

## FSN WG Food Security and Nutrition Update

### Key messages

- In March 2025, an estimated 85 million people in the region were highly food insecure and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. This included 69.2 million people in 10 of the 13 countries covered by the FSNWG, according to [IPC](#) analyses, in addition to 15.8 million people in Ethiopia, as per the 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Of these, 53.7 million people were in seven of the eight IGAD member states.
- Escalating conflict in Upper Nile state since early March threatens to worsen food insecurity in South Sudan. Limited humanitarian access and the spillover effects of the conflict in Sudan are exacerbating the situation.
- Levels of acute malnutrition in the region have been rising since 2019, with close to 4 million under-five children estimated to suffer from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in 2024. In 2025, a similarly high number – about 3.9 million – is projected to suffer from SAM.
- Rainfall performance since the onset of the March-May (MAM) season to 20 April<sup>1</sup> has been mixed, with wetter than usual conditions recorded in southern and western Ethiopia, most of Kenya, central and southern Somalia, central to eastern South Sudan, northeastern Uganda and parts of Tanzania. Drier than usual conditions were recorded in Djibouti, southern and northwestern Eritrea, northern Ethiopia and Somalia, western South Sudan, southern Uganda, northern Burundi and most of Rwanda.
- The number of forcibly displaced persons in the region remained high, at about 24.6 million as of 27 March 2025. This included 18.97 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 5.6 million refugees and asylum seekers.
- The changing funding landscape has significantly impacted humanitarian operations, largely due to the issuance of stop work orders (SWOs), which have led to delayed implementation of activities and a scale down in service delivery. Reduced coordination and information management capacities will likely compound broader operational challenges.

### Food insecure population estimates, as of March 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 <sup>2</sup>	474,720	232,178	52,822		285,000
Kenya	6,352,950	1,884,700	265,900		2,150,600
Somalia	6,526,000	2,954,000	442,000		3,396,000
South Sudan	4,576,000	4,334,000	1,714,000	31,000	6,079,000
Sudan	15,623,989	15,896,148	8,097,626	613,000	24,606,774
Uganda <sup>3</sup>	2,408,296	1,327,419	26,485		1,353,904
<b>IGAD Total</b>	<b>35,961,955</b>	<b>26,628,445</b>	<b>10,598,833</b>	<b>644,000</b>	<b>37,871,278</b>
Burundi	5,925,208	1,212,374	0		1,212,374
CAR	2,752,713	1,663,412	307,271		1,970,683
DRC	51,541,000	23,843,000	3,903,000		27,746,000
Tanzania (partial)	1,729,928	379,476	0		379,476
<b>Total</b>	<b>97,910,804</b>	<b>53,726,707</b>	<b>14,809,104</b>	<b>644,000</b>	<b>69,179,811</b>

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

### Other food security estimates

Ethiopia	15,800,000 (Humanitarian Response Plan 2024)
<b>Total highly food insecure population in need of assistance</b>	<b>IGAD caseload: 53.67 million</b>
	<b>Regional caseload: 84.98 million</b>

<sup>1</sup> Rainfall performance into April has been included in consideration of observed deviations from the initial seasonal forecast

<sup>2</sup> Valid through December 2024

<sup>3</sup> Covers only refugee-hosting communities and Karamoja

## Sector updates

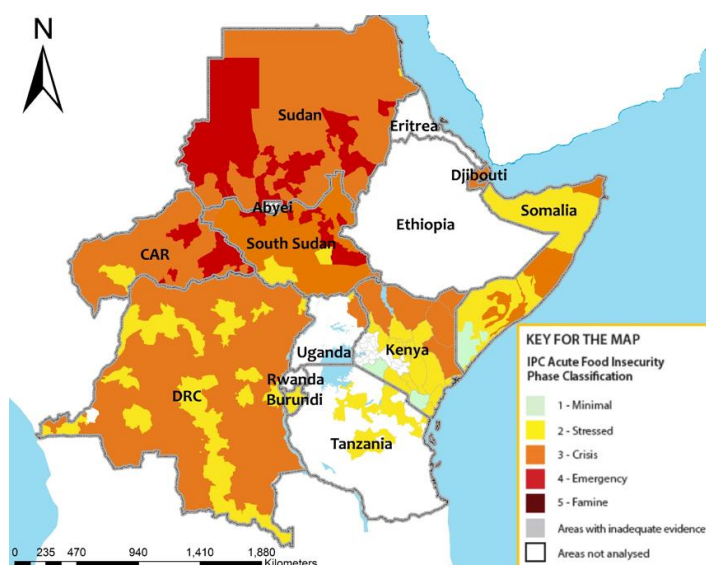
### Food security

The food security situation in the region remained concerning, with close to 85 million people in 11 of the 13 countries covered by the FSNWG estimated to be highly food insecure and in urgent need of assistance. This included 69.2 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, 53.7 million were in seven of the eight IGAD member states – Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

Furthermore, 14.8 million people were classified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) in the 10 countries with IPC analyses. The situation was particularly concerning in Sudan and South Sudan, where 644,000 people were classified in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) – 613,000 in Sudan and 31,000 in South Sudan – in addition to Famine and Risk of Famine classifications in parts of Sudan.

The region also had a large number of people facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) levels of acute food insecurity, at 97.9 million across countries covered by the IPC, including close to 36 million people in the IGAD region. This population requires livelihood support and resilience strengthening.

### Regional food security situation, as of March 2025



Source: IPC-GSU for East and Central Africa

In the coming three months, coinciding with the lean season in many countries, the food security situation across the region is expected to further deteriorate, driven by seasonality, and exacerbated by conflict, macroeconomic challenges, displacement, and climate extremes. In addition is a likely decline in humanitarian assistance to those in need due a changing funding landscape.

### Country updates

In Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), an estimated 2.2 million people faced Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) levels of acute food insecurity, including 266,000 people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) across Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana and Wajir counties. This represents a 24% increase from the October-December 2024 figure, attributed to the impacts of a poor performance of the 2024 short rains.

Between April and June 2025, the situation is expected to further deteriorate, with 2.8 million people projected to face Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) levels of acute food insecurity, largely due to the effects of the previously poor rainy season, forecasts of a second consecutive below-average March to May (MAM season), and anticipated increases in food prices and resource-based conflicts. This signifies a 10% increase compared to the same period in 2024.

In South Sudan – where 7.7 million people are projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between April and July 2025 – food insecurity risks further worsening, particularly in the Upper Nile State, which has been the most impacted since the escalation of conflict in early March. Notably, more than 1 million of those projected to be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) levels of acute food insecurity in the country are in the Upper Nile state.

Compounding the situation is the regional spillover from the conflict in neighbouring Sudan. Since April 2023, about 1.1 million people have fled into South Sudan<sup>4</sup>, most with critical needs for food and nutrition – about half of the 63,000 people projected to be in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in the country are returnees from Sudan. Limited humanitarian access is further complicating the situation, with WFP, for instance, reportedly forced to halt aid distribution in six counties in the Greater Upper Nile region due to security concerns<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> WFP. [Hunger hotspots in South Sudan at tipping point as food insecurity nears record levels. April 2025](#)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

This is amid adverse macroeconomic conditions, primarily due to oil production disruptions, resulting in a decline in export revenues, significant local currency depreciation and hyperinflation<sup>6</sup>. On 18 March 2025, the South Sudanese Pound (SSP) reached an all-time high of [4465.1](#) against the United States Dollar (USD).

Meanwhile increased conflict, especially in the eastern parts, has deepened food insecurity in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In this respect, an estimated 27.7 million people are projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) across the country through June 2025 – this is a 2.2 million increase compared to the previous projection for the same period and the highest number ever recorded in the DRC. Of them, 3.9 million are projected to be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). Of particular concern are Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika provinces, where about 10.3 million people are projected to be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above).

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) remained among those disproportionately affected, with 2.2 million of the 3.7 million of them analysed, classified in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above). This even as the conflict continued to trigger widespread population movements, including new displacements and forced returns.

High food prices, amidst other macroeconomic shocks such as the depreciation of the Congolese Franc, and limited access to stable means of livelihoods exacerbated the situation. The IPC warns that without urgent action, the situation could further deteriorate.

## Nutrition

Levels of acute malnutrition in the region have been rising since 2019, with close to 4 million under-five children estimated to suffer from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in 2024. In 2025, a similarly high number – about 3.9 million – is projected to suffer from SAM.

According to UNICEF, available nutrition supplies are expected to last until the second quarter of the year, raising concerns around a potential increase in acute malnutrition levels if additional funding is not secured. Furthermore, recent funding cuts could also constrain the scope of nutrition surveys and screenings, limiting the availability of timely and reliable nutrition data and information.

## Country updates

In Kenya's ASALs, 800,202 under-five children are estimated to be acutely malnourished, 198,166 of them severely so. About 120,732 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) are also acutely malnourished. This is attributed to a high morbidity burden, suboptimal infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices, poor household food security, and limited access to health services among other factors.

While some counties have recorded an improvement in comparison to the same period in 2024, several have recorded a deterioration and most have remained in the same IPC acute malnutrition (AMN) phase. Garissa and Wajir counties were among those that have recorded a deterioration, declining to Critical (IPC AMN 4) from Serious (IPC AMN 3).

In Somalia, 1.8 million under-five children are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition through the end of the year – 479,000 of them in its severe form – marking an increase from the 1.7 million reported in the IPC analysis released in February 2025.

Notably, in Guban and Addun pastoral livelihood zones, acute malnutrition levels are expected to deteriorate from Serious (IPC AMN 3) to Critical (IPC AMN 4) between April and June 2025. Deterioration, though within the same Critical phase (IPC AMN 4), is also expected in Bay agro-pastoral, Beledweyne rural, Shabelle riverine and Shabelle riverine agro-pastoral livelihood zones.

This is amid a decline in humanitarian funding, which is expected to adversely impact the delivery of nutrition, health, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) related assistance, as well as reduce the coverage of food assistance.

Meanwhile in South Sudan, 2.08 million under-five children are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2025, according to the October 2024 Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring Survey (FSNMS) and other SMART surveys from that year – representing a 26% increase compared to 2024. Among them, 650,000 are projected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition, marking a 33% increase from the previous year. The nutrition situation is particularly concerning in Central and Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, Lakes, Unity, Upper Nile, and Northern and Western Bahr El Ghazal states<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> [World Bank. South Sudan Economic Monitor 7th Edition: A Pathway to Overcome the Crisis. March 2025](#)

<sup>7</sup> [South Sudan Nutrition Cluster. 2025 Nutrition Advocacy Brief. December 2024](#)

The main contributing factors include suboptimal child feeding and caring practices (with just 2.1% of children in the country estimated to receive the minimum acceptable diet), high levels of food insecurity, high inflation that has significantly eroded household purchasing power, child morbidity, and limited access to WASH services. In addition, there are spillover effects of the conflict in Sudan, with a significant number of returnees arriving in the country with critical needs for nutrition<sup>8</sup>.

## Displacement

Close to 24.6 million people were estimated to be forcibly displaced across the region, as of 27 March 2025. This included 18.97 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 5.6 million refugees and asylum seekers. Conflict and insecurity, and climatic shocks remain the leading drivers of displacement in the region.

### IDPs and refugees in the region, as of March 2025

Country	IDPs	Refugees
Djibouti	6,086	32,643
Eritrea		118
Ethiopia	1,919,993	1,075,982
Kenya	484,260	843,165
Somalia	3,262,080	39,475
South Sudan	1,844,914	548,036
Sudan	11,301,340	841,966
Uganda	1,896	1,858,060
Burundi	92,227	89,151
Rwanda	24,000	129,178
Tanzania	31,000	230,436
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,967,796</b>	<b>5,688,210</b>

Source: IOM, UNHCR

Sudan accounted for more than half of the region's IDPs, at 11.3 million. Of these, 2.7 million were displaced before the start of the conflict in April 2023, while 8.59 million were displaced after. For the first time since the conflict began, a decrease in the number of IDPs was reported, as an estimated 396,738 people returned to their areas of origin – mainly in Al Jazirah, Sennar and Khartoum states – between 18 December 2024 and 04 March 2025. In addition, over 3.9 million people were estimated to have sought refuge in other countries, the majority in Egypt

(38%), South Sudan (28%) and Chad (25%), due to the conflict<sup>9</sup>.

Since January 2025, an estimated 69,854 refugees have arrived in Burundi following the escalation of conflict in the DRC. Prior to then, Burundi hosted about 89,000 DRC refugees. The majority face critical multi-sectoral needs, exacerbated by gaps in health care providers and medical supplies, and limited shelter and WASH facilities.

Funding shortfalls continue to force food rations cuts for refugees across the region from the recommended 2100 kilocalories per person per day – ranging from 30% in Djibouti and Sudan to 78% in Uganda. In Uganda, as well as in South Sudan and Rwanda, prioritisation based on vulnerability is being applied.

## Climate

A review of rainfall performance since the start of the March-May (MAM) season reveals a varied pattern.

As of 20 April 2025, wetter than usual conditions were recorded in southern and western Ethiopia, most of Kenya, central and southern Somalia, central to eastern South Sudan, northeastern Uganda and parts of Tanzania, pointing to favourable prospects for crop production, pasture regeneration and water availability. However, flooding was reported in southern Ethiopia and Tanzania, while inundation persisted in the Sudd wetlands of South Sudan.

A review of climate drivers shows that several factors have contributed to the enhanced rainfall observed in parts of the region. The Madden Julian Oscillation (MJO) was active in March, and La Niña weakened, thereafter transitioning to ENSO-neutral. In addition, sea surface temperatures (SST) were average to above-average, and the low-level southerly and southeasterly winds were stronger than normal in early April, boosting moisture in the air<sup>10</sup>.

Meanwhile, drier than usual conditions were recorded in Djibouti, southern and northwestern Eritrea, northern Ethiopia, northern Somalia, western South Sudan, southern Uganda, most of Rwanda, and northern Burundi.

Forecast warmer than normal temperatures across most of the region through the end of the season will likely intensify evapotranspiration, especially in the drier parts of the region, risking wilting of crops and vegetation, and depletion of surface water resources.

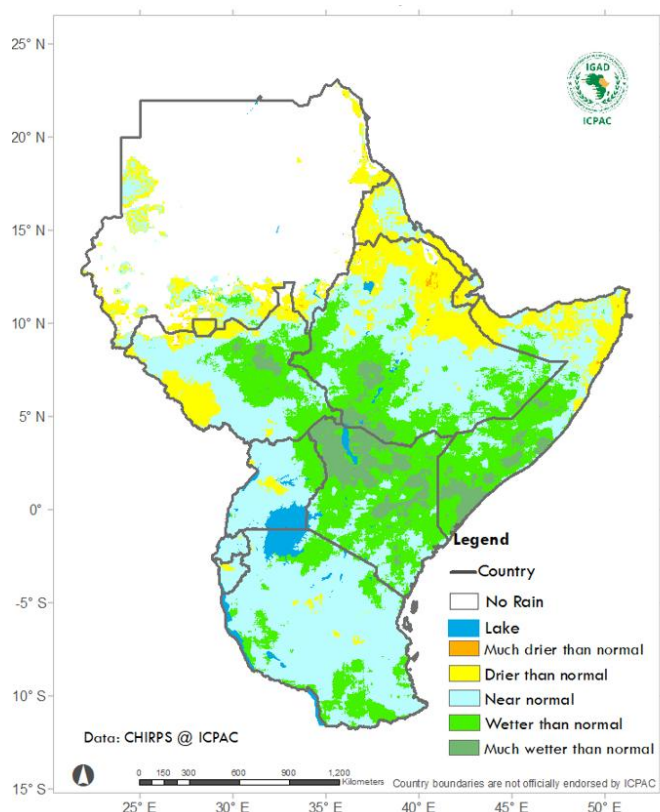
<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> IOM DTM. Sudan Mobility Update. March 2025

<sup>10</sup> Alaso D, Funk C, et al. March-May 2025 Rainfall Seasonal Update. April 2025



## Rainfall anomalies – percentage of long-term mean, 01 March-20 April 2025



Source: ICPAC

## Humanitarian response

While the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans (HNRPs) figures and requirements still stand, all the HNRP countries are reprioritising in light of the shifting funding landscape, focusing on lifesaving priorities.

### HNRP funding (million USD) by country, as of 27 March 2025

Country	Required	Received	Received (%)
Somalia	1,422	176.9	12.4%
South Sudan	1694.8	174.6	10.5%
Sudan	4,162.5	290.9	7%

Source: OCHA

Between 06-12 February 2025, OCHA conducted a global survey to assess the scale and impact of the U.S. funding freeze. Results revealed severe implications for humanitarian operations primarily driven by the issuance of stop work orders (SWOs), which have resulted in delayed implementation of activities and reduced service delivery. Despite the severity of the situation, waivers were reportedly limited – by 12 February, nearly 70% of respondent organisations that had received SWOs had not

received waivers. As a result, millions of people had been left without humanitarian assistance, even as many organisations reported a reduction in geographic coverage.

National Non-Governmental Organisations (NNGOs) had been disproportionately affected, facing the highest proportion of frozen funds and receiving the fewest waivers. Further, compared to in-kind assistance, cash and voucher assistance (CVA) had been more impacted.

Early indications pointed to further adverse implications for coordination and information management capacities, which would likely compound the broader operational challenges. Preliminary analysis of the survey findings can be found [here](#).

## 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, especially in parts of Sudan facing Famine and Risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5), and of South Sudan with populations in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), including in Upper Nile state, where conflict has escalated since early March.
- 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 IDP and refugee camps and settlements across the region.

- Supporting and strengthening initiatives that seek to address and mitigate conflict and insecurity in the region, given that conflict and related displacement remain key drivers of food insecurity, especially in parts of Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and the DRC.
- Close monitoring of the progress 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.
- An evaluation of the implications of funding cuts on food security and nutrition data collection, monitoring and early warning systems.
- Review and optimisation of humanitarian coordination structures across the region to strengthen partnerships, enhance efficiency, and prioritise critical activities and services in order to sustain essential humanitarian operations.

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