

FSN WG¹ Food Security and Nutrition Update²

Key messages

- An estimated 53.6 million people in Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda were severely food insecure (IPC³ Phase 3+) and in need of urgent assistance in October 2020.
- Below-average rains are forecast through December 2020, which could further threaten food security and livelihoods across the region.
- Over 13.2 million children⁴ across the IGAD region are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition. Within this, 3.6 million are severely malnourished.
- There are signs of regional trade recovery following the easing of some COVID-19 related measures. Nonetheless, the lagging effects of these measures, including delays in the movement of commodity trucks across borders, continue to impede trade.
- Millions of people, particularly in Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan, are dealing with the aftermath of recent widespread flooding, aggravating an already critical situation for many who have already been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, desert locust upsurge, and conflict and insecurity.
- Humanitarian funding gaps continue to be reported across all major humanitarian sectors. In the IGAD region for instance, only 43% of the total funding requirement for 2020 had been met by October 2020, representing a 4% increase compared to the previous month (September 2020).

Figure 1: Food Insecure Population Estimates⁵

Country	Stressed (IPC Phase 2)	Crisis (IPC Phase 3)	Emergency (IPC Phase 4)	Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5)	Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3+)
Ethiopia	12,440,774	5,856,056	814,259	-	6,670,315
Kenya	3,745,000	1,022,500	296,500	-	1,319,000
Somalia	3,012,000	1,703,000	400,000	-	2,103,000
South Sudan	3,285,000	4,735,000	1,745,000	-	6,480,000
Sudan	15,900,000	7,400,000	2,200,000	-	9,600,000
Uganda	4,485,497	1,642,222	382,809	-	2,025,031
IGAD Total	42,868,271	22,358,778	5,838,568	-	28,197,346
Burundi	3,293,345	713,462	42,054	-	755,516
CAR	1,619,209	1,608,758	753,979	-	2,362,737
DRC	29,024,132	16,131,386	5,703,327	-	21,834,713
Tanzania	1,845,763	481,036	7,625	-	488,661
Total	78,650,720	41,293,420	12,345,553	-	53,638,973

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 Information pertaining to Ethiopia was gathered before the ongoing political crisis in the country.

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

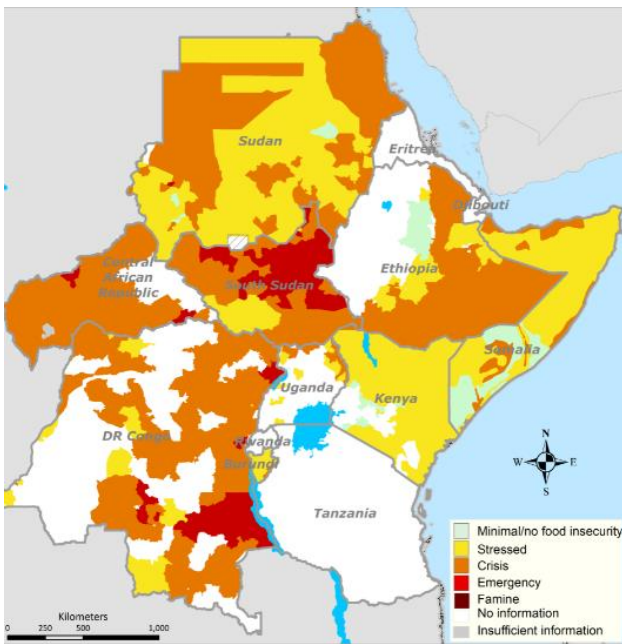
⁴ Aged 6-59 months.

⁵ This is based on recent IPC analyses. Countries which do not have recent IPC analyses have been left out.

Sector updates

Food security

High levels of food insecurity persist in many parts of the region, owing largely to the combined effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the desert locust upsurge, and widespread flooding that has been witnessed across the region since June 2020. Exacerbating factors include protracted food insecurity from previous shocks and conflict and insecurity. Based on the most recent IPC analyses, an estimated 53.6 million people in Burundi, CAR, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda were severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3+) and in need of urgent assistance in October 2020. An additional 78.6 million were Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and in need of livelihood support.



Source: IPC

Populations of concern

Though the majority of food insecure people remain in rural areas, additional populations of concern include urban residents whose livelihoods have been disrupted by the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, around one million people, representing 41% of the population

analysed in informal settlements in Kisumu, Mombasa and Nairobi counties in Kenya, and about 0.25 million people, representing 15% of the population analysed in Kampala in Uganda, were estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3+). Other populations of concern are displaced populations, who often are confronted with limited livelihood opportunities and low coping capacities in the event of a shock.

The DRC had the largest food insecure population in the region, where 21.8 million people, representing 33% of the total analysed population, were severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3+). In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, other key drivers included floods, desert locust upsurge, conflict and insecurity, which have been driving displacement, and an economic decline that is negatively affecting households' purchasing power.

In terms of prevalence, South Sudan had the largest proportion of food insecure population, with 55% of the analysed population estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3+). Key drivers included the cumulative effects of flooding and insecurity, related population displacements and a protracted macro-economic crisis that is being exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The South Sudan IPC analysis is currently ongoing and updated figures will likely be available shortly.

In Ethiopia, an estimated 6.7 million people were estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3+), compared to 8.5 million people in September 2020. This decline can likely be attributed to the Meher harvests.⁶ However, it is important to note that this estimation was done prior to current political crisis in the country. Similar to South Sudan, this figure could change following the ongoing IPC analysis in the country.

Sustained assistance to affected populations and continuous monitoring of the situation in relation to the shocks highlighted above are therefore crucial.

⁶ Main growing season in Ethiopia which sets in after mid-May through September.

Nutrition

The levels of acute malnutrition remain high, with over 13.2 million children⁷ across the IGAD region projected to be acutely malnourished. Within this, 3.6 million require lifesaving treatment for Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM).

Notably in Somalia, 849,900 children will likely face acute malnutrition through August 2021, including 143,400 who will likely face SAM. Compared to other population groups, internally displaced populations (IDPs) appeared to be disproportionately affected by malnutrition. Contributing factors included food insecurity, disease outbreaks, poor care practices, and low immunisation and Vitamin-A supplementation.

In Ethiopia, SAM admissions stood at 275,495 between January and August 2020, 13.2% higher compared to the same period in 2019. In addition, over 300,000 people have been displaced following the widespread floods witnessed across the country, especially in Afar, Amhara, Gambella, Oromia, Somali and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) regions between June and September 2020. The Government of Ethiopia estimates that within this, more than 10,000 children and 5,000 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) will suffer acute malnutrition^{8,9}.

In Uganda, approximately 20,000 children¹⁰ with severe acute malnutrition were admitted for treatment in the Karamoja region. Even so, detection is low due to a lack of Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) tapes. In addition, SAM management is poor, due to inadequate funding to support interventions.

In addition to factors, such as stock outs and conflict and insecurity, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt the delivery of essential nutrition services, risking an increase in all forms of malnutrition across the region. Vitamin-A supplementation tops the list of disrupted services. In view of COVID-19 triggered

disruptions, certain programme adaptations, including the reduction of follow up visits for wasted children and implementation of family-measured MUAC, are being made to reduce the impact of the disruptions.

Going forward, it is critical that nutrition services are enhanced with special focus on prevention and resilience.

Market and trade

Generally, the ongoing gradual lifting of COVID-19 related restrictions has led to an increase in regional trade. However, their lagging effects continue to pose serious delays to cross border trade, due to border screenings. This in turn is increasing the cost of cross border trucking.

Trends in commodity trade remained varied. For instance, a 130% increase was recorded in the volume of maize traded across the region in the third quarter of the year compared to the second quarter. Still, this was 29% lower than the recent five-year average, owing partially to the effects of COVID-19. Conversely, a 37% decline was recorded in the volume of sorghum traded in the third quarter of the year compared to the second quarter. Contributing factors included a substantial depreciation of the South Sudanese pound, making imports expensive, increased transportation cost due to COVID-19 related procedures, and a below-average harvest in Sudan, impacting export volumes. Regarding livestock trade, despite the end of Hajj, cattle exports from Ethiopia to Somalia increased because of re-export demand to Egypt and other Middle East countries. Similarly, goat exports to Kenya also increased following the re-opening of border markets. Trade in other animals, however, remained low due to COVID-19 related restrictions.

In terms of commodity prices, prices of staple food commodities continued to exhibit mixed trends,

⁷ Aged 6-59 months.

⁸ Information pertaining to Ethiopia was gathered before the ongoing crisis in the country.

⁹ Government of Ethiopia. Flood Response Plan – 2020 Kiremt Season Floods. September 2020.

¹⁰ Aged 6-59 months.

mainly due to different harvest times. Whereas maize prices remained stable or recorded a decline in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda, owing to recent harvests, the prices of millet, sorghum and locally produced wheat in South Sudan and Sudan recorded an increase as supplies tightened (due to the June-October lean season) and increased demand. Livestock prices remained stable due to water, pasture and browse availability. Markedly, adverse macro-economic conditions continue to trigger an upward trend in commodity prices in Burundi, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan.

Further, local currencies continued to depreciate against the United States Dollar (USD), making imports expensive. Of particular concern is the South Sudanese Pound (SSP). Since the fall in oil prices in March 2020, the country's USD earnings have been on a decline, stretching its foreign currency reserves. Consequently, the SSP has been progressively losing value, hitting an all-time high of SSP.750/USD in October 2020, compared to SSP.275/USD in March 2020, representing a 175% loss in value.

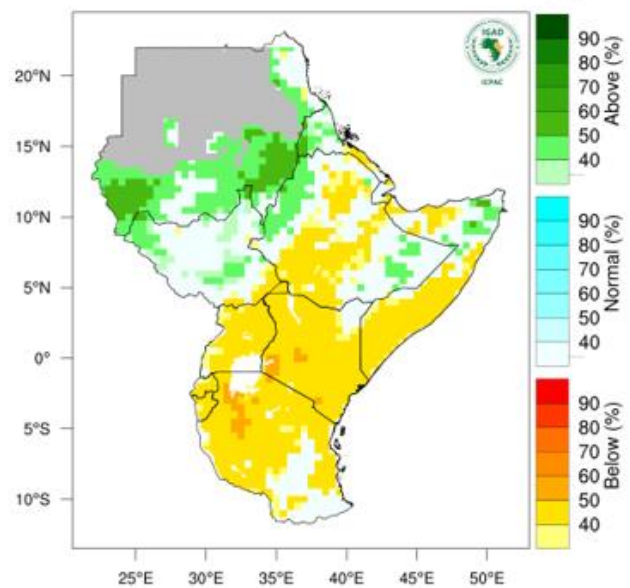
Climate

A poor October-December (OND) 2020 season is expected, driven by a La Niña phenomenon in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. Presently, it is projected that this La Niña phenomenon will persist at least through February 2021.

Considering that the OND season is a major cropping season for Burundi, southern Ethiopia, Kenya, southern Somalia, Rwanda, much of Tanzania and Uganda, this presents poor prospects for crop performance, risking a further deterioration of food security and nutrition outcomes in parts of the region, more so in light of the multiple food security shocks that the region is already facing.

Further, the projected below-average rains could also lead to a shortage of pasture and water for livestock, leading to poor body conditions and hence low meat and milk production. This will in turn negatively impact pastoral livelihoods.

November 2020-January 2021 forecast



Source: ICPAC

While the risks posed by these below-average rains may be uneven across the region, actors are urged to update their contingency plans in view of this.

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

Conflict

Armed conflicts, violent extremism, inter-communal violence and political tensions continued to disrupt peace and security in the region. This is particularly a concern given that past experiences have shown a complex relationship between conflict and food insecurity, each triggering and/or reinforcing the other.

In Ethiopia, political tension continues to rise following news of delayed general elections, originally scheduled for this year¹¹. In Samburu County in Kenya, communities continue to grapple with inter-communal violence, resulting from border conflicts, cattle rustling and revenge attacks, and competition over land and water resources. Political tension is also rising in South Sudan as the Real Sudan People's Liberation Movement (R-SPLM) refused to sign the South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA) charter unless the

¹¹ Information pertaining to Ethiopia was gathered before the ongoing crisis in the country.

South Sudan United Front (SSUF) is reintegrated in the alliance of non-signatory groups.

Across the region, the projected below-average OND 2020 seasonal rains are likely to trigger atypical livestock migrations in search of water and pasture. This could lead to inter-communal conflicts among pastoral communities due to competition for these resources.

On a positive note, Sudan’s transitional government and a coalition of rebel groups signed a peace deal aimed at ending decades of conflict.

Humanitarian snapshot

Millions of people across the region are still dealing with the lagging effects of the widespread flooding witnessed between June and September 2020, aggravating an already challenging food security and nutrition situation. In Ethiopia, about 1.1 million people were affected, including over 300,000 displaced. Similarly, in Sudan, roughly 875,000 people were affected, including over 150 killed, by the country’s worst floods in decades. In Somalia, over 633,000 people were affected including 43,000 displaced, and in Kenya, water levels in several Rift Valley lakes, particularly Lake Baringo and Lake Naivasha, were at historically high levels.

Furthermore, humanitarian funding gaps continue to be reported across all countries in the region and across major humanitarian sectors.

Humanitarian funding by country (million USD)

Country	Required	Funded	Funded (%)
South Sudan	1899.9	824.1	43%
Sudan	1633.4	751.2	46%
Ethiopia	1473.8	494.1	34%
Somalia	1009.9	618.7	61%
Kenya	286.7	106.7	38%
Uganda	316.4	20.5	6%
Djibouti	30	4.5	15%

Source: OCHA

As at 28th October 2020, only 43% of the funding requirement for the 2020 combined humanitarian response plan (HRP) and COVID-19 response had been met. Of the IGAD countries, Somalia was the most funded, at 61%.

Desert Locust Upsurge

The desert locust situation in the region still remains dire, particularly in Ethiopia and Somalia, which are the epicentres of the invasion.

In Ethiopia, numerous swarms formed in the northeast during the month. However, the situation is improving following an intensification of control efforts, and as swarms moved north into the highlands, south into the Rift Valley and further east to the Somali region.

In Somalia, mature swarms in the northeast moved southwards to the central parts of the country, and the adjacent areas in eastern Ethiopia.

As widespread breeding continues in these areas, a new generation of immature swarms is expected to form in December 2020 and move south, threatening southeast Ethiopia, northeast Kenya and southern Somalia.

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. Livelihood support and resilience building is also recommended for populations in Stress (IPC Phase 2).
- Governments and relevant actors to provide targeted livelihood support to populations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Resumption of nutrition surveys and data collection following the recently released global guidance on safe data collection in the context of COVID-19, as appropriate to the context. In addition, remote data collection approaches to continue being used to provide vital information around diets, practices and food security. Relatedly, continued COVID-19 adaptations to ensure delivery of essential nutrition services, especially Vitamin A supplementation.
- Urgent and integrated interventions should be prioritised to support recovery and prevent deterioration in the nutrition situation in the region. Within this, the FSNWG calls for additional funding to support nutrition interventions in the region.
- Given the forecast below-average rains through December 2020, actors are encouraged to update contingency plans and activate sectoral response plans to facilitate timely response, as and when necessary.
- A scale up of institutional, infrastructural and technical investments in order to intensify desert locust control operations in the region.
- Close monitoring of the situation and contingency planning, in view of the political situation in Ethiopia.

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