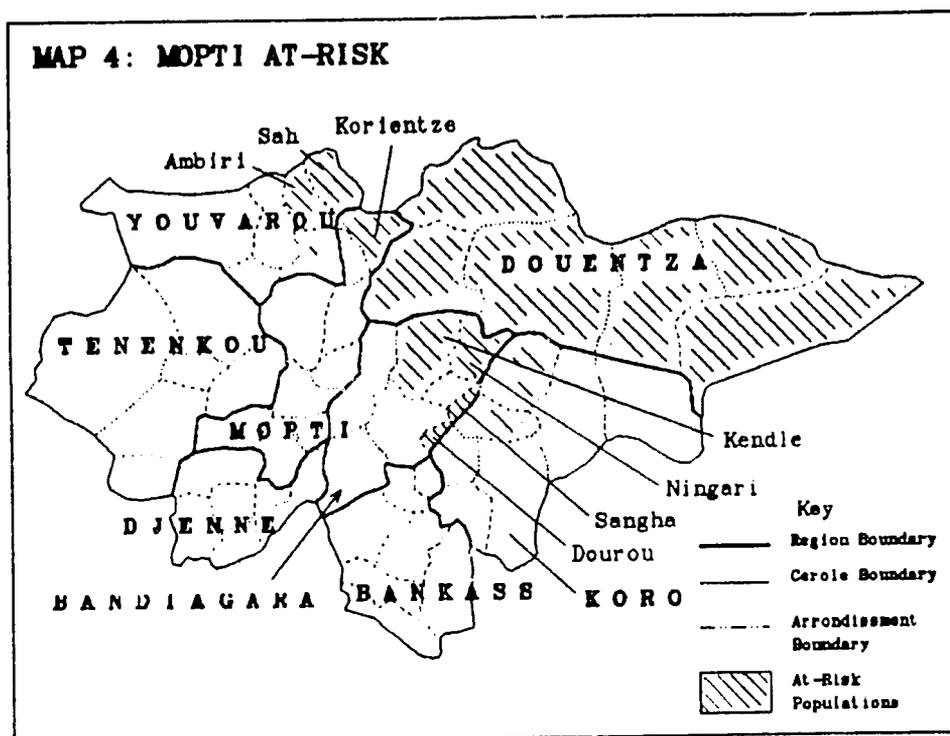
Tombouctou Region

In Gourma-Rharous Cercle, family food stocks are reportedly very low, and the food situation remains particularly tenuous in the arrondissements of Bambara-Maounde, Ouinarden, Haribomo, and Rharous. Some arrondissements in Goundam Cercle may eventually exhaust their food stocks, although off-season sorghum harvests may provide some relief. However, rodent attacks have been noted since the middle of the growing season and may seriously reduce grain production in localized areas.



Mopti Region

A much more varied picture is found in Mopti Region, where family food stocks are low in much of Douentza Cercle, in the Korientze Arrondissement in Mopti Cercle, the arrondissements of Dourou, Kendie, Ningari and Sangha in Bandiagara Cercle, and in the arrondissements of Ambiri and Sah in Youvarou Cercle. However, Government of Mali (GOM) reports indicate that millet production in the rest of the arrondissements in these cercles is average to better than average, and is particularly good in the cercles of Bankass and Koro this year.



Koulikoro Region

The combined impact of grasshopper infestations and lack of rain in Nara Cercle has led to very poor harvests in some arrondissements, and a substantial grain deficit is expected for the cercle as a whole. Unusually early herd movements from north to south are reported, indicating poor pasture and low water levels in the north.

Kayes Region

The cercles of Nioro and Yelimane both merit continued monitoring as certain arrondissements in each suffered from poor rains and heavy grasshopper damage. At present, the food situation does not appear as serious as in Nara Cercle.

DISPLACED PERSONS

As suggested in the December FEWS report, the reduction in the number of displaced people in the town of Gao was only a temporary phenomenon, and reports indicate that many families have returned to the town after the wild grain harvest. Although the latest figures on displaced people in the town are not yet known, numbers are expected to increase as a result of migrations from the cercles of Bourem and Ansongo.

A significant element in identifying population movements in the Gao Region is the time of the year when the movement occurs. Distinguishing between "normal" and "abnormal" movements in a nomadic population is difficult. However, the departure of entire families from rural areas during harvest time is undoubtedly unusual in most places, and will usually be indicative of a problem with the harvest. A survey performed in November by the SAP estimates that approximately 20% of the residents of Ansongo and 11% of the residents of Bourem left during the past three months. The interpretation of this figure must be cautious, however, until confirmation from additional sources is found.

One explanation for these migrations so early in the year may be that people are anticipating food shortages in the coming months, and are choosing to leave before the situation worsens. Indeed, the survey also found widespread reliance on consumption of famine foods in these areas, which is further evidence of a lack of food stocks and purchasing power.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

A nutrition survey carried out in the Gao Region in November does not support an earlier survey that reported extremely high numbers of severely malnourished children in some cercles. The earlier nutrition survey was carried out under the auspices of the SAP in October (sample size 200), and discovered a staggeringly high 43% rate of severe malnutrition in children under the age of six in Almoustarat Arrondissement, Cercle of Bourem. This prompted UNICEF to conduct a nutrition evaluation of the same population. With a sample size of 800, UNICEF found a severe malnutrition rate averaging only 9.7% for those areas in the survey. Though even this rate indicates an important malnutrition problem in the area, it is very near the level that is commonly found in rural sahelian zones. While this discrepancy can be partly attributed to differences in methodology and in handling of anthropometric measurements, other, as yet unexplained, factors have to be responsible for the huge disparity between the overall results.

UNICEF operates five feeding centers in the cercle of Bourem, one of which is in Almoustarat. As a result of their nutrition evaluation in that arrondissement, they have decided to distribute dry rations through January 1987 to all the families in villages where the malnutrition rate is above 10%.

Two other nutrition surveys were conducted by the SAP in November. The first was in the arrondissements of Bourem, Bamba, and Temera (Bourem Cercle), where a malnutrition rate of 13.7% (less than 80% weight to height ratio) was found among children under six. The second nutrition survey was carried out in the arrondissements of Ansongo and Ouatagouna (Ansongo Cercle), where a rate of 8.3% was found. While this latter rate is considered relatively low, it is widely expected to increase as the season progresses and food resources become depleted. The unusually heavy reliance on famine foods recorded in these arrondissements is indicative of food shortages, and will itself have an impact on the overall nutritional status of the population. UNICEF will operate two feeding centers in the cercle of Ansongo until January 1987.

MARKET PRICES

In the southern and relatively productive agricultural areas, like Bankass Cercle in Mopti Region, the retail price of millet on the open market remained stable until September, and started to decrease at the time of the main harvest in October. By comparison, millet prices in the less productive cercles of Bourem and Ansongo to the north, were an average 54% higher through October. This divergence became further accentuated in November, when the price dropped in Bankass while remaining stable in Ansongo. The millet harvest in Bankass is reported to be very good, as it is in many other areas of the country this year, and one should expect most prices to drop further in the coming months. The pattern differs in the northern belt, where food production was very poor this year, and where prices will remain relatively stable at a high level.

FOOD AID

The Government of Mali's CNAVS (National Committee for Aid to Victims of the Drought) Provisions Committee for Emergency Distribution will meet in January 1987 to develop a preliminary estimate of emergency needs for 1987. The committee is composed of GOM officials, representatives of line ministries, bilateral donors, OPAM (the GOM cereals marketing board), and PVOs and other international organizations working in affected areas. The committee will be using data from the SAP,

government services in the field, and PVO observations, to develop this estimate.

Initial recommendations made by the SAP indicate that about 15,000 MT of food will be necessary for emergency distribution over the next six month period. The cereals for this distribution will probably be made available by the CNAVS. However, some PVOs are already buying cereals from local markets and from OPAM. Cereal stocks available from OPAM, the National Security Stock, and other organizations in Gao (as of the end of October 1986) included approximately 10,000 MT, from which there have been minor distributions in the intervening period. This total does not count whatever cereals may be available on the open market in this area.

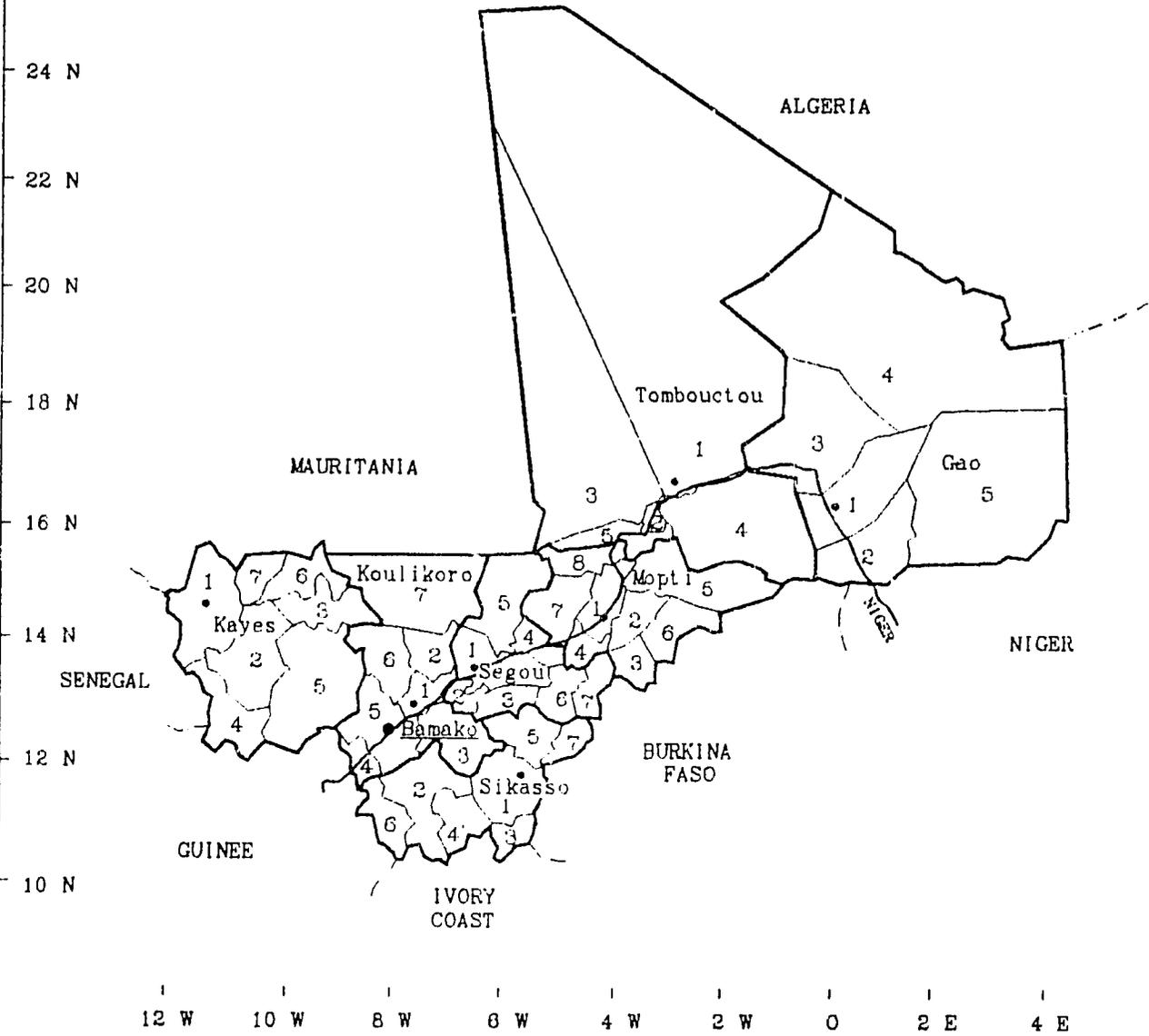
To meet immediate needs, and to provide a three month period for further assessment to occur, SAP has recommended that the following amount of cereals be made available by the end of January for distribution in the cercles of Bourem, Ansongo, Menaka, and Nara.

- Bourem: 2,700 MT. This quantity would provide 64,286 people with a three month ration. SAP estimates the population at 90,000 people; FEWS/Mali, using work completed in 1986 by a demographer, estimates 60,000.
- Ansongo: 2,000 MT. This quantity would supply 47,619 people with a three month ration. SAP estimates the population at 73,000 people; FEWS/Mali estimates 53,000.
- Central arrondissement of Menaka: 800 MT. This quantity would supply 19,047 people with a three month ration. SAP estimates the population at 18,000 people.
- Nara: 2,700 MT. This quantity would supply 64,286 people with a three-month ration. The population of Nara was estimated (in 1983) at 143,000.

(Note: The above rations were calculated using an annual cereal requirement of 167 kg per person and dividing it by four to arrive at a three month requirement.)

MAP 5: MALI

Administrative Units: Regions & Cercles



REGIONS and CERCLES

KAYES

1. Kayes
2. Bafoulabe
3. Diema
4. Kenieba
5. Kita
6. Niore
7. Yelimane

KOULIKORO

1. Koulikoro
2. Banamba
3. Dioila
4. Kangaba
5. Kati
6. Kolokani
7. Para

SIKASSO

1. Sikasso
2. Bougouni
3. Kadiolo
4. Kolondieba
5. Koutiala
6. Yanfolila
7. Zorosse

SEGOU

1. Segou
2. Baraoueli
3. Bla
4. Macina
5. Niono
6. San
7. Tominian

MOPTI

1. Mopti
2. Bandiagara
3. Bankass
4. Djenne
5. Douentza
6. Koro
7. Tenenkou
8. Youvarou

TOMBOUCTOU

1. Tombouctou
2. Dire
3. Goundam
4. Gourma-Rharous
5. Niafunke

GAO

1. Gao
2. Ansongo
3. Bourem
4. Kidal
5. Menaka

Other Int'l
Boundaries

Region Boundary

Cercle Boundary

• National Capital

• Regional Capital

200 km