

FSNWG Food Security and Nutrition Update

Key messages

- In January 2025, an estimated 82.1 million people in the region were highly food insecure and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. This included 66.3 million people in 10 of the 13 countries covered by the FSNWG, according to IPC¹ analyses, in addition to 15.8 million people in Ethiopia, as per the 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Of these, 53.1 million people were in seven of the eight IGAD member states.
- In Sudan, Famine (IPC Phase 5) is projected in ten areas through May 2025 – Zamzam, Abu Shouk, and Al Salam camps, as well as in the Western Nuba Mountains, affecting both residents and IDPs, in addition to North Darfur localities of Um Kadadah, Melit, El Fasher, At Tawisha, and Al Lait. Seventeen other areas in North Darfur, South Darfur, the central Nuba Mountains, Al Jazirah and Khartoum are at Risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5).
- The nutrition situation across the region remained concerning as persistent underlying drivers – limited access to food, inadequate health and nutrition services, and poor infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices – have been exacerbated by escalating conflicts, economic challenges, and climatic shocks.
- Drier than normal conditions are forecast over most parts of the region, specifically over Djibouti, coastal parts of Eritrea, southern and north-eastern Ethiopia, eastern and northern Kenya, much of Somalia, western South Sudan, western Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and north-western Tanzania, during the March-May (MAM) 2025 rainfall seasonal. This is in addition to warmer than normal temperatures, risking increased heat and water stress, and reduced agricultural productivity in affected areas.
- Somalia, worst affected by the below-average October-December (OND) 2024 rains, continued to face worsening drought conditions. Forecast drier than normal conditions during the Gu (April-June) 2025 rainfall season risk intensifying the drought and livelihoods stress. Food prices are also likely to go further up due to reduced agricultural production.

Food insecure population estimates, as of January 2025

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 ²	474,720	232,178	52,822		285,000
Kenya	6,084,209	1,634,828	98,038		1,732,866
Somalia	6,526,160	2,953,750	442,430		3,396,180
South Sudan	4,576,000	4,334,000	1,714,000	31,000	6,079,000
Sudan	15,622,062	15,894,221	8,098,589	612,941	24,605,751
Uganda ³	2,402,974	1,171,697	26,485		1,198,182
IGAD Total	35,686,125	26,220,674	10,432,364	643,941	37,296,979
Burundi	5,925,208	1,212,374	0		1,212,374
CAR	2,752,713	1,663,412	307,271		1,970,683
DRC	51,470,764	22,243,071	3,251,536		25,494,607
Tanzania (partial)	1,729,928	379,476	0		379,476
Total	97,564,738	51,719,007	13,991,171	643,941	66,354,119

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

Other food security estimates

Ethiopia 15,800,000 (Humanitarian Response Plan 2024)

Total highly food insecure population in need of assistance

IGAD caseload: 53.1 million
Regional caseload: 82.1 million

¹ 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)

² Valid through December 2024

³ Covers only refugee-hosting communities and Karamoja

Sector updates

Food security

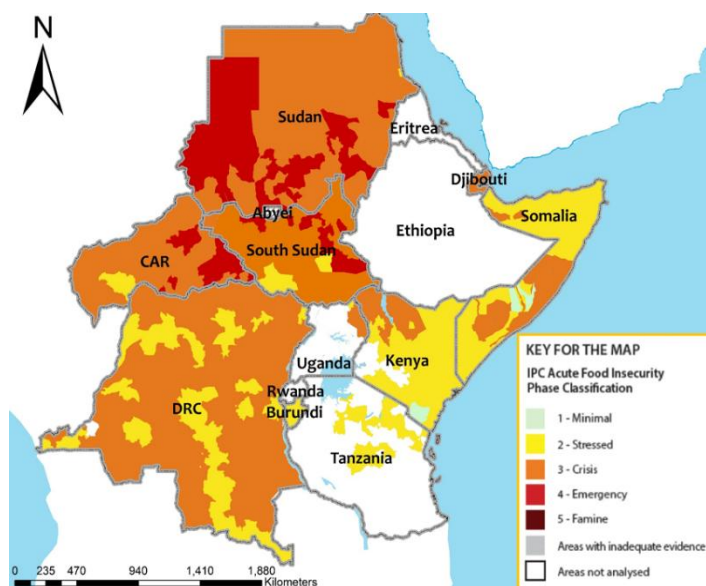
The region continued to grapple with high levels of acute food insecurity, including Famine and Risk of Famine classifications in Sudan.

Close to 82.1 million people in 11 of the 13 countries covered by the FSNWG were highly food insecure and in urgent need of assistance. This included about 66.3 million people according to IPC analyses in 10 countries, in addition to 15.8 million people in Ethiopia, based on the 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Of these, more than 53.1 million were in seven of the eight IGAD member states – Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

High levels of acute food insecurity were especially prevalent in South Sudan and Sudan, with about 45% and 51% of their analysed populations, respectively, in Crisis or worse (IPC Phases 3 or above). The two countries also had populations classified in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) – 612,941 in Sudan and 31,000 in South Sudan.

The region also had a large caseload of people in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) levels of acute food insecurity, at about 97.6 million across countries covered by the IPC, including 35.7 million people in the IGAD region. This population requires livelihood support and resilience strengthening.

Regional food security situation, as of January 2025



Source: IPC-GSU for East and Central Africa

Extreme weather events, escalating conflict in various areas, macroeconomic challenges, and widespread displacement remained the main drivers of acute food insecurity in the region.

Countries of concern

In Sudan, 24.6 million people (51% of the population) faced Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) outcomes, representing an unprecedented decline in the food security situation during what is typically a post-harvest period. This included close to 613,000 people in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), the highest number globally⁴.

Compared to the same period in 2024, when 17.7 million people were classified in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) and no populations were estimated in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), this reflects a sharp deterioration.

Famine (IPC Phase 5), first found plausible in Zamzam camp, North Darfur, in July in 2024 persisted and spread to Abu Shouk and Al Salam camps, as well as the western Nuba Mountains by October 2024. Projections indicated further expansion to Um Kaddah, Melit, El Fasher, At Tawisha, and Al Lait localities in North Darfur from December 2024 through May 2025. Seventeen additional areas in North Darfur, South Darfur, central Nuba Mountains, Al Jazirah and Khartoum were also expected to face a Risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5), according to the IPC Famine Review Committee (FRC).

Beyond food insecurity, the conflict in Sudan has led to loss of lives and livelihoods, destruction of critical infrastructure, disruption of essential services, trade and humanitarian assistance, and large-scale displacement. As of 28 January 2025, 8.9 million people had been internally displaced since the outbreak of the conflict in April 2023, bringing the total number of IDPs in the country to 11.6 million, and making Sudan the largest internal displacement crisis across the globe. Additionally, 3.5 million people had crossed the border into neighbouring countries⁵.

In Somalia, worsening drought conditions persist. The Deyr (October-December) 2024 season was characterised by significant rainfall deficits, poor distribution, and prolonged dry spells, leading to moderate-to-severe drought, particularly in the southern and central regions, with

⁴ WFP. Sudan Emergency. January 2025

⁵ IOM. DTM Sudan Mobility Update (15). February 2025

Bakool, Bari, Bay, Galgaduud, Gedo, Hiran, Mudug, Sool and Togdheer among the worst-affected areas⁶.

The current Jilaal dry season (December-March), marked by above-average temperatures, has continued to deplete water and pasture resources, progressively worsening the drought. The anticipated below-average Gu (April-June) 2025 seasonal rains, along with a delayed onset in key agricultural areas, risk intensifying water scarcity, straining agricultural production, and further amplifying the drought conditions and livelihoods stress⁷.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) remained among the world's most food-insecure countries, with 25.5 million people in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) levels of acute food insecurity. Displaced populations and returnees, concentrated in North Kivu, Ituri, South Kivu and Tanganyika provinces, are the most affected due to protracted conflict.

The recent escalation of conflict, especially in South Kivu and North Kivu, threatens to worsen food insecurity amid mass displacement. As of 11 February 2025, conflict had internally displaced an estimated 500,000 people since the start of the year, adding to the existing 6.7 million IDPs in the country⁸. Though recent reports indicate a fragile calm and a gradual return of displaced populations to their areas of origin, particularly in Goma, food access remains extremely limited, especially for returnee households⁹.

The depreciation of the Congolese Franc and rising food prices further constrain households purchasing power and access to food, in a context where access to stable sources of income remains limited. Recurrent flooding has also often devastated farmlands and essential infrastructure. Chronic food insecurity, affecting a large part of the country, aggravates the situation.

Nutrition

The nutrition situation across the region remained concerning as persistent underlying drivers – limited access to food, inadequate health and nutrition services, and poor infant and young child feeding practices (IYCF) – have been exacerbated by escalating conflicts, economic challenges, and climatic shocks.

Countries of concern

High levels of acute malnutrition persisted in parts of Ethiopia, with 614,172 under-five children admitted for severe acute malnutrition (SAM) treatment between January and November 2024. Oromia recorded the highest number of admissions, followed by Amhara and Somali regions.

In the Gambella region, preliminary findings of a SMART Plus survey conducted in four woredas indicated a critical nutrition situation, with a global acute malnutrition (GAM) prevalence of 17.1%, surpassing the World Health Organization (WHO) Emergency threshold of 15%. Meanwhile, in the Amhara region, a mass nutrition screening of about 75% of the under-five children in Bugna woreda, North Wollo, revealed a proxy GAM prevalence of 65%.

Ongoing seismic activity in parts of Afar and Oromia – particularly in Awash Fentale and Dulecha districts – continued to displace populations and damage critical infrastructure, including health centres, heightening acute malnutrition risks amid food shortages. Disease outbreaks, including cholera, dengue fever and malaria, pose additional threat, especially in the IDP sites where water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities remain limited¹⁰.

In Somalia, 1.7 million under-five children were estimated to suffer from acute malnutrition through December 2025, with 466,440 of them expected to suffer from its severe form. About 64% of the total burden is concentrated in southern Somalia.

The ongoing drought risks worsening the situation. Cholera cases are expected to remain at or slightly exceed the 2024 levels. This is particularly concerning given Somalia's historically high case fatality rate (CFR) for cholera, especially among children and pregnant and lactating women (PLWs). Malaria, measles and dengue fever outbreaks also remain key public health concerns, making morbidity a significant risk factor in a context of high levels of acute malnutrition¹¹.

Meanwhile in South Sudan, about 2.1 million under-five children are expected to be acutely malnourished through June 2025, 650,000 of them severely so. Five states – Jonglei, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile, Unity and Warrap – account for 67% of the burden. High levels of

⁶ OCHA. [Somalia Monthly Humanitarian Update. January 2025](#)

⁷ FAO SWALIM. [Review of Deyr 2024, status of Jilaal, and Gu 2025 outlook and implications for livelihoods over Somalia. January 2025](#)

⁸ UNHCR. [Eastern DRC Displacement Overview. February 2025](#)

⁹ OCHA. [DR Congo: Intensification of Violence in North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces - Situation Report 2. February 2025](#)

¹⁰ WHO. [Ethiopia Earthquake: Situation Report No 1. January 2025](#)

¹¹ OCHA. [Somalia 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan \(HNRP\). January 2025](#)

food insecurity and poor child feeding practices are among the key drivers of acute malnutrition in the country, with just 2.1% of under-five children receiving the minimum acceptable diet.

In Sudan, 422,170 under-five children were admitted for SAM treatment in 2024 – the highest ever admission in the country.

SMART surveys conducted across 50 localities since the start of the year revealed proxy GAM prevalence exceeding the 15% WHO Emergency threshold in 43 localities. In three localities in North Darfur and the western Nuba areas in Kordofan, proxy GAM prevalence exceeded 30%, indicating extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition and surpassing the Famine threshold.

Climate

A review of the state of climate drivers shows that a weak La Niña is ongoing and will persist in the near-term, with a likely transition to El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO)-neutral by March through May 2025.

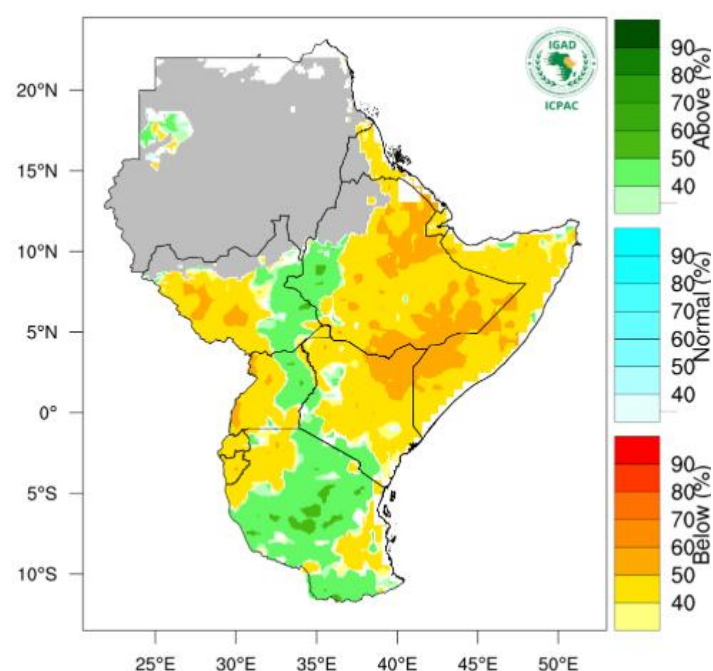
The March-May (MAM)¹² 2025 seasonal forecast by the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) indicates higher chances of drier than normal conditions across much of the region. Specifically, drier than normal conditions are likely over Djibouti, coastal parts of Eritrea, southern and north-eastern Ethiopia, eastern and northern Kenya, much of Somalia, western South Sudan, western Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and north-western Tanzania. Of particular concern are south-eastern Ethiopia, north-eastern Kenya and south-central Somalia, where this would mark a second consecutive season of below-average rains. This is likely to negatively impact livelihoods by exacerbating water shortages for crops and livestock, while also limiting pasture availability.

On the other hand, wetter than normal conditions are forecast over western Ethiopia, eastern South Sudan, north-eastern Uganda, and over parts of central and southern Tanzania, increasing the risk of flooding and waterlogging, and potentially crop damage in the low-lying areas such as eastern Uganda, and landslides in hilly areas like western Ethiopia. High water levels are also expected in the Nile River and the Sudd wetlands, prolonging inundation.

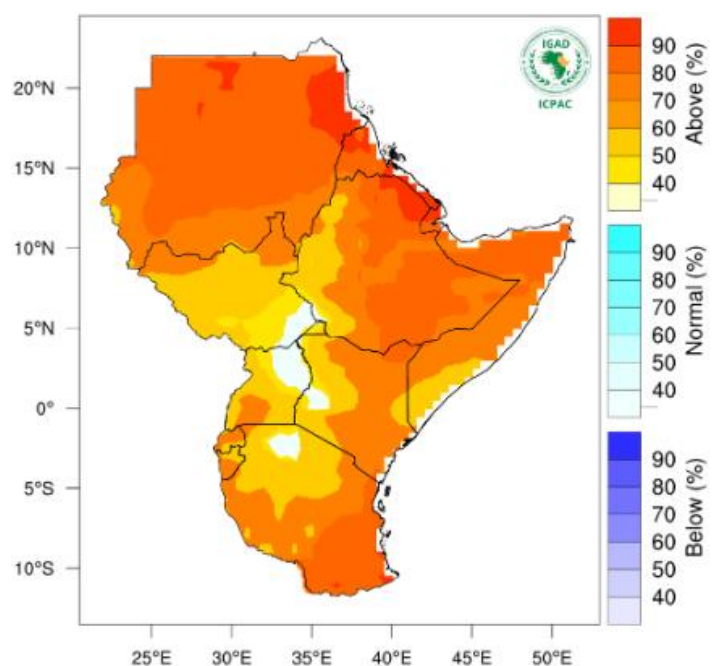
In terms of onset, there are high chances of early to normal onset over most parts of the region except in parts of southern Ethiopia, over central Kenya and in parts of central Somalia, where a delayed onset is expected.

Examining analogue years, the season is expected to resemble the (March-May) MAM seasons of 2017 and 2021.

Rainfall probabilistic forecast for March-May 2025



Temperature forecast for March-May 2025



Source: ICPAC

¹² MAM constitutes an important rainfall season, particularly in the equatorial parts of the Greater Horn of Africa (GHA), where it contributes up to 60% of total annual rainfall

In addition to the drier than normal conditions, most parts of the region are forecast to experience warmer than normal temperatures, with enhanced probabilities in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, northern Kenya, northern Somalia, Sudan and southern parts of south-eastern Tanzania. This will likely increase water loss through evaporation and evapotranspiration causing wilting of crops and vegetation, and depletion of surface water resources.

Recommendations

The FSNWG recommends:

- Immediate, coordinated and multi-sectoral life-saving assistance in areas with populations in Crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+).
- Close monitoring of the food security and nutrition situation in areas where the situation is dire and at risk of further deterioration, including in areas of Sudan facing Famine and Risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5) and in parts of Somalia affected by the ongoing drought.
- Scale-up of programmes to safeguard livelihoods, and support recovery and a return to self-reliance for households facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) or worse outcomes, with a focus on context-specific livelihood packages.
- Rapid scale-up of nutrition interventions to treat malnutrition cases and prevent a deterioration in the overall nutrition situation, including expanding integrated community management (ICCM+) and early referral of malnutrition cases. Additionally, mass screening exercises should be prioritised for early detection, and nutrition services expanded to areas with low coverage.
- Increased multi-sectoral assistance – including food, water, sanitation, protection, shelter, health and nutrition interventions – in conflict-affected areas of Sudan and in areas hosting those displaced including neighbouring countries. Mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, as well as to care for and protect unaccompanied displaced children should also be put in place and scaled up.

- Supporting and strengthening initiatives that seek to address and mitigate conflict and insecurity in the region.
- Close monitoring of the performance of the MAM 2025 rainfall season, including sub-seasonal drivers like the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO), and strengthening of anticipatory action initiatives for disaster risk reduction. Regular updates should also be shared to support timely action.
- Urgent mobilisation and coordination of resources to address the drought situation in parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia and to prepare for the likely impacts of a drier than normal Gu 2025 season.

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