

## FSN WG<sup>1</sup> Food Security and Nutrition Update

### Key messages

- The main drivers of food insecurity in the region remain conflict, macroeconomic shocks, socio-economic effects of COVID-19 and climate-related hazards.
- Conflicts in various parts of the region continue to threaten lives and aggravate vulnerabilities as livelihoods are disrupted, assets and infrastructure are destroyed, and populations are displaced.
- Macroeconomic shocks, including inflation and currency depreciation, are driving food prices up across parts of the region, limiting households' access to food.
- The socio-economic effects of COVID-19, such as market disruptions and reduced incomes, continue to negatively impact the food security of vulnerable households.
- Pockets of drought conditions have been observed across the region, including parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, due to below-average October-December 2020 rains. Poor crop and livestock production is expected in parts of the region forecast to receive below-average rains between March and May 2021.
- The nutrition situation remains critical, with a high burden of chronic and acute malnutrition. In Ethiopia, for example, about 7.1 million children under the age of five and pregnant and lactating women (PLW) are estimated to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2021.
- Over 3.45 million people, or three-quarters of the refugee population in the region, have been affected by food ration cuts linked to funding shortfalls.
- Despite growing humanitarian needs and multiple hazards affecting the region, the humanitarian response remains underfunded. Further advocacy for resources to respond to life-threatening levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, and protect livelihoods is urgently needed.

**Figure 1: Food insecure population estimates<sup>2</sup>**

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 <sup>3</sup>	3,866,000	3,934,000	1,728,000	105,000	5,767,000
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
<b>IGAD Total</b>	<b>50,858,432</b>	<b>24,448,181</b>	<b>6,404,204</b>	<b>105,000</b>	<b>30,957,385</b>
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	40,779,169	20,533,697	6,728,624		27,262,321
<b>Total</b>	<b>97,349,814</b>	<b>47,709,110</b>	<b>13,668,834</b>	<b>105,000</b>	<b>61,482,944</b>

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Based on recent IPC analyses. Countries which do not have recent IPC analyses have been left out.

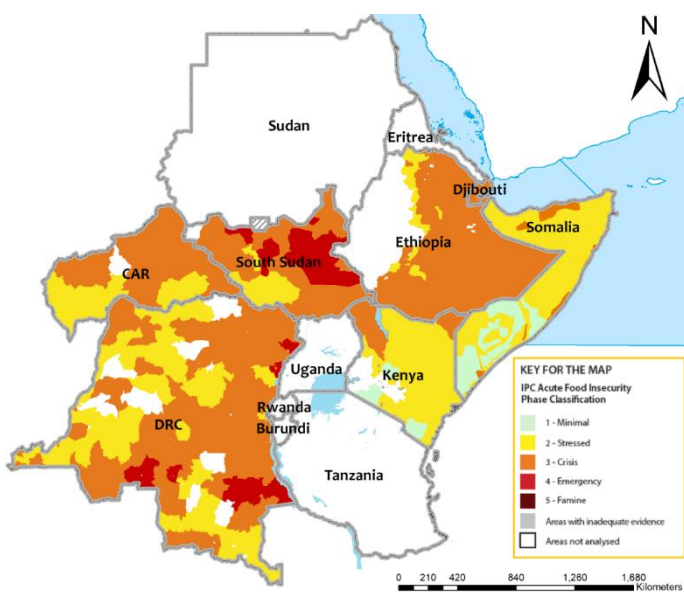
<sup>3</sup> Based on IPC Global Support Unit's consolidated findings from the South Sudan IPC Technical Working Group and external reviews (Famine Review and Quality Review), following a breakdown in technical consensus in the estimation of populations in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in six counties. According 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

Based on the most recent IPC analyses, an estimated 61.5 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 March 2021. Another 97.3 million people were Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and in need of livelihood support.

### Regional food security situation



Source: IPC GSU for East and Central Africa

Conflict, macroeconomic shocks, socio-economic effects of COVID-19 and climate-related hazards have contributed to these high levels of food insecurity across the region.

In South Sudan, unprecedented levels of food insecurity, including “famine-likely” conditions in Pibor county<sup>4</sup>, have been recorded, partly due to localised conflict. In Ethiopia, an updated IPC food security analysis has not yet been conducted though the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) estimates that Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are expected in central and eastern Tigray

through at least September 2021 due to the ongoing conflict<sup>5</sup>. Exacerbating the situation is a fluid humanitarian access situation that has left a significant population cut-off from humanitarian assistance. Additionally, in the DRC, armed and inter-communal conflicts, mainly in the East, continue to force population displacement.

Although the restrictive measures initially put in place to curb the spread of COVID-19 are gradually being lifted in parts of the region, their impacts continue. For example, households are still dealing with income losses from the erosion of their livelihoods, reflecting lingering disruptions from these measures. As a result, many vulnerable populations continue to face related pressure on their food security, especially in urban areas.

The pandemic has highlighted the need for food security analyses in urban areas, in addition to rural areas that have been the traditional targets for food security analyses.

Macroeconomic challenges, including inflation and currency depreciation, continue to cause food price spikes and negatively affect households purchasing power, especially in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan. In Sudan, for instance, staple food prices were 600-650 percent above the recent five-year average<sup>6</sup>, mainly due to the devaluation of the Sudanese Pound from 55 SDG|USD to 375 SDG|USD.

Pockets of drought conditions were reported in the region, including parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, following below-average October-December 2020 rains. Looking at the March-May 2021 seasonal forecast from the Fifty-Seventh Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF 57), below-average rains are expected over eastern Eritrea, north-eastern Ethiopia, very localised areas of eastern Kenya and limited areas of western South Sudan, risking poor crop and livestock production in these areas.

<sup>4</sup> According to a recent Famine Review Committee

<sup>5</sup> [FEWS NET. Ethiopia - Amid High National Needs, Tigray Remains of Greatest Concern with Conflict Driving Emergency Outcomes. February 2021](#)

<sup>6</sup> FEWS NET. Sudan - High food prices expected to drive high food assistance needs through the lean season. March 2021

## Nutrition

The nutrition situation in the region remains critical, with a high burden of chronic and acute malnutrition across all the countries.

In Ethiopia, about 7.1 million children under the age of five, and pregnant and lactating women (PLW) are estimated to suffer acute malnutrition through 2021, requiring a large-scale nutrition response across the country. The nutrition situation is particularly concerning in the Somali and the Tigray regions.

In the Somali region, there was a 27% increase in admissions for severe wasting in February 2021, compared to the same period in 2020. While this could partly be attributed to change in protocols for the management of acute malnutrition, high levels of food insecurity linked to desert locust damages, high food prices, water shortages, poor pasture availability for livestock, and a high occurrence of infectious diseases played a significant role.

In the Tigray region, recent nutrition data remains inadequate due to access challenges. However, available information at the time of reporting pointed to high levels of acute malnutrition, with children and PLW being the most affected. Overall, the nutrition situation requires special attention as it risks deteriorating.

In Uganda, high levels of acute malnutrition were recorded, specifically in the Karamoja region. Compared to the same period in 2020, moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) admissions in the region increased by about 110% in January 2021.

Funding gaps continue to slow down nutrition service delivery across the country. Nationally, SAM services were very low as F-75, F-100 and Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) commodity gaps were recorded. SAM admissions also remained low (37,531 or 17.1% of a total SAM burden of 219,731) largely due to limited screening and referral, and limited funding to scale up family-measured MUAC. A complete pipeline break in nutrition therapeutic

supplies is expected in January 2022 if no funding is received.

In Burundi, the prevalence of chronic malnutrition remained among the highest globally, with about 56% of children under the age of five reportedly stunted in 2020. On the other hand, a slight improvement was noted in Rwanda, with 33% of children under the age of five reportedly stunted in 2020 compared to 38% in 2015.

## Displacement

As of March 2021, a total of 2,418 COVID-19 cases had been confirmed among displaced populations in Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda, representing a 20% increase compared to February 2021. The majority of these (67%) were among camp-based refugees. Kenya had the highest caseload with 21% of the total cases being reported among its displaced populations. It was followed by Rwanda at 19%, South Sudan at 18%, Uganda at 16% and Ethiopia at 15%.

In addition to the health impact, the knock-on effects of COVID-19 continue to exacerbate the vulnerabilities of displaced populations. Early results from rapid response phone surveys<sup>7</sup>, conducted by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, UNHCR and the World Bank, to evaluate the socio-economic conditions of refugees in Kakuma camp in Kenya, revealed that the pandemic had notable effects on their livelihoods, education and health access. The employment rate among camp-based refugees fell to an alarmingly low 6% due to the pandemic. Furthermore, 92% of self-employed camp-based refugees experienced declines in business revenue. Regarding education, the pandemic had translated into nearly zero school attendance at the time of the assessment. Even though this was in line with the directive by the Government of Kenya to close schools, it was feared that re-enrolment rates might deteriorate once schools re-open. In respect to health access, 65% of camp-based refugees reported

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<sup>7</sup> The Kenya Rapid Response Phone Survey collects data from national, stateless, and refugee households, as well as from formal enterprises and micro-entrepreneurs every two months. These early results are

based on recently completed first three data collection rounds. Data collection started in May 2020

lower access to health facilities after the outbreak of COVID-19 compared to before, mainly due to fear of infection and unavailability of medical staff.

More information can be found [here](#).

The refugee response in the region remains underfunded, with over 3.45 million people, or three-quarters of the refugee population in the region, affected by food ration cuts linked to funding shortfalls. In the most recent case, the World Food Programme was forced to slash its monthly assistance to refugees in Rwanda by 60%, beginning March 2021.

### Climate

Looking at the March-May 2021 seasonal forecast from the Fifty-Seventh Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF 57), below-average rains are expected over eastern Eritrea, north-eastern Ethiopia, very localised areas of eastern Kenya and limited areas of western South Sudan, risking poor crop and livestock production in these areas.

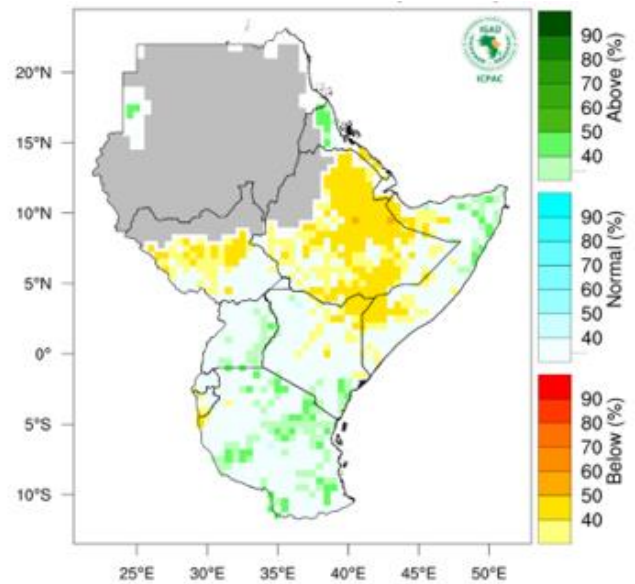
In respect to April, which is usually the peak for the March-May season, drier than usual conditions were forecast over central and eastern Kenya, much of Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, and most parts of Burundi, based on the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre's (ICPAC) updated forecast for April 2021.

On the other hand, there was a moderate likelihood of wetter than average conditions over southern Kenya, north eastern Somalia, parts of northern and western Tanzania, and eastern Uganda.

Average conditions were forecast over much of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, and in north western Tanzania.

ICPAC is monitoring the season's performance and providing updates as and when necessary.

### Updated April 2021 rainfall outlook



Source: ICPAC

### Conflict

Armed conflicts, violent extremism, ethnic violence and localised inter-and intra-communal violence continue to threaten peace and security in the region, especially in Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan.

In the Tigray region of Ethiopia, the conflict that began in November 2020 has culminated in widespread displacement, as well as a severe food security and nutrition emergency requiring an immediate humanitarian response. Though an updated IPC analysis has not yet been conducted, Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of acute food insecurity, along with high levels of acute malnutrition, are expected in central and eastern Tigray through at least September 2021, according to FEWS NET<sup>8</sup>.

Moreover, the dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan over the Al-Fashqa border region and the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Blue Nile River, remains a concern.

<sup>8</sup> [FEWS NET. Ethiopia - Amid High National Needs, Tigray Remains of Greatest Concern with Conflict Driving Emergency Outcomes. February 2021](#)

The Kenya-Somalia maritime boundary dispute continues to sever diplomatic ties between the two countries. This could negatively impact the livelihoods of pastoral communities along the border areas, as their movement in search for water and pasture is hampered. Livestock trading and flows in the Kenya-Somalia trade corridor could also be negatively impacted.

In South Sudan, despite warring parties committing to a cessation of hostilities, localised inter-communal violence persists, displacing thousands of people and crippling the food security and livelihoods of growing numbers of people.

### Humanitarian snapshot

The region is facing many challenges, including critical levels of food insecurity in South Sudan, conflict in Tigray, large numbers of displaced populations (the majority of whom face food ration-cuts), adverse socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, and an uncertain March-May 2021 rain season.

Despite these multiple hazards and growing humanitarian needs, the humanitarian response in the region remains largely underfunded. Further advocacy for resources to respond to life-threatening levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, and protect livelihoods is therefore urgently needed.

### Humanitarian funding by country (million USD)<sup>9</sup>

Country	Required	Funded	Funded (%)
Ethiopia <sup>10</sup>	1,500	89.6	6%
Somalia	1,090	41.7	3.8%
South Sudan	1,680	22	1.3%
Sudan	1,940	139.5	7.2%

Source: OCHA

### Recommendations

The FSNWG recommends:

- Continued coordinated planning, resource mobilisation and response by all concerned actors to effectively address food security gaps, especially among populations categorised in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3+) levels of acute food insecurity.
- Scale-up of nutrition interventions to support recovery and prevent further deterioration of the nutrition situation.
- Collective advocacy to increase awareness of crises in the region and mobilise resources to respond to the various humanitarian needs in the region.
- Close monitoring of the food security situation in areas affected by conflict, especially given the escalating insecurity and conflict in parts of the region.
- Peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms, and high-level advocacy on humanitarian access, considering the role of conflict in driving food insecurity.
- Close monitoring and contingency plans relating to drought, in view of the uncertainty of the March-May 2021 season performance in some parts of the region.

### Contacts

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<sup>9</sup> As of 25 March 2021

<sup>10</sup> Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is yet to be approved by the Government