

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

### Key messages

- According to the IPC<sup>2</sup>, at least 55.3 million people in 10 of the 13 countries covered by the FSNWG were highly food insecure (IPC Phase 3+) in March 2023. Of these, 25.8 million were from six of the eight IGAD member states. In addition, 20.1 million people were targeted for food assistance in Ethiopia according to the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). If this figure is added on, an estimated 75.4 million people were in need of urgent food assistance during the month in 11 of the 13 countries covered by the FSNWG, 45.9 million of them in seven of the eight IGAD member states.
- Across the countries covered by the IPC, the over 9.6 million people classified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and 129,150 people classified in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) – 96,150 in Somalia and 33,000 in South Sudan – were of particular concern.
- In Somalia, the Risk of Famine remains a possibility among rural agro-pastoral households in Burhakaba and new internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Baidoa and Mogadishu between April and June in a worst-case scenario where the performance of the ongoing season is worse than currently forecast and humanitarian assistance does not reach the most vulnerable.
- The number of forcibly displaced populations has been on an upward trend, with over 4.96 million refugees and asylum seekers and 11.71 million IDPs present in the region. This includes 1.83 million new IDPs in Ethiopia and Somalia due to drought, and nearly 100,000 new refugees in Ethiopia due to the recent conflict in Laascaanood in Somalia.
- Though improved rainfall from mid-March has brought some reprieve to pastoral and agro-pastoral communities, it has also caused river overflows and flash floods in some areas. Given the magnitude of livelihood losses and population displacements observed in the region, the impacts of the drought will likely continue regardless of seasonal performance.
- Scaled-up humanitarian response remains critical to mitigating the high multi-sectoral humanitarian needs in the region.

### Food insecure population estimates, as of March 2023

IPC analyses	Stressed (IPC Phase 2)	Crisis (IPC Phase 3)	Emergency (IPC Phase 4)	Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5)	Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3+ or equivalent)
Djibouti	414,767	179,778	12,390		192,168
Kenya	5,905,188	4,213,529	1,224,686		5,438,215
Somalia	3,136,145	3,528,750	1,360,030	96,150	4,984,930
South Sudan	3,840,000	4,311,000	1,966,000	33,000	6,310,000
Sudan	17,746,553	6,189,076	1,549,705		7,738,781
Uganda (partial)	2,553,245	1,050,595	50,925		1,101,520
<b>IGAD Total</b>	<b>33,595,898</b>	<b>19,472,728</b>	<b>6,163,736</b>	<b>129,150</b>	<b>25,756,614</b>
Burundi	3,660,000	1,353,000	51,000		1,404,000
CAR	2,004,079	2,011,128	641,565		2,652,693
DRC	47,192,223	21,707,327	2,813,131		24,520,458
Tanzania (partial)	3,759,399	990,097			990,097
<b>Total</b>	<b>90,211,599</b>	<b>45,534,280</b>	<b>9,669,432</b>	<b>129,150</b>	<b>55,332,862</b>

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

### Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) – Population targeted for food assistance

Ethiopia	20,100,000
----------	------------

Source: 2023 Ethiopia HRP

<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 on food security and nutrition to relevant stakeholders for improved decision making

<sup>2</sup> The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a set of standardised 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)

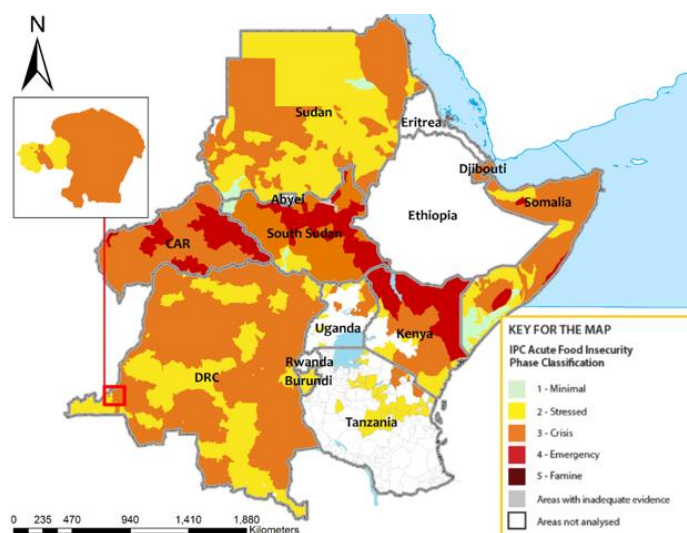
## Sector updates

### Food security

The food security situation in the region continues to be of utmost concern, with widespread Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes being recorded in large part as a result of the impacts of a historic five-season drought, conflict and insecurity, displacement, and macroeconomic challenges.

According to the most recent IPC data, an estimated 55.3 million people in 10 of the 13 countries covered by FSNWG were highly food insecure (IPC Phase 3+) in March 2023. Of these, 25.8 million were from six of the eight IGAD member states – Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. The other nearly 29.6 million were from Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Tanzania. An additional 20.1 million people were targeted for food assistance in Ethiopia, according to the 2023 Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). If this figure is added on, an estimated 75.4 million people were in need of immediate food assistance during the month in 11 of the 13 countries covered by the FSNWG, 45.9 million of them in seven of the eight IGAD member states.

### Regional food security situation, as of March 2023



Source: IPC-GSU for East and Central Africa

Across the countries covered by the IPC, an additional 90.2 million people were Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and in need of livelihood support and resilience building, including 33.6 million from the IGAD region.

The 2022 October-December (OND) rainfall season culminated in the fifth consecutive season of drought in parts of southern and south-eastern Ethiopia, the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of Kenya, and across large parts of Somalia, worsening already severe drought impacts on pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods.

Since the start of the drought, seasonal harvests in affected areas have been subpar, adversely impacting food availability and income sources for many. In southern Somalia, for instance, cereal harvest from the 2022 OND season, which concluded in January-February 2023, was estimated at 67,200 tons – 32% below the 1995-2021 average<sup>3</sup>. This has in turn put upward pressure on food prices, which, while they have begun to decline from their peak, remain above average, significantly curtailing household purchasing power<sup>4</sup>.

Extensive livestock deaths have also been recorded due to a lack of water and pasture, with the last estimate being 13.2 million – 6.8 million in Ethiopia, 2.6 million in Kenya and 3.8 million in Somalia – eroding the primary source of livelihoods and nutrition, particularly for pastoral communities. Poor body conditions of many of the remaining livestock have been limiting their production and saleability.

Furthermore, it is estimated that 1.83 million people – 1.32 million in Somalia and 510,000 in Ethiopia – have been internally displaced as a result of the drought, and more than 221,000 new refugees and asylum seekers have arrived in drought-affected areas since January 2022<sup>5</sup>, raising the risk of conflict between host and displaced populations due to competition for scarce resources, and exposing women and children, in particular, to several protection risks. Newly displaced populations have also been experiencing very concerning rates of acute malnutrition, exceeding the 15% Emergency threshold in many areas.

Earlier forecasts for the ongoing March-May (MAM) rainfall season had pointed to depressed rainfall, coupled with high temperatures, risking a sixth consecutive season of drought in affected areas<sup>6</sup>. Looking at the performance so far, improved rainfall was recorded from mid-March onwards, improving pasture and water availability in some pastoral areas such as southern Ethiopia, and facilitating land preparation in the agro-pastoral areas. In numerous ASAL

<sup>3</sup> [IPC. Multi-Partner Technical Release on Somalia 2022 Post Deyr Assessment. February 2023](#)

<sup>4</sup> [FEWS NET. East Africa Price Bulletin. February 2023](#)

<sup>5</sup> [UNHCR. Drought Response in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. February 2023](#)

<sup>6</sup> [ICPAC. GHACOF 63 Statement. February 2023](#)

areas in Kenya however, poor vegetation conditions persisted, indicating that optimal regeneration had not occurred.

At the same time, and in a likely reflection of the region’s proneness to duality of weather extremes, the rains have been heavy in certain parts of the region, causing river overflows and flash floods in some areas, many of which were already struggling to recover from the prolonged drought. This has resulted in the destruction of homes, farmlands and shelters for some displaced populations (including those recently displaced by drought), death of humans, and an increased risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera. For instance, as of 05 April, 29 people had reportedly died in Ethiopia’s Somali region, with 240,000 others affected or displaced across the country due to floods<sup>7</sup>. Rising water levels in the Shabelle and Juba rivers, following increased rains in the Ethiopian highlands, had also caused the death of 21 people and affected more than 13,000 households in Baardheere in Somalia<sup>8</sup>. Livestock deaths have also been reported and risk rising, considering that livestock with poor body conditions from the drought are more susceptible to death from hypothermia, pneumonia, anthrax and other diseases associated with increased rains.

Overall, while the rains may provide some reprieve to drought-affected populations, it is unlikely that they will be sufficient to improve their outlook. The protracted nature of the drought and magnitude of livelihood losses and population displacements, point to continued drought impacts, including widespread Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes.

At the time of reporting, 21.4 million people were estimated to be food insecure and in need of immediate food assistance due to the drought. This includes 11 million people in the drought-affected areas of Ethiopia, 5.4 million people in Kenya and 4.98 million people in Somalia. In Somalia, where the Risk of Famine remains a possibility in a worst-case scenario, it is projected that 6.5 million people will be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3+), including 222,000 in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), between April and June<sup>9</sup>.

Meanwhile, conflict and insecurity continued to displace populations, disrupt livelihoods, restrict access to essential services and infrastructure, and limit humanitarian access,

severely compromising food security in various parts of the region, including parts of Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, CAR and the DRC.

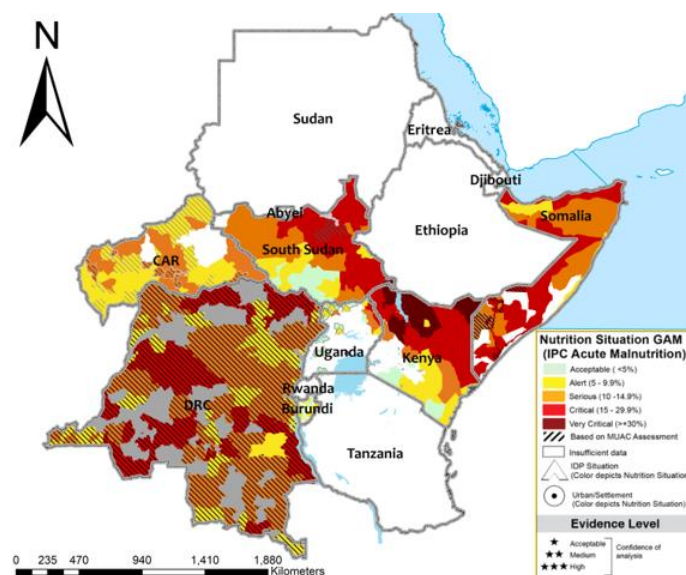
Looking at Somalia, an estimated 154,000-203,000 people had been internally displaced across the country, at least 80 killed and more than 450 injured due to the recently erupted conflict in Laascaanood in Sool region, as of 09 March<sup>10</sup>. Close to 100,000 others, mostly women and children, have fled to Ethiopia's Somali region, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Macroeconomic challenges, including inflation, local currency depreciation and low foreign currency reserves, compounded by global food and fuel supply and price shocks, are concurrently exacerbating food insecurity across the region by constraining households’ purchasing power.

## Nutrition

High levels of acute malnutrition (AMN) continue to be recorded in various parts of the region, driven by the combined effects of the ongoing drought, poor feeding practices, conflict and insecurity, poor access to safe water, and disease outbreaks, including cholera and measles, among others.

### Regional acute malnutrition situation, as of March 2023



Source: IPC-GSU for East and Central Africa

<sup>7</sup> ECHO. Daily Flash. April 2023

<sup>8</sup> OCHA. Somalia Gu Rainy Season 2023-Flash Floods Update No.2. April 2023

<sup>9</sup> IPC et al. Somalia Multi-Partner Technical Release on 2022 Post Deyr Assessment. February 2023

<sup>10</sup> Somalia Health Cluster. Laascaanood Conflict Update. March 2023

Due to the time lag required for pasture recovery and crop production, and subsequent effects on food security and nutrition, the prevalence of acute malnutrition in the drought-affected areas is expected to remain high regardless of the performance of the ongoing rainfall season.

### Country updates

In Ethiopia, high proxy global acute malnutrition (GAM) and severe acute malnutrition (SAM) rates<sup>11</sup> continued to be recorded in the drought and conflict-affected areas. For example, in the Borana zone of Oromia, proxy GAM of 19.5% and SAM of 1.5% were recorded among under-five children following a Find and Treat campaign conducted in March. In the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNP), proxy GAM of 15% and SAM of 1.8% were recorded among under-five children across 20 woredas. Meanwhile, in the northern part of the country, higher SAM admissions were noted in January compared to the same period in previous years, except in Amhara region. In Afar, where a rapid nutrition assessment was conducted in previously conflict-affected woredas, proxy GAM among under-five children ranged between 15.9% in Berahle to 39.9% in Ewwa.

In Kenya, acute malnutrition cases sustained an upward trend, with Critical (IPC AMN Phase 4) to Extremely Critical (IPC AMN Phase 5) levels of acute malnutrition being recorded in several ASAL counties. Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana North and Turkana South specifically were in Extremely Critical (IPC AMN Phase 5).

More than 970,000 under-five children were estimated to be acutely malnourished across the country, close to 243,000 of them severely so. At least 142,000 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) were also estimated to be acutely malnourished. Looking at month-on-month admission trends, 25,922 under-five children in the ASAL counties were admitted for SAM treatment between January and February 2023, representing a 64% increase compared to the same period in 2022. Exacerbating the situation are floods being experienced in various parts of the country, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases.

The nutrition situation in Somalia remains critical, with over 1.8 million under-five children estimated to be acutely malnourished, close to 478,000 of them severely so.

Populations of utmost concern include agro-pastoral communities in Burhakaba, and IDPs in Baidoa and Mogadishu, among which extreme levels of mortality have been noted. For instance, the under-five death rate (U5DR) among IDPs in Baidoa and Mogadishu is estimated at 4.9 and 4.2, respectively. Relatedly, following a retrospective study of mortality in Somalia, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) estimates that 43,000 excess deaths occurred in 2022 in the country due to the current drought, half of them among under-five children. The majority of the deaths were estimated to have occurred in Bay, Bakool and Banadir regions<sup>12</sup>.

In South Sudan, where the acute malnutrition situation is expected to further deteriorate following the start of the lean season (April-July), 59 out of 77 counties were estimated to be in Serious (IPC AMN Phase 3) and above levels of acute malnutrition. Of these, 44 were estimated to be in Critical (IPC AMN Phase 4). Overall, 1.4 million children under the age of five were estimated to be acutely malnourished across the country, 345,890 of them severely so. Close to 738,000 PLWs were also estimated to be acutely malnourished. Looking at month-on-month admission trends, 40,286 under-five children with SAM were admitted into inpatient and outpatient treatment programs between January and February 2023, which is a 26% increase compared to the same period in 2022. The highest admissions were recorded in Northern Bahr el Ghazal state (18.2%), Jonglei (17.3%) and Unity (12.6%).

Meanwhile in Uganda, 10,782 under-five children were admitted for SAM treatment between January and February 2023, representing a 17% increase compared to the same period in 2022. In the Karamoja region in particular, 3,057 under-five children with SAM were admitted into inpatient and outpatient treatment programs, representing a 10% decline compared to the same period in 2022 and a 29% increase compared to the same period in 2021, partly attributed to an earlier than usual start of the lean season (in January) following below-average late 2022 harvests<sup>13</sup>.

### Displacement

As of 28 February 2023, the region hosted an estimated 4.96 million refugees and asylum seekers – the majority (2.24 million) from South Sudan – and 11.71 million IDPs.

<sup>11</sup> Based on mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC)

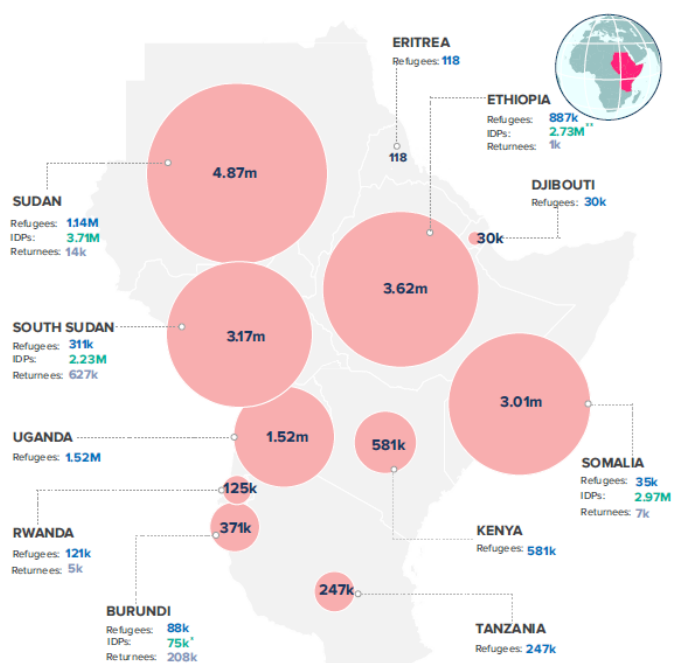
<sup>12</sup> [LSHTM et al. From Insight to Action: Examining Mortality in Somalia. March 2023](#)

<sup>13</sup> [FEWS NET. Uganda Key Message Update January-May 2023. January 2023](#)



The number of forcibly displaced populations in the region has been increasing, driven mainly by conflict and insecurity, and climatic shocks (drought on one hand and flooding on the other) in various parts of the region. At the time of reporting, an estimated 1.83 million people had been internally displaced in Ethiopia and Somalia due to the drought since January 2022, and more than 221,000 refugees had arrived in drought-affected areas. In addition, nearly 100,000 new refugees had arrived in Ethiopia's Doolo zone since 06 February 2023, fleeing conflict in Laascaanood in Somalia.

### Refugees, asylum seekers, refugee returnees and IDPs, as of February 2023



Source: UNHCR

The nutrition situation among displaced populations has continued to deteriorate, with nutrition screenings among new arrival refugee children across Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda largely revealing GAM prevalences above the 15% Emergency threshold. In the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, GAM prevalences of 9% and 13% were recorded among new arrival refugee children (under-five) screened for malnutrition, based on mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC), oedema and weight-for-height z-score (WHZ), in January and February 2023 respectively. In both months, a SAM prevalence of 3% was recorded among the screened children. Meanwhile, in Imvepi refugee settlement in Uganda, a GAM prevalence of 18% and a SAM prevalence of 6% were recorded among new arrival refugee children aged 6-59 months in January 2023.

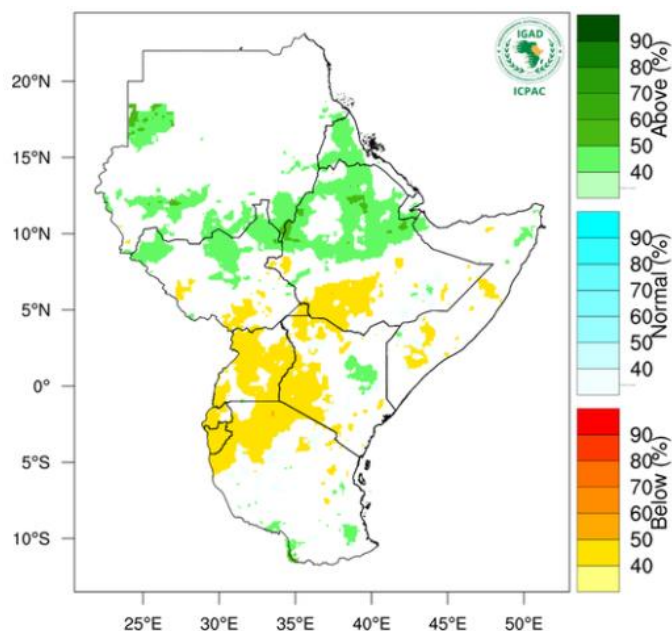
Looking at Doolo zone in Ethiopia, specifically Bokh, Danot and Galhamor woredas, MUAC-based nutrition screenings of new arrival refugee children (under-five) from Somalia, conducted in March revealed a GAM prevalence of 26.5% and a SAM prevalence of 4% pointing to a critical situation.

Food ration cuts from the recommended 2100 kilocalories per person per day (kcal|p|d), which have affected 3.8 million (90%) of the camp-based refugees in the region, combined with the impacts of the current drought, high food prices and limited livelihood opportunities, are aggravating the already severe food security and nutrition situation of displaced populations in the region.

### Climate

According to the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), parts of Ethiopia, western Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania recorded more than 50 millimetres (mm) of rainfall between 11-20 March. From 21-31 March, between 50 and 150 mm of rainfall were recorded over parts of central Ethiopia, western Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania (with western parts of Tanzania recording significantly higher rainfall), resulting in flash floods and river overflows in certain areas.

### Rainfall probabilistic forecast for April-June 2023



Source: ICPAC

Looking at ICPAC's forecast for April-June 2023, drier than normal conditions are expected over southern Ethiopia, southwestern to central Kenya, pockets of southern and central Somalia, Uganda, Burundi, most parts of Rwanda

and north-western Tanzania. Meanwhile, wetter than normal conditions are expected over parts of Eritrea, northern Ethiopia, localised areas of Kenya and Somalia, northern South Sudan, and localised parts of Tanzania risking the occurrence of floods especially in the flood-prone areas.

Models have no confidence over much of south-eastern Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan, and as such, rainfall in these areas could be above normal, normal or less than normal, indicating the need for close monitoring of the forecast. Above-average temperatures are forecast over most parts of the region.

A review of the state of climate drivers indicates that both the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) are currently neutral, though typically, these drivers are not expected to have a significant influence on the MAM rainfall season. There is, however, a probability of El Niño forming later in the year, which if it materialises, could lead to depressed rains in the northern parts of the region during the June–September (JJAS) rainfall season and increased rains in the equatoria to southern parts of the region during the October–December (OND) rainfall season.

### Humanitarian response

Though extremely high levels of humanitarian needs are expected to persist, and possibly increase, in 2023, funding for humanitarian response continues to fall short of keeping up with the rising levels of need in the region. There is, therefore, an urgent need for sustained advocacy and resource mobilisation to ensure an immediate and multi-sectoral response, especially to the life-threatening needs in the region.

#### HRP funding by country (million USD), as of 29 March 2023

Country	Required	Funded	Funded (%)
Ethiopia	3,994.8	720	18%
Kenya*	451.8	54	12%
Somalia	2,599.2	387.3	14.9%
South Sudan	1,699.9	391.5	23%
Sudan	1,747.4	221.6	12.7%

\*Drought Response Plan

Source: OCHA

Countries also received funding outside the plans – Ethiopia (USD. 7.6 million), Kenya (USD. 121.8 million), Somalia (USD. 4.3 million), South Sudan (USD. 97.1 million) and Sudan (USD. 1.1 million).

### Recommendations

The FSNWG recommends:

- Immediate global action to avert Famine (IPC Phase 5) in the region. This includes a significant scale-up of contributions to country Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) and other existing and future funding appeals.
- Immediate, coordinated and multi-sectoral life-saving assistance in areas with populations in Crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+).
- Rapid scale-up of nutrition interventions to treat malnutrition cases and prevent a deterioration in the overall nutrition situation. Additionally, mass screening exercises should be prioritised, and nutrition services expanded to areas with low coverage.
- Close monitoring of the food security and nutrition situation in areas where the situation is dire and| or at risk of further deterioration. This includes, but is not limited to, areas with populations in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and| or Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5).
- Scale-up of livelihood programmes to safeguard livelihoods, and support recovery and a return to self-reliance for households facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) or worse outcomes.
- Scale up of emergency response in areas affected by floods, including delivery of food, clean water, emergency shelter, nutrition and medical supplies. Disease surveillance and monitoring, coupled with treatment and prevention interventions, should also be prioritised given the increased chances of waterborne diseases in these areas.
- Close monitoring of the remainder of the March–May (MAM) rainfall season.
- Supporting and strengthening initiatives that seek to address and mitigate conflict and insecurity in the region.

## Contacts

- **IGAD:** Charity Mumbua  
([Charity.Sammy@igad.int](mailto:Charity.Sammy@igad.int))
- **FAO:** Brenda Lazarus  
([Brenda.Lazarus@fao.org](mailto:Brenda.Lazarus@fao.org))