

FSN WG¹ Food Security and Nutrition Update

Key messages

- An estimated 53.8 million people in 10 of the 13 countries covered by the FSNWG faced high levels of acute food insecurity and were in need of urgent food assistance (IPC² Phase 3+) in February 2021. Of these, 30.9 million were from 7 of the 8 IGAD Member States (see Figure 1).
- Urgent action to save lives, reduce food consumption gaps and restore livelihoods is needed in South Sudan where extremely high levels of acute food insecurity, including populations in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), have been reported.
- Despite some progress in delivery of humanitarian assistance in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, the situation remains concerning as most basic services remain largely disrupted and many affected populations remain in hard-to-reach areas.
- The nutrition situation in the region remains of concern with 13.3 million children under the age of five estimated to suffer acute malnutrition. Of these, about 4 million are severely wasted and in need of urgent lifesaving treatment.
- Refugees in Rwanda are likely to face a 60% food ration cut from March 2021. This comes at a time when many refugees have been particularly hard hit by the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.
- Total incomes of 89% of refugee households in Uganda have either declined or were lost since the introduction of the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, according to a recent assessment in the country.

Figure 1: Food Insecure Population Estimates³

Country	Stressed (IPC Phase 2)	Crisis (IPC Phase 3)	Emergency (IPC Phase 4)	Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5)	Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3+)
Djibouti	389,000	167,000	27,000		194,000
Ethiopia	17,353,112	10,279,333	2,592,136		12,871,469
Kenya	4,802,500	1,185,600	238,600		1,424,200
Somalia	2,497,200	1,451,000	149,800		1,600,800
South Sudan ⁴	3,866,000	3,935,000	1,728,000	105,000	5,768,000
Sudan	17,407,791	5,800,371	1,296,808		7,097,179
Uganda	4,542,829	1,630,877	371,860		2,002,737
IGAD Total	50,858,432	24,449,181	6,404,204	105,000	30,958,385
Burundi	3,955,432	1,206,500	128,129		1,334,629
CAR	1,756,781	1,520,732	407,877		1,928,609
DRC	30,253,077	14,741,313	4,875,469		19,616,782
Total	86,823,722	41,917,726	11,815,679	105,000	53,838,405

Source: IPC Global Support Unit (GSU) for East and Central Africa

¹ The East and Central Africa Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (FSN WG) is a multi-stakeholder regional forum, chaired by IGAD and FAO, mandated to provide adequate and timely information of food security and nutrition to planners and decision makers to ensure interventions are well coordinated to save lives, safeguard livelihoods and build resilience of at-risk population in participating member countries.

² The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a set of standardized tools used to classify the severity of food insecurity using a five-phase scale, that is, Minimal (IPC Phase 1), Stressed (IPC Phase 2), Crisis (IPC Phase 3), Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and Catastrophe or Famine (IPC Phase 5).

³ Based on recent IPC analyses. Countries which do not have recent IPC analyses have been left out.

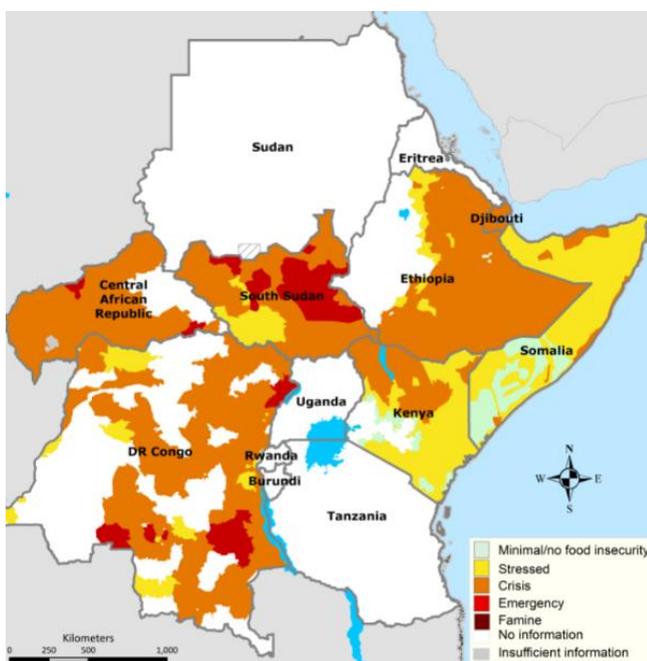
⁴ Based on IPC Global Support Unit's consolidated findings from the South Sudan IPC Technical Working Group and external reviews (Famine Review and Quality Review), following a breakdown in technical consensus in the estimation of populations in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in six counties. According to the South Sudan IPC Technical Working Group, 3,873,000 people were in Stress (IPC Phase 2), 4,024,000 in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), 1,785,000 in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and 11,000 in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5).

Sector updates

Food security

The region continued to witness high levels of food insecurity. According to recent IPC analyses, an estimated 53.8 million people in Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda faced high levels of acute food insecurity and were in need of urgent food assistance (IPC Phase 3+) in February 2021. An additional 86.8 million were Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and in need of livelihood support.

Regional food security situation



Source: IPC GSU for East and Central Africa

Country updates

In the marginal agricultural and pastoral areas of Kenya, an estimated 1.4 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity and were in need of urgent food assistance (IPC Phase 3+)⁵. Of particular concern were Isiolo, Marsabit and Turkana counties, as well as parts of Mandera, Samburu and Wajir counties which were classified in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

⁵ Based on preliminary findings from the post 2020 short rains food security and nutrition assessment

⁶ Short rain season in Somalia that usually begins in mid-September and ends December

Below-average October-December 2020 rains (which led to below-average maize harvests in marginal agricultural areas), the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, Desert Locusts, and livestock pests and diseases were the main drivers of food insecurity in these areas.

A deterioration of the food security situation is projected between March and May 2021, if the March-May 2021 rains are below average, and the Desert Locust upsurge persists.

In Somalia, an estimated 1.6 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity and were in need of urgent food assistance (IPC Phase 3+). Poor and erratic 2020 Deyr⁶ rains, and continued flooding in Hiraan, Shabelle and Juba regions, which led to poor production among riverine communities, were some of the main drivers of food insecurity in the country. Other drivers included Desert Locust-related damages to crops and pasture and the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, such as reductions in remittances from diaspora, and fewer livelihood opportunities, especially for urban populations and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Between April and June 2021, the number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+) in Somalia is projected to rise to 2.7 million due to multiple risk factors, including the depletion of food stocks, the possibility of below-average 2021 Gu⁷ rains, the continued Desert Locust upsurge and adverse socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.

Close monitoring of the food security situation in Ethiopia, especially in respect to the situation in Tigray, and in South Sudan, where extremely high levels of food insecurity have been reported, is needed.

Nutrition

The nutrition situation in the region remained of concern in a context of multiple drivers, including conflict and insecurity, extreme weather events resulting in either droughts or floods, Desert Locusts

⁷ Long rain season in Somalia that usually begins in mid-March and ends in June

and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic among others.

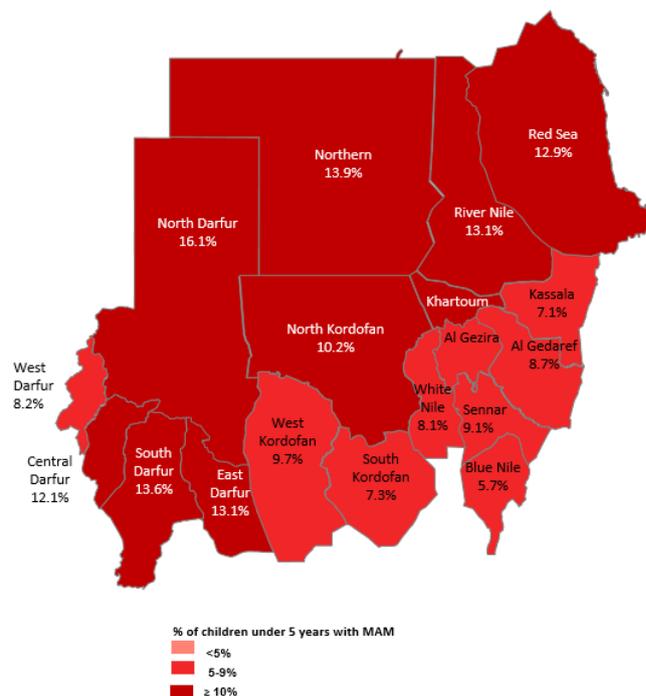
In Kenya, unacceptable levels of acute malnutrition (AMN) persist in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). Garissa, Isiolo, Mandera, Samburu, Turkana and Wajir counties, as well as parts of Baringo and Marsabit counties, were estimated to be in a Critical (IPC AMN Phase 4) situation. In addition, Tana River and West Pokot counties were estimated to be in a Serious (IPC AMN Phase 3) situation. Poor dietary intake – linked to reduced milk production and consumption as animal body conditions deteriorated following poor 2020 short rains – was the main driver of acute malnutrition in these counties. Overall, 352,842 children under the age of five in the ASALs, 129,596 children in the non-ASAL areas and 59,224 children in urban areas were estimated to suffer acute malnutrition. Of these, 140,993 children required lifesaving treatment for severe acute malnutrition (SAM).

The nutrition situation in Kenya is projected to deteriorate if the March-May 2021 rains perform poorly.

In South Sudan, the nutrition situation remained critical with an estimated 1.4 million children under the age of five expected to suffer acute malnutrition through 2021. This represents the highest acute malnutrition caseload in the country since 2013. Additionally, 53 of the 79 counties in the country are estimated to be in a Serious (IPC AMN Phase 3) and above situation. Of these, 29 counties are estimated to be in a Critical (IPC AMN Phase 4) situation. A further deterioration in the nutrition situation is expected during the lean season (April-July 2021), largely due to high levels of food insecurity.

In Sudan, the prevalence of acute malnutrition also remained high. Of particular concern were Central Darfur, East Darfur, South Darfur, North Darfur, Khartoum, North Kordofan, Northern, Red Sea and River Nile states where more than 10% of children under the age of five were estimated to suffer moderate acute malnutrition (MAM).

MAM prevalence by state



Source: UNICEF and WFP

There is also a need for close monitoring of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on nutrition. Findings from a review, conducted by UNICEF, of available secondary data on the impacts of COVID-19 on diets indicate a shift from nutrient rich foods to less nutrient dense ones, reduced dietary diversity among populations in some countries, and to a small extent, reduced consumption of dairy products and eggs among children during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Mobile data collection is planned for to further investigate these findings.

Market and trade

In comparison to the recent five-year average, cereal⁸ prices remained elevated in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan due to macro-economic challenges, including currency depreciation and inflation. They were, however, relatively stable in Kenya and Uganda due to recent seasonal harvests.

In Burundi and Rwanda, beans prices were higher than the recent five-year average because of poor

⁸ Mainly maize and sorghum

first season harvests. This was attributed to above-average rains which resulted in massive crop losses.

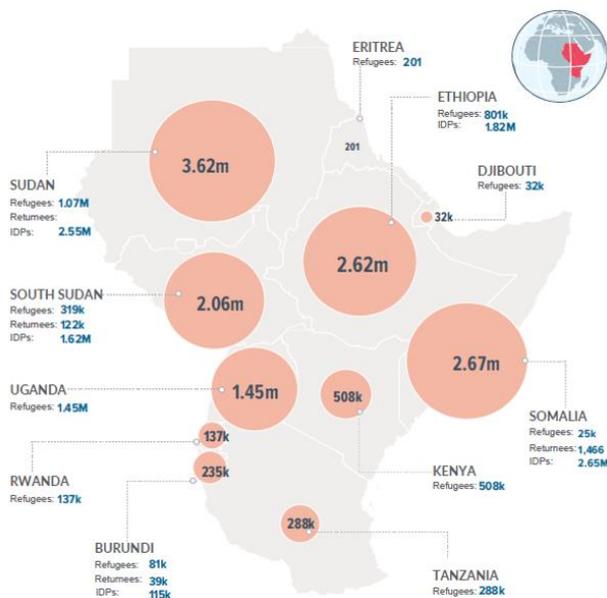
In 2021, cereal prices are expected to generally follow seasonal trends, except in Sudan where the recent sharp devaluation of the Sudanese Pound (SDG) from SDG.55|USD to SDG.375|USD⁹ by the Central Bank of Sudan is expected to accelerate inflation.

The regional cross-border trade recovery noted in the third and fourth quarters of 2020, partly driven by the gradual lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, is expected to continue through 2021.

Displacement

Close to 13.5 million people, including 8.75 million IDPs and 4.72 million refugees and asylum seekers, remained displaced across the region.

Refugees, asylum seekers, returnees and IDPs as of 31 January 2021



Source: UNHCR

In February 2021, a total of 2,018 COVID-19 cases were reported among displaced populations in Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia,

South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda, representing an 8% increase compared to January 2021. The majority of these (73%) were among camp-based refugees.

While the health impacts of COVID-19 on displaced populations have not been overly severe, partly owing to a quick shift in programming by humanitarian organisations towards COVID-19 prevention when the pandemic hit, the socio-economic impacts have been notably devastating.

Findings from an assessment of the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on refugees in Uganda, conducted between October and November 2020¹⁰, revealed that total incomes of 89% of refugee households had either declined or were lost since the introduction of the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020. Ninety-five percent (95%) of these households were residing in Kampala¹¹. Consequently, poverty incidence among refugee households had increased from 44% to 52%. In addition, their food security had also deteriorated significantly – 85% of refugee households reportedly ran out of food during the lockdown period, due to a lack of money or other resources, compared to 61% in 2018. More information can be found [here](#).

Food ration cuts, due to funding shortfalls, continue to compound the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. In addition to the 10-40% food ration cuts that have so far affected refugees in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, the World Food Programme (WFP) is expected to further undertake a 60% food ration cut among refugees in Rwanda from March 2021. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), protection concerns, including child labour and domestic violence, are growing as a result. Furthermore, affected populations are resorting to distress coping strategies such as skipping or reducing meal portions, taking high-interest loans, and selling productive assets in order to meet their basic needs.

⁹ FEWS NET. Sudan Food Security Outlook – Conflict and macro-economic crisis drive above-average needs through September 2021. February 2021

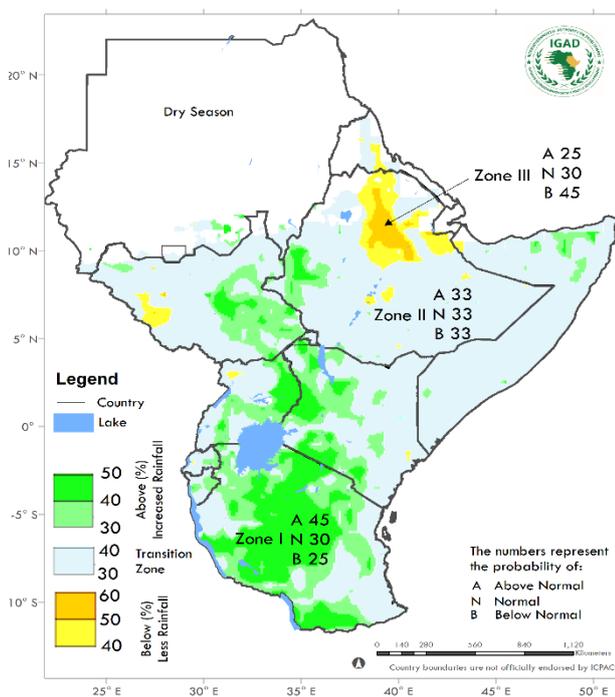
¹⁰ Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOs), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and World Bank. Monitoring Social and Economic Impacts of COVID-19 on Refugees in Uganda. Results from the High-Frequency Phone Survey. February 2021

¹¹ This differential impact could partially be attributed to the structure of employment in each region. Aside humanitarian assistance, remittances, wage employment and non-farm business were the most common sources of income among refugees in Kampala. Family farming, on the other hand, was a more common source of income among refugees in South West and West Nile.

Climate

According to the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), a wetter than usual March-May 2021 season is expected over parts of Burundi, western Ethiopia, western Kenya, parts of Rwanda, north-eastern Somalia, eastern South Sudan, Tanzania and eastern Uganda. On the other hand, drier than usual conditions are expected over eastern Eritrea, north-eastern Ethiopia, a few places over eastern Kenya and limited areas of western South Sudan.

MAM 2021 rainfall outlook



Source: ICPAC

Probabilities are less significant over most of the remaining parts of the region and as a result, no dominant category stands out.

The start of the season is expected to closely follow long-term average trends. However, a 1-2 weeks early onset is expected over south-western Ethiopia, western and some parts of eastern Kenya, southern Somalia, most of South Sudan, northern Tanzania and northern Uganda. On the other hand, 1-4 weeks delayed onset is expected over north-eastern Ethiopia.

For crops requiring more than 300 mm of rainfall, there are high chances (>50%) of more than 300 mm of rainfall over much of Burundi, south-western

Ethiopia, western Kenya, much of Rwanda, south-western South Sudan, much of Tanzania, and Uganda.

Crop conditions

Harvesting of main season crops in Ethiopia, Eritrea, parts of Kenya, parts of South Sudan, and Sudan were completed in January 2021. Favourable crop production was recorded across much of Ethiopia and Sudan despite extreme flooding during the season. Localised production shortfalls were, however, recorded in the southern Somali, Afar and Tigray regions of Ethiopia due to the combined effects of dry conditions, Desert Locusts, and conflict and insecurity. Poor production was also recorded in South Sudan due to floods and conflict and insecurity.

In Burundi, bimodal areas of Kenya, Somalia, southern South Sudan, Rwanda, northern and eastern Tanzania, and Uganda, harvesting of the October-December 2020 season crops was also completed in January 2021. Favourable crop production was recorded in central, eastern and southern Tanzania and in Uganda. Poor crop production was, however, recorded in parts of Kenya and Somalia, South Sudan and northern Tanzania due to below-average rains.

Desert Locusts continue to pose a threat to crops and pasture. At the time of reporting, swarms had been reported in northern and central Ethiopia, north-eastern, eastern and coastal Kenya, and north-western, north-eastern and south-central Somalia.

Recommendations

The FSNWG recommends:

- Immediate scale-up of multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance to save lives, reduce food consumption gaps and avert total collapse of livelihoods in areas with populations categorised in Crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase

3+), particularly in Tigray (where harvesting and markets remain disrupted, risking a deterioration in the food security situation), and in South Sudan.

- Close monitoring of the nutrition situation, especially with regard to the effects of COVID-19. Relatedly, continued COVID-19 adaptations to ensure delivery of essential nutrition services.
- Scale up in refugee response considering the 10-40% food ration cuts among refugees in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, and the 60% cut expected in Rwanda.
- Close monitoring and contingency plans, in view of the uncertainty of the March-May 2021 season performance in some parts of the region.
- Strengthened food security and nutrition information and early warning systems given the increasing frequency and severity of food security and nutrition shocks in the region.

Contacts

- **IGAD:** Charity Mumbua
(charity.sammy@igad.int)
- **FAO:** Brenda Lazarus
(Brenda.Lazarus@fao.org)