

East Africa



2024 GLOBAL REPORT
ON FOOD CRISES

JOINT ANALYSIS FOR BETTER DECISIONS

The magnitude and severity of food crises in East Africa worsened in 2023, with the largest year-on-year deterioration in the Sudan following the onset of the conflict in April 2023.

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The return of rainfall to most areas of the Horn of Africa began to ease the impacts of the historic drought, but its lingering damage coupled with flooding in late 2023 impacted food access and availability.

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Conflict in the Sudan and armed clashes in parts of Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan deepened the region's highly complex displacement crisis. In Somalia and South Sudan, 0.1 million people faced Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5).

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Acute malnutrition levels continued to deteriorate, exacerbated by inadequate child-feeding and low access to basic WASH, health and nutrition services.

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The number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity is projected to decline in 2024. However, the situation in the Sudan is rapidly deteriorating. The risk of weather extremes and escalation of conflicts in areas of Ethiopia and South Sudan could also drive catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity.

East Africa

The lingering impact of the unprecedented 2020–2023 drought, El Niño-driven floods, heightened conflicts and continued macroeconomic instability exacerbated already high levels of acute food insecurity in eight countries across East Africa. Households experienced limited food availability due to decreased agricultural production and constrained financial access to food. Huge numbers of displaced people from the conflict in the Sudan put additional strain on already meagre resources in areas within the country and at its borders.

64.2M 

people or 24% of the analysed population faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2023 in eight countries.

20.7M 

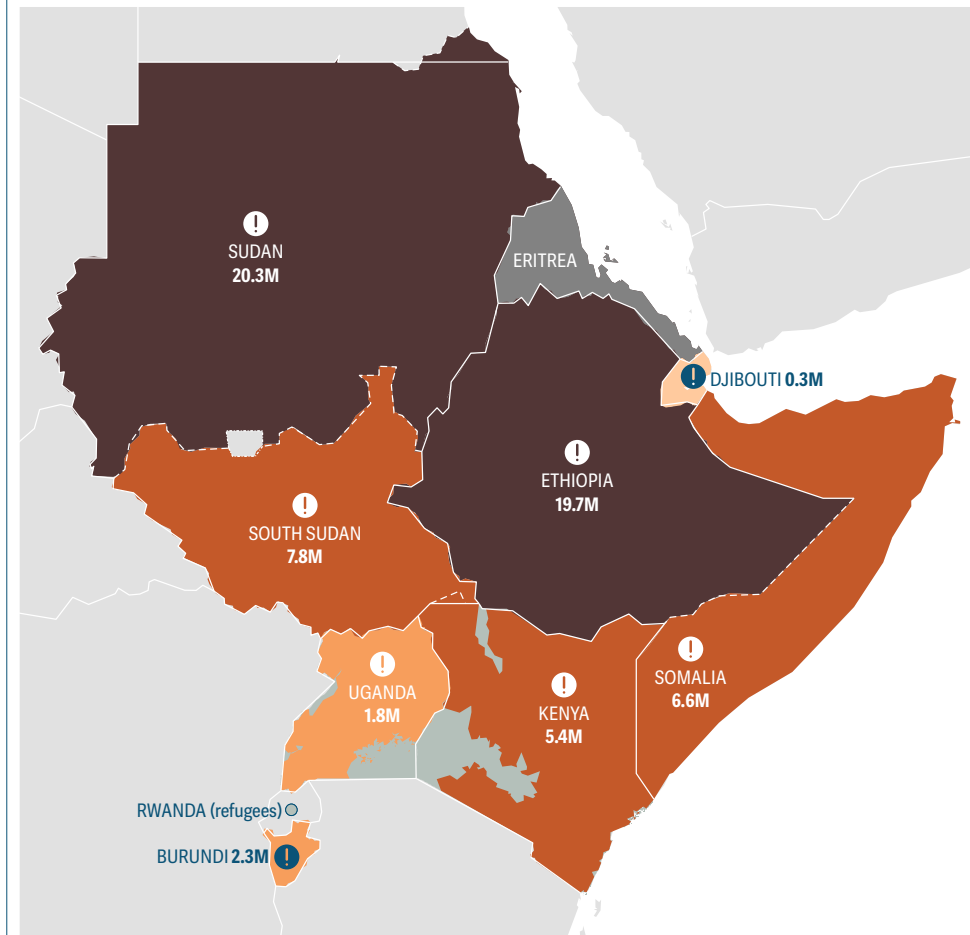
forcibly displaced people by 2023 – consisting of 15.9 million IDPs and 4.8 million refugees and asylum-seekers.

12.1M 

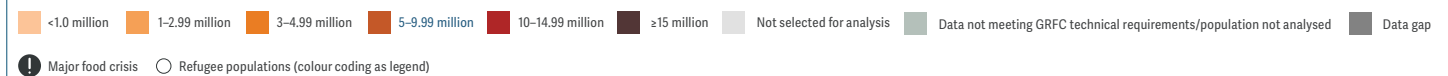
children were acutely malnourished with 3 million of them suffering the most severe form in eight countries.

Burundi | Djibouti | Ethiopia | Kenya | Somalia | South Sudan | Sudan | Uganda

FIG. 2.3 Numbers of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity in eight countries, 2023

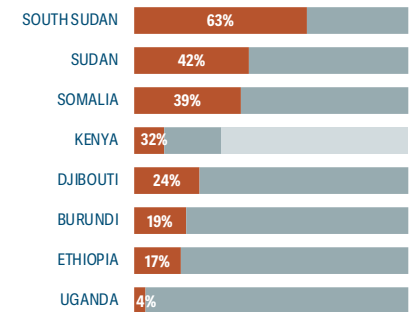


The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.



Sources: IPC TWGs; FEWS NET (Ethiopia and Uganda).

FIG. 2.11 Share of analysed populations facing high levels of acute food insecurity, 2023



The total population was analysed in all countries, except for Kenya (32%).



How have the food crises in this region changed since 2022?

The compounding nature of the climatic, economic and conflict-related shocks that the region has faced over the past three years drove an additional 7 million people to face high levels of acute food insecurity between 2022 and 2023.

The share of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity increased from 22 percent in 2022 to 24 percent in 2023, suggesting that households' capacity to cope has been severely eroded, leading more people to experience large consumption gaps, acute malnutrition and/or depleted livelihood assets.

The Sudan became the largest food crisis in the region in terms of numbers and recorded the largest year-on-year deterioration due to the onset of the conflict in April 2023.

Burundi, Djibouti, Somalia and comparable areas of Kenya also experienced significant deteriorations in their acute food insecurity situations.

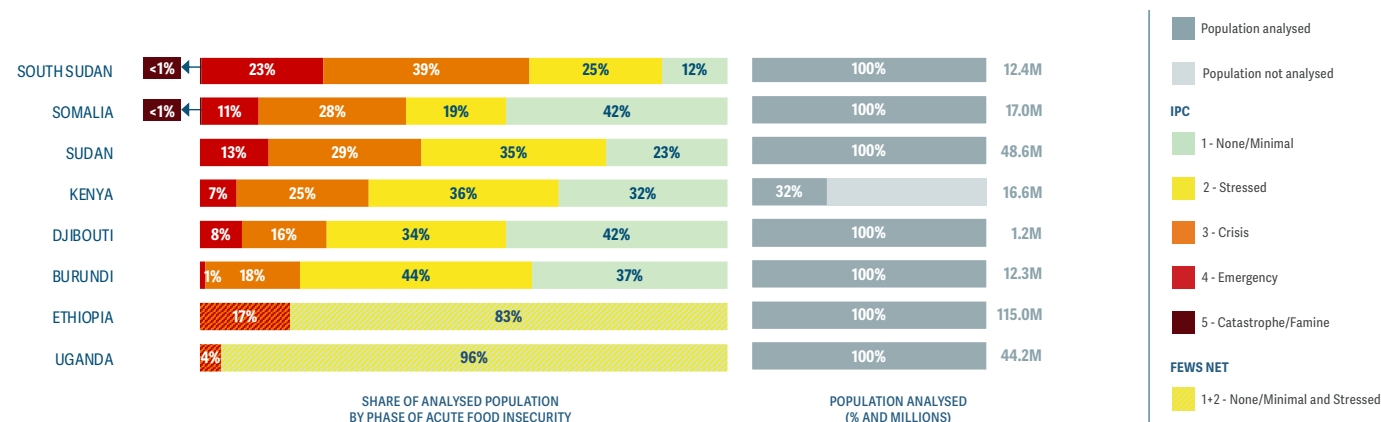
In South Sudan, the situation remained persistently dire, with 63 percent of the population experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity.

Only Uganda saw a slight decline in the number of people who urgently needed assistance from 5 percent to 4 percent of its analysed population, which equated to a decrease of 0.5 million people.

The analyses for Ethiopia are not directly comparable as two different methodologies are used to measure acute food insecurity between 2022 and 2023.

All eight countries with data available in East Africa met the criteria for being defined as major food crises, with four of them – Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan – being protracted major food crises.

FIG. 2.12 Share of analysed populations by phase of acute food insecurity, 2023 peak



Sources: IPC TWGs; FEWS NET (Ethiopia and Uganda).

Severity of acute food insecurity

For the six countries where data could be disaggregated by IPC phase (i.e. all countries except Ethiopia and Uganda in which FEWS NET analyses were used), there were large shifts in the severity of food insecurity outcomes.

0.08 million people were projected to face Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) across Somalia and South Sudan

Around 43 000 people were projected to face starvation and death (IPC Phase 5) during the lean season (April–July 2023) in the Akobo, Canal/Pigi and Fangak counties of South Sudan's Jonglei state, as well as Leer and Mayendit counties of Unity state. While there was no longer a Risk of Famine in Somalia, there remained 40 400 people across Bakool, Bay, Galgaduud, Middle Shabelle, Mudug and Togdheer states who were projected to experience the most extreme levels of acute food insecurity from April to June 2023 (lean season). Compared with the previous year, the overall

number declined from 301 100 in 2022 to 83 400 in 2023, mostly due to the positive impact of the early 2023 rains and sustained humanitarian assistance.

12.4 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) across six countries

Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan all recorded increases in the populations experiencing large food consumption gaps and/or employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation. The prevalence of these outcomes ranged from 1 percent of the analysed population in Burundi to as high as 23 percent in South Sudan. The largest increase was recorded in the Sudan, where the population in IPC Phase 4 doubled from 3.1 million in 2022 to 6.3 million in 2023.

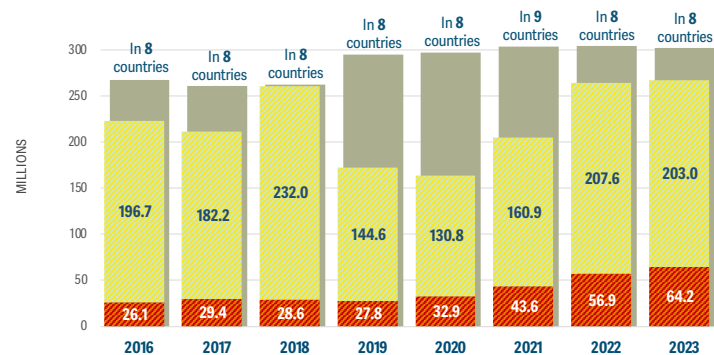
30.2 million people in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) across six countries

The number of people urgently in need of assistance in this phase increased by over 38 percent from 21.8 million in 2022. The largest country increases were recorded in the Sudan followed by Burundi, Somalia and Kenya.

35.2 million people in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) across six countries

The 2.5 million person increase in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes from 32.7 million in 2022 happened in parallel to a decrease of nearly 2.5 million in the number of people in Minimal (IPC Phase 1), indicating a deteriorating situation. The largest increase was in Burundi – up from 3.6 to 5.5 million people, an increase of over 50 percent.

FIG. 2.13 Numbers of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity, 2016–2023



Source: GRFC 2017–2024.

1+2 - None/Minimal and Stressed Phase 3+ - Crisis or worse or equivalent Total population

Acute food insecurity since 2016

Levels of acute food insecurity in East Africa remained relatively stable through 2019, but, with the convergence of multiple shocks, the magnitude and severity of the region's food crises have since increased rapidly.

The impact of COVID-19, consecutive years of drought, and conflicts in Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan undermined people's already limited capacity to cope with shocks, particularly among pastoralist groups. The war in Ukraine had repercussions on food access and availability as many net food-importing East African countries rely on Ukraine and the Russian Federation for agricultural inputs as well as wheat and sunflower oil (WFP, November 2022).

The end of the Black Sea Grain Initiative in July 2023 made it increasingly difficult and expensive to import and produce staple foods (IFPRI, August 2023).

Acute food insecurity in East Africa has historically been extremely severe, with populations in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) since 2016 in South

Sudan. In recent years, people have faced IPC Phase 5 in Somalia and Ethiopia (Tigray region).¹

The increases in the number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity from 2019 onwards were also attributable to increased analysis coverage.

Some countries, such as Djibouti, were not included every year, while others (Ethiopia and Uganda) saw major changes in the geographic coverage of analyses and methodologies. Kenya, by contrast, saw increases in the analysed population in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs).

Many of the drought-affected areas in the Horn of Africa received adequate or above-average precipitation levels in early 2023, allowing for the regeneration of rangelands primarily used by pastoralists, and improved crop and livestock development. While it will take years for households to fully recover from the drought's toll, these improved weather conditions improved projected food security outcomes for 2024.

¹ The Government of Ethiopia did not endorse the May 2021 IPC analysis.

Outlook for 2024

Levels of acute food insecurity in East Africa are currently projected to decline to 47.6 million – or 19 percent of the analysed population – by July 2024. Nonetheless, these levels remain high by historical standards.

This number is an aggregation of projections from the six countries where data are available: Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, the Sudan and Uganda. There were no projections available for Djibouti or Somalia as of January 2024.

Nearly all countries with data available are expected to see a decline in the number of people requiring urgent assistance, mostly due to the end of the drought in the Horn of Africa.

The severity of these food crises is also projected to diminish, as the number of people facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) is set to decrease while the number of people in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) will increase. However, the notable exception is in South Sudan where the population in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) is likely to almost double to 79 000 (IPC, November 2023).

Levels of acute food insecurity could deteriorate further during the latter half of 2024 if conflicts intensify and/or weather patterns become severe. Both could exacerbate disruptions to agricultural production, which could pose a threat to food availability in parts of the region. High staple food prices in markets across the region are also likely to continue constraining food access and undermining households' purchasing power, but not to the same extent as in 2022 and 2023 (IPC, November 2023).

The ongoing conflict in the Sudan is unlikely to end in 2024 (ACLEDA, January 2024). The improvement in food availability from the February 2024 harvest is expected to be marginal compared with the 2023 lean season due to the negative impact of conflict on agricultural production and livelihoods, and as a result, the hostilities' widespread impacts on civilians will worsen. According to FEWS NET, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are widespread,

Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes exist in heavily impacted urban areas, and some households could deteriorate to Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in Omdurman of Khartoum and El Geneina of West Darfur during the lean season (FEWS NET, February 2024). Should the security situation further affect the delivery of humanitarian assistance in these areas, other populations could also face Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) outcomes (IPC, December 2023).

The conflict has also been a major driver of displacement, as South Sudanese returnees from the Sudan are exacerbating already high levels of acute food insecurity in South Sudan, leading to the projection of populations in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in the lean season (IPC, November 2023).

Strong El Niño conditions and a positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), forecast to continue through early 2024, led to above-average rainfall in eastern parts of the region and below-average rainfall in western areas. This change in the weather pattern was expected to increase crop and livestock production in some areas, generating improved levels of food security. However, there was also a risk of widespread flooding contributing to displacement, crop and livestock losses, disruption to livelihood and trade activities, and disease outbreaks (FEWS NET, November 2023).

Ethiopia is experiencing both extremes of this shifting weather pattern: drought in the north, including in Afar and Amhara regions, and El Niño-induced flooding in the south, including Somali and Oromia regions. These weather extremes coupled with conflict, limited humanitarian assistance and persistent macroeconomic instability make Ethiopia a very critical hunger hotspot in 2024 (WFP/FAO, October 2023).

According to FEWS NET, in the Tigray region, Meher crop losses due to the El Niño-associated drought raised the risk of Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) outcomes during the region's lean season in February–April 2024 (FEWS NET, December 2023; OCHA, December 2023).

Drivers of the food crises, 2023–2024



Weather extremes were the primary driver of acute food insecurity in five countries where 35.8 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity.

Weather extremes were the primary driver of food consumption gaps and/or households' employment of negative coping strategies in the region, principally affecting **Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia** and **Uganda**.

Five seasons of below-average rainfall from late 2020 to early 2023 created the worst drought conditions that the Horn of Africa has experienced in nearly 40 years, affecting rangeland and water resources and, in turn, crop and livestock production.

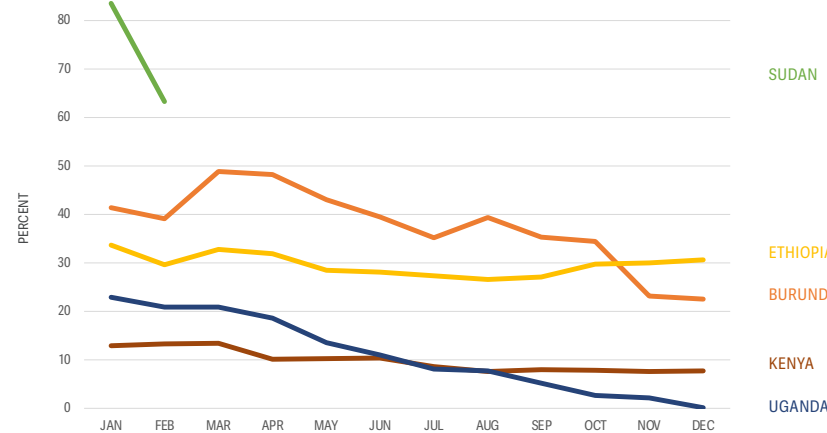
The consecutive years of below-average harvests and a substantial reduction in herd numbers resulted in livelihood losses and increased displacement as people in the region searched for better livelihood and grazing resources. The drought also led to seasonal increases in food prices, which constrained household purchasing power (WFP, July 2023; OCHA, May 2023).

Livelihood recovery will take years and may not be possible for all households, also considering the increasing frequency of drought and floods due to climate change.

Households in pastoral areas of southern Ethiopia, northern and northeastern Kenya, and Somalia were among the hardest hit by this drought. There are roughly 13 different pastoralist communities in Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda, with a total population of approximately 4.5 million. These communities use transhumance as a strategy for managing rangeland and coping with the variable climate of the drylands. In doing so, they can come into conflict with other pastoralists and land users when competing for resources, particularly during times of drought (FAO/IGAD, November 2023).

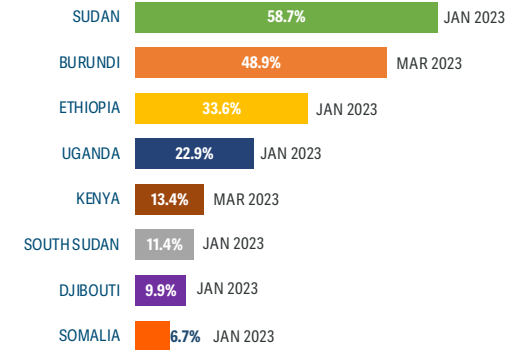
Shifting weather patterns provided two periods of above-average rainfall in 2023. The first occurred

FIG. 2.14 Food inflation tended to be highest in the first quarter of 2023



Data were not available in Sudan after February 2023. This graph only includes countries where food inflation peaked at over 10 percent in 2023. Source: Trading Economics, 2024.

FIG. 2.15 Highest annual food inflation rate by country, 2023



Source: Trading Economics, 2024.

between March and May 2023 when tropical cyclone Freddy and the Madden–Julian oscillation over the Indian Ocean created the conditions for high levels of precipitation across nearly all of the Horn of Africa – except for in south-central Somalia and parts of southwest Kenya (WFP, July 2023).

The second happened during the latter half of 2023 when a strong El Niño event coupled with a positive Indian Ocean Dipole once again created wetter-than-normal conditions throughout East Africa.

This precipitation supported improvements in crop and livestock development, and the acute food insecurity situation in some areas improved. However, it also triggered flooding in others, as the soil was unable to absorb large quantities of water, leading to loss of lives, livestock and livelihoods as well as human displacement. More than 3.1 million people were estimated to be affected by the heavy rains and flooding between September and mid-November 2023, with at least 772 000 people being displaced in Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, Burundi,

and southern and southeastern Ethiopia (OCHA, November 2023).

The El Niño event also worsened drought conditions in Ethiopia's Tigray and Afar regions. In the Tigray region, one of Ethiopia's crop-producing areas, the dry conditions severely hindered Meher crop development, and in many instances, led to crop failure. The Meher harvest was assessed at being 65 percent below the regional average, and such losses are likely to have widespread impacts during Tigray's 2024 lean season (February–April) (FEWS NET, January 2024; OCHA, December 2023).

In the Afar region, where livestock rearing is the main livelihood activity, drought conditions affected rangeland resources and animal body conditions in an area where a significant number of animals were killed during the conflict in neighbouring Tigray from 2020 (FEWS NET, January 2024).



Conflict/insecurity was the primary driver in the Sudan where a total of 20.3 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity.

Conflict/insecurity was the primary driver of the largest year-on-year deterioration in acute food insecurity in East Africa. Hostilities in the Sudan escalated into a nationwide conflict in April 2023, exacerbating an already severe socioeconomic crisis, as well as contributing to mass internal and cross-border displacement. It is likely that this conflict will continue to have far-reaching and devastating regional repercussions in 2024.

Localized conflicts in Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan also undermined acute food security and nutrition outcomes in the region. Clashes between armed groups in Ethiopia's northern Amhara and central Oromia regions are of high concern in 2024, as this conflict has already led to large numbers of forcibly displaced people, as well as market disruptions and livelihood losses (FEWS NET, December 2023).



Economic shocks were the primary driver of acute food insecurity in Djibouti and South Sudan, where 8 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity.

The inflationary shock stemming from the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine led to elevated borrowing costs and debt burdens, depleted foreign reserves and depreciation of national currencies (IMF, October 2023). These impacts to East African economies have reduced vulnerable households' purchasing power while limiting governments' public policy response (GRFC 2023, May 2023).

Inflationary pressures receded slightly in 2023, but the cost of living in East Africa remained high, with the annual inflation rate across the region averaging 13 percent in September 2023 (WFP, November 2023). Similarly, food prices in the eight countries declined slightly but remained above pre-pandemic levels given the upward pressure from reduced food availability and high fuel prices inflating production and transportation costs of food and non-food items (WFP, November 2023). Double-digit inflation persisted throughout the year in Burundi and Ethiopia (see figure 2.14).

The current global economic climate has hampered governments' ability to address the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, particularly in Djibouti and South Sudan, leading economic shocks to be considered the primary driver of high levels of acute food insecurity in both countries. Djibouti's economy is reliant on foreign markets and was therefore vulnerable to price increases. Its economy began to recover in 2022 (IMF, January 2024), but the fiscal situation remained under strain due to diminished tax revenues, recent tax exemptions and mounting public debt servicing costs, which have translated into increases in consumer price indices (WB, December 2023).

In South Sudan, while economic shocks were identified as the primary driver, in reality it is the combination of the economic crisis (currency depreciation and high food prices) with frequent

climate-related shocks and conflict/insecurity – including the spillover effects of the conflict in the Sudan – that are equally contributing to the country's dire situation (IPC, November 2023). The economy's modest recovery from the civil war was undone by the COVID-19 pandemic and flooding (WB, September 2023). The economy relies on revenues from oil production, which became more costly in 2023 due to the conflict in the Sudan and production bottlenecks (IMF, December 2023). South Sudan saw a significant increase in staple food prices due to spikes in fuel prices (leading to high transportation costs), significant currency depreciation, and reduced trade volumes from the Sudan (WFP, July 2023).

Structural vulnerabilities underlie the region's food insecurity crises






East African countries have various underlying structural vulnerabilities that significantly impact their ability to address and cope with high levels of acute food insecurity.

Not only do they face environmental vulnerabilities that increase their risk due to the intensification of recurrent shocks such as droughts and floods, but they are also faced with economic vulnerabilities that increase their exposure to shocks.

All the East African countries with major food crises, except for Kenya, are designated as Least Developed Countries by the United Nations (UNCTAD, January 2024), which means they are characterized by historically weak development capacity, low and unequally distributed income, and scarcity of domestic financial resources.

These vulnerabilities limit the capacity for human development, as evidenced by the low scores and rankings these countries receive on the Human Development Index (HDI). Kenya ranks slightly better than the other countries, but there are huge disparities between the country's different regions, as the ASALs have much lower HDI scores than urban areas such as Nairobi. This divide in urban and rural development outcomes is typical in sub-Saharan Africa where roughly 70 percent of people

TABLE 2.2 Structural vulnerabilities indicators

	Cereal import dependency weighted by caloric relevance (%) 	Share of agricultural, forestry and fishery employment (%) 	Crop growing period affected by drought conditions (%) 	Rangeland growing period affected by drought conditions (%) 	INFORM Risk Index (0-10)	HDI global ranking (1-192) 
BURUNDI	22.9	85.9	7.4	8.5	5.6	187th
DJIBOUTI	98.8	1.2	N/A	15.6	4.9	171st
ERITREA	N/A	62.4	19.2	16.5	6	176th
ETHIOPIA	6.6	63.7	14.6	19.6	7	175th
KENYA	41.1	33	12.6	17.6	6.6	152nd
RWANDA	34.0	54.7	8.8	16.3	4.2	165th
SOMALIA	N/A	26.3	21.1	16.1	8.5	N/A
SOUTH SUDAN	N/A	62.1	13.5	18.1	8.5	191st
SUDAN	33.5	40.6	18.6	18.6	7.3	172nd
UGANDA	8.9	62.9	7.1	10.6	7	166th

Sources: FAO (Cereal import dependency weighted by caloric relevance); FAO (Share of agricultural, forestry and fishery employment); EC-JRC (Crop growing period affected by drought conditions); EC-JRC (Rangelands growing period affected by drought conditions); EC-JRC (INFORM Risk Index); UNDP (HDI Global Index).

living in rural areas are multidimensionally poor, while in urban areas that percentage decreases to just over a quarter (OPHI/UNDP, 2022). Poverty is particularly concentrated in East Africa, as 38 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's poor live in the region (OPHI, 2020). The highest incidences of poverty (where data are available) in the region are in South Sudan and Ethiopia, where 9 out of 10 and 8 out of 10 people are poor, respectively (OPHI, 2020). High levels of poverty and dependence on imports to meet domestic food demand make it difficult for vulnerable populations to afford food in a context of high food prices.

Households are also typically reliant on agriculture for livelihoods and subsistence. Around 68 million people depend on agriculture, fishing and forestry for their employment and livelihoods across East Africa, making up over half the employment opportunities in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Uganda. It reaches as high as 86 percent in Burundi (FAO, 2023). Djibouti has the lowest share at around 2 percent, as the country's economy relies primarily on providing port services due to

its strategic location on the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Less than 1 percent of the country is made up of arable land, which makes it almost entirely reliant on imports to meet its food demand (WB, December 2023).

When limited coping capacities combine with higher risks and exposure to shocks, households in the region become more vulnerable to crises. East African countries ranked highly on the global INFORM Risk Index, with most countries landing in the top 20. Somalia and South Sudan tied for being the second most vulnerable countries in the world.

Somalia also ranked second on the list of countries with the highest exposure to hazards, especially drought. The 21 percent frequency for crop-growing period affected by drought in table 2.2 can be interpreted as severe drought affecting one season in every five over the period 2003–2023. Observation of drought frequency shows that over the last seven years, one season in two has been affected by severe drought (EC-JRC).

DISPLACEMENT | A complex and escalating regional displacement crisis driven by conflict and weather extremes

East Africa has more forcibly displaced people than any other geographical region in the GRFC with a total of 20.7 million, most of them internally displaced in the Sudan and Ethiopia followed by South Sudan and Somalia.

There are interconnected and compounding factors that lead people to move frequently throughout the region, causing this displacement crisis to be complex and dynamic in nature.

While conflict and insecurity forced a high proportion of displacements in 2023, climate and natural disasters also figured prominently in people’s motivations to relocate. Displaced people typically moved to places with only marginally better conditions, where host populations also faced a multitude of challenges that ranged from conflict and frequent population movements to chronic poverty and weather extremes.

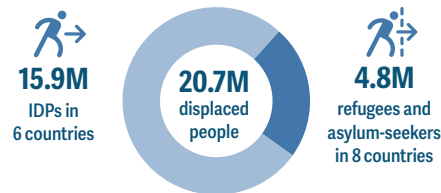
These challenges hindered the host communities’ capacities to support and integrate displaced populations, often resulting in temporary stays and onward movements to seek refuge and opportunities. They often led to tensions over competition for resources and livelihood opportunities (Joint Statement, June 2023).

The acute food insecurity and malnutrition data that are available for displaced populations in 2023 show a bleak picture.

The Sudan experienced the region’s largest displacement crisis

The conflict in the Sudan triggered the latest wave of widespread displacement in the region, with over 6 million people internally displaced between April 2023 and the end of the year, totalling 9.1 million IDPs overall. Prior to the start

FIG. 2.16 Numbers of IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers in 8 countries in the region, 2023



Source: UNHCR, IOM, December 2023.

of hostilities, the Sudan hosted over 1 million refugees, making it one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in the world and the second largest in Africa (Joint Statement, June 2023) (see *Focus on the Sudan*, page 53).

Drought and conflict perpetuated extensive displacement in Ethiopia

Prior to the conflict in the Sudan, Ethiopia had the largest number of forcibly displaced people in the region, with 3.5 million people internally displaced across 24 sites and camps, primarily due to conflict (65 percent of IDPs) followed by drought (18 percent). The Somali region hosted the highest number of IDPs who were displaced by drought, while the Tigray region hosted the highest number displaced by conflict (IOM, October 2023). Ethiopia’s refugee population of around 1 million people is predominantly from South Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea.

IDPs and refugees experienced large food consumption gaps and lacked access to services, leading to disease outbreaks, as well as acute food insecurity and malnutrition levels that were similar to those of the host population (UNHCR, February 2024).

Very concerning acute malnutrition levels in refugee camps in seven countries

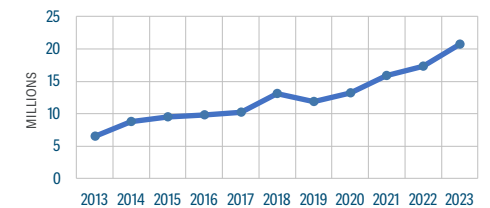
Uganda is Africa’s largest host of refugees, with over 1.6 million people, primarily from South Sudan and Democratic Republic of the Congo, living

across 13 settlements (UNHCR, December 2023). Inflation, sluggish recovery from COVID-19 and reduced humanitarian funding have resulted in a deteriorating nutrition situation for refugees and host families in 2023. According to the IPC acute malnutrition analysis, two settlements were classified in IPC AMN Phase 3 (Serious) and six in IPC AMN Phase 2 (Alert) from April to September 2023 (IPC, November 2023). The situation could deteriorate further in 2024 with diminished international funding (European Commission, October 2023).

Nearly half of the SENS nutrition assessments conducted across 66 refugee camps in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, the Sudan and Uganda found High (>10%) or Very High (>15%) levels of acute malnutrition among children under the age of 5 years (UNHCR, 2023).

The situation was most concerning in Ethiopia where the levels were High or Very High in 14 out of 21 camps, in South Sudan (High or Very High

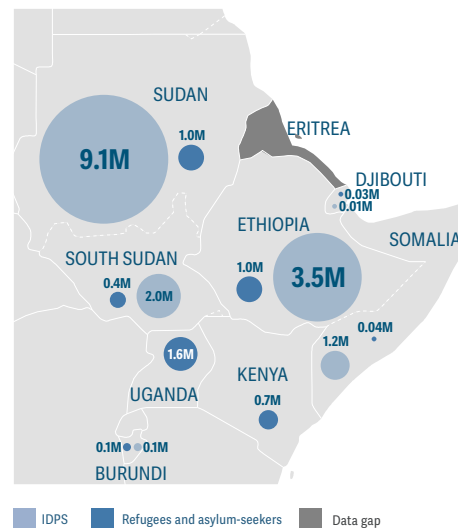
FIG. 2.17 Numbers of forcibly displaced people in the region 2013–2023



Sources: 2013–2022, UNHCR, IDMC, UNRWA; 2023, UNHCR nowcasted estimates December 2023, IOM.

in four out of eight camps), in the Sudan (seven out of nine camps) and in Djibouti (all three camps). High levels of anaemia among children under 5 years old and women of reproductive age were widespread in refugee camps. Refugees in all assessed camps had inadequate food consumption (according to the FCS indicator). In some camps in Ethiopia, Kenya and the Sudan, more than 70 percent of refugees had a poor FCS (see *Technical Notes*, page 165) (UNHCR, 2021–2023).

MAP 2.4 Numbers of IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers by country, 2023



Source: UNHCR, IOM, December 2023.

ACUTE MALNUTRITION | Inadequate health and WASH services, disease outbreaks, and poor infant and young child-feeding practices exacerbated by years of drought conditions, inflation and conflict-related displacement drove high levels of acute malnutrition, particularly in Ethiopia, the Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan and Kenya.

More than 12 million children under 5 years old were acutely malnourished in the eight food-crisis countries in East Africa, 3 million severely so.

The severity of acute malnutrition varied throughout the region in 2023, with countries such as Burundi and Uganda primarily experiencing Acceptable and Alert (IPC AMN Phase 1 and 2) situations while Djibouti, Somalia and South Sudan predominantly faced Serious and Critical (IPC AMN Phase 3 and 4) outcomes.

In early 2023, acute malnutrition in Kenya's drought-stricken ASALs was Extremely Critical (IPC AMN Phase 5) or Critical (IPC AMN Phase 4) in many counties and even worse than in 2022. A July 2023 IPC AMN analysis showed an improving but still critical situation.

At over 4 million, Ethiopia was the country with the highest GAM burden in the region, with the total number of SAM cases reaching over 1 million (HRP 2023 Ethiopia, February 2023). SMART surveys conducted in August 2023 in rural areas and IDP sites across the Tigray region indicated a Very High/Critical prevalence of acute malnutrition, with the highest prevalence among IDPs (26.5 percent). Some 61 percent of pregnant and breastfeeding women were suffering from acute malnutrition (MUAC < 23cm), indicating an Extremely Critical situation (SMART, August 2023).

In the Sudan, sharply escalating conflict since April 2023 has led to increased vulnerability to malnutrition, due to high inflation, reduced access to food, lack of water, poor hygiene and increased risk of infections and communicable diseases, such as measles, especially among the millions of displaced people.

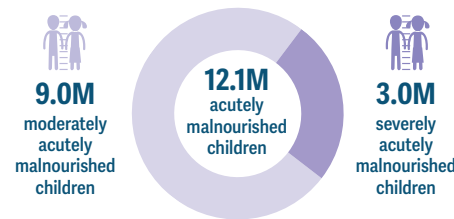
According to the revised HRP, the number of children with acute malnutrition increased by an estimated 30 percent in areas with active hostilities, by 15 percent in IDP-hosting states and by 10 percent elsewhere. However, the interruption in nutrition monitoring and reporting impacted the understanding of the evolving nutrition situation in most parts of the country, particularly in the hotpot areas (OCHA, May 2023).

Drivers of acute malnutrition

Lack of food A deterioration in acute food insecurity due to weather extremes, continued macroeconomic instabilities, escalating conflicts and mass displacement, particularly in the Sudan, led to poor dietary intake by women and children in terms of quantity and quality. In pastoral communities such as in northern Kenya, Somalia and southern Ethiopia, low livestock production resulted in limited availability of milk for children's diets, which was a leading contributor to their poor nutritional status. Limited food access during the temporary halt of humanitarian distribution and the onset of the lean season in Ethiopia were likely to have impacted children's nutritional status (SMART, August 2023).

Inadequate services Poor access to improved drinking water and sanitation as well as limited access to health services increased the risk of disease. Many of the drought-affected areas of the region had limited water (IPC, February 2023). In the Tigray region of Ethiopia, most households (82 percent) lack improved sanitation facilities, rising to 92 percent in the Central zone (SMART 2023). Major disease outbreaks including cholera, measles, malaria and other diseases across the region were worsened by the rise in El Niño-induced flooding and fragile

FIG. 2.18 Number of children under 5 years old with acute malnutrition in eight food crises, 2023



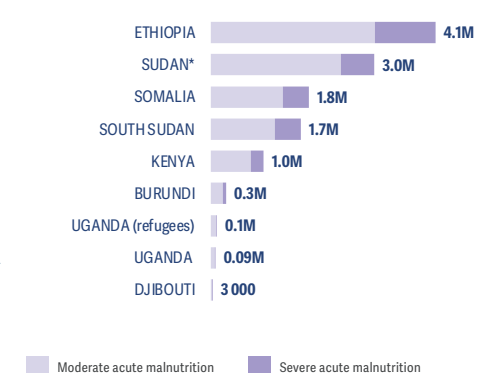
Source: IPC and HNO.

health systems. As of 31 January 2024, Ethiopia had around 32 000 cholera cases and Kenya 12 000 (WHO, February 2024). Some disease outbreaks are vaccine preventable, but routine immunization services along with maternal and childcare programmes have been disrupted for several years due to COVID-19 and lack of accessibility in remote, rural areas.

Ongoing conflicts in the region also affected service delivery at health facilities, exposing vulnerable populations, including women and children, to increased risks (WHO, March 2023). In the Sudan, critical civilian infrastructure including water systems and hospitals have been destroyed. Repairs to damaged infrastructure typically cannot be undertaken due to issues of access and security (OCHA, May 2023).

Inadequate practices Inadequate feeding practices of infants and young children, were another high-risk contributing factor to acute malnutrition. All countries in the region had suboptimal levels of exclusive breastfeeding. The percentage of children aged 6-23 months receiving a Minimum Acceptable Diet was low across the region and at Extremely Critical/Catastrophe levels in Burundi (4 percent), Somalia (8.7 percent), South Sudan (5 percent), the Karamoja region of Uganda (2.9 percent) and Tigray region of Ethiopia (0-6 percent) (SMART 2023).

FIG. 2.19 Number of children under 5 years old with acute malnutrition by country, 2023



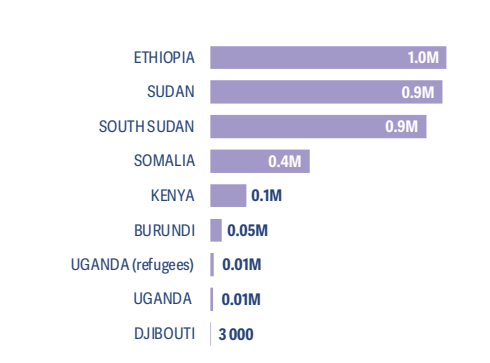
* HNO Estimates prior to the conflict in April 2023.

Source: Ethiopia HRP 2023, February 2023; Burundi IPC TWG, September 2022; Djibouti IPC TWG, June 2023; Kenya IPC TWG, September 2023; Somalia IPC TWG, April 2023; South Sudan IPC TWG, November 2023; Sudan HNO 2023, November 2022; Uganda IPC TWG, June and November 2023.

3.4M pregnant and breastfeeding women with acute malnutrition in eight food crises, 2023

Source: GRFC Nutrition TWG, 2024.

FIG. 2.20 Number of pregnant and breastfeeding women with acute malnutrition by country, 2023



Source: Burundi IPC TWG, September 2022; Djibouti IPC TWG, June 2023; Ethiopia HRP 2023, February 2023; Kenya IPC TWG, September 2023; Somalia IPC TWG, April 2023; South Sudan IPC TWG, November 2023; Sudan HNO 2023, November 2022; Sudan Revised HRP 2023, May 2023; Uganda IPC TWG, June and November 2023.

Focus | Conflict in the Sudan

Heavy fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) since April 2023 has had devastating consequences across the Sudan and in the neighbouring countries of Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan.

The humanitarian situation is dire. Millions of people among the displaced and host communities, especially women and children, are experiencing severe access constraints to basic goods and services, including food, water and shelter, with profound and prolonged impacts on their food security and nutrition.

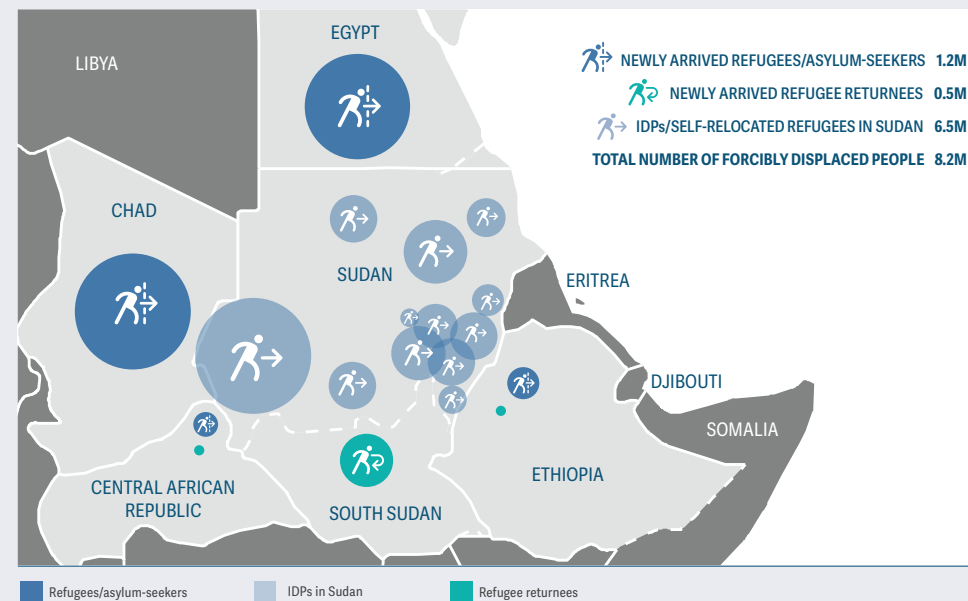
The Sudan is now East Africa's largest food crisis

In 2023, during the June–September lean season, around 20.3 million people, or 42 percent of the total population, experienced high levels of acute food insecurity, 74 percent more than during the 2022 lean season (IPC, August 2023). Seasonal improvements in food access and availability from October 2023 to February 2024 following the main harvest were expected to be limited by the severity of the conflict's impact in Greater Darfur, Greater Kordofan, Khartoum and Gezira. Around 17.7 million people were projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity during this post-harvest period (IPC, December 2023).

Major impact on the country's agriculture sector

The conflict has severely restricted access to land for cultivation, livestock movement and seasonal activities, making it extremely difficult for households to produce food. Major infrastructure for food production and storage has been destroyed, including in southeastern areas – the country's breadbasket. Supply chain disruptions further limited the availability and distribution of seeds, inputs and agricultural finance. Irrigation canals cannot be maintained. Violence is reducing

MAP 2.5 Number of forcibly displaced people between mid-April 2023 and February 2024



Source: IOM, OCHA, UNHCR and COR, February 2024.

access to water and pasture for livestock and disrupting seasonal migrations in many areas (IPC, December 2023). The sorghum and millet harvests in Gezira, Sennar, White Nile and South Kordofan were significantly disrupted. In 2024, the conflict affected key production areas, including the Gezira irrigation scheme, which produces 40–50 percent of the national wheat output and where critical irrigation infrastructure was damaged (FEWS NET, February 2024).

According to the findings of a 2023 Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission, cereal production is estimated at well below average levels (FAO, March 2024). In this context, food import requirements – which covered 80–85 percent of countrywide

wheat consumption needs before the conflict – are expected to increase further. Lower food availability is expected to have a compounding impact on already widespread and high levels of acute food insecurity across the country (FEWS NET, February 2024).

The world's largest internal displacement crisis

By the end of 2023, about 7.7 million people had been displaced since the onset of hostilities in April 2023, including about 6 million IDPs, 1.5 million refugees, and nearly 200 000 self-relocated refugees internally displaced in the Sudan (UNHCR, December 2023; IOM, December 2023). When added to the millions of people

internally displaced by conflict over two decades, there were an estimated 9.1 million IDPs by the end of 2023, including 3 million children – the largest internal displacement crisis worldwide (IOM, January 2024).

As Map 2.5 shows, the number of displaced people continued to increase rapidly in early 2024, reaching a total of 8.2 million by February, consisting mainly of IDPs/self-relocated refugees followed by Sudanese refugees/asylum-seekers and refugee returnees of other nationalities (UNHCR, February 2024).

The limited humanitarian access to conflict hotspots due to recurring telecommunications issues, security concerns and high fuel costs hindered domestic travel to conduct reverification exercises, undermining the provision of assistance and support to affected populations, thereby contributing to rising numbers of IDPs (IOM, January 2024) and acutely food-insecure populations.

Alarming levels of acute malnutrition threaten the lives of children and women

The Sudan is among the food crises with the highest prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) among children under 5 years old, at an estimated 13.6 percent, a High severity according to WHO thresholds (OCHA, December 2023) even before the outbreak of the conflict. Massive displacement – resulting in lack of water and poor hygiene, increasing risk of infections, and limited access and availability to basic health and nutrition services – worsened malnutrition among children and women since April 2023. About 76 percent of the 3 million acutely malnourished children under 5 years old and 0.9 million acutely malnourished pregnant and breastfeeding women (OCHA, May 2023) were in areas most affected by conflict. In these areas, the GAM prevalence

was above the Very High threshold of 15 percent (OCHA, December 2023).

Micronutrient deficiencies are widespread, evidenced by the fact that 48 percent of children aged under 5 suffer from anaemia due to iron deficiency. Only 25 percent of children aged under 5 achieve Minimum Dietary Diversity, a situation worsened by extensive displacement limiting access to nutritious foods and disrupting regular feeding and caregiving practices (OCHA, December 2023).

The nutrition outlook is expected to deteriorate in 2024, particularly during the June–September lean season, due to ongoing conflict, worsening food insecurity, compromised health, WASH and nutrition services, prolonged displacement and extremely high food prices. More than 3.5 million children are projected to be acutely malnourished in 2024, of whom more than 0.7 million are expected to be severely affected – and at increased risk of death without timely treatment (UNICEF, HAC, December 2023).

A crisis beyond the country's borders

The ongoing conflict in the Sudan has had a profound impact on border regions in neighbouring countries, where refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees are gathering in significant numbers. These areas, including parts of **Central African Republic, Chad** and **South Sudan**, were already grappling with severe acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition before the conflict (GRFC 2023, May 2023).

The increased influx of refugees is intensifying competition for limited resources, raising the potential for tensions between displaced and local communities, while stretching already scarce resources.

By the end of 2023, among the 1.5 million people who fled the Sudan, including Sudanese nationals and refugees from neighbouring countries who were hosted in the Sudan, 0.5 million were in both South Sudan and Chad, 0.4 million in Egypt, 43 700 in Ethiopia and nearly 26 000 in Central



Many of those crossing the border are South Sudanese refugee returnees travelling on boats to reach their communities of origin where they face extreme levels of economic hardship and hunger.

African Republic. Most of the cross-border displacements into South Sudan were refugee returnees (UNHCR, January 2024).

In **Chad**, the arrival of new refugees added to the over 0.4 million Sudanese refugees who had been living in camps there for over a decade (ACAPS, January 2024), putting more pressure on the limited resources of host communities, with the number of refugees and returnees approximately four times greater than the local population in places such as Adré town (Ouaddaï province) (ACAPS, January 2024). A Cadre Harmonisé special protocol activated to assess the acute food insecurity situation of these affected populations found that 24 percent of nearly 315 000 refugees analysed in two eastern provinces (Sila and Wadi Fira) faced high levels of acute food insecurity in October–December 2023 (CILSS, November 2023).

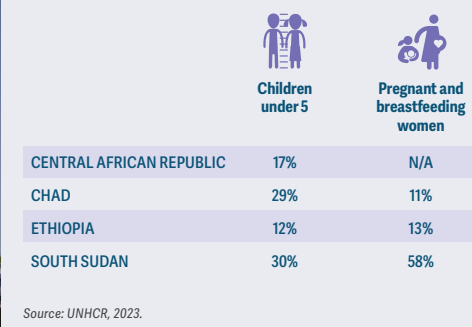
Humanitarian needs among **South Sudanese** refugee returnees, who have been displaced several times, are dire. Around 28 000 or

10 percent of the returnee population are expected to face catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 5) in April–July 2024 (IPC, November 2023).

Following the RSF attacks on Wad Madani in the heavily populated Sudanese state of Gezira in December 2023, the number of Sudanese refugees arriving in South Sudan also increased considerably, spiking in the first half of January. Average daily arrivals fluctuated between about 1 500 and 2 500 per day and were expected at similar levels in 2024 as the conflict continues (FEWS NET, January 2024).

In **Central African Republic**, many refugees were hesitant to travel far from the border and stayed in the Amdafock area in the rainy season instead of moving to Korsi, a refugee reception centre in the city of Birao. As conflict continued in South Darfur, by the end of 2023 many had relocated to Korsi to seek protection. As of January, the data cut-off date for the GRFC, no data were available on the

FIG. 2.18 Prevalence of acute malnutrition among refugees at border crossings, 2023



food security conditions of Sudanese refugees in these areas. A report by IOM indicated that about 40 percent of them said they crossed the border seeking humanitarian assistance (IOM, July 2023).

Levels of acute malnutrition surpassed Very High thresholds among those fleeing the Sudan

Regarding nutrition, refugee and returnee populations who have sought refuge in Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan had MUAC measurements indicating levels of wasting above the 15 percent Very High WHO threshold for all countries, except Ethiopia.

The situation was the most severe in border points in South Sudan, with screenings between May and November, indicating that 30 percent of children under 5 years old and a staggering 58 percent of pregnant and breastfeeding women (PBW) were acutely malnourished.

This situation was also extremely concerning in Chad, where MUAC screening at border points indicated 29 percent of children aged under 5, and 11 percent of PBW were acutely malnourished. In border crossing points of Central African Republic, the prevalence was 17 percent among children under 5 years (*see figure 2.18*). In Ethiopia, the acute malnutrition situation is relatively better but still above the High WHO threshold, at 12 percent for children and 13 percent for PBW.



Founded by the European Union, FAO and WFP in 2016, the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) is an alliance of humanitarian and development actors committed to addressing the root causes of food crises and finding lasting solutions to them, through shared analysis and knowledge, strengthened coordination in evidence-based responses and collective efforts across the humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) nexus.



The Food Security Information Network (FSIN) is a technical global platform for the exchange of expertise, knowledge and best practices on food security and nutrition analysis. Its purpose is to promote timely, independent and consensus-based information about food crises, while also highlighting and addressing critical data gaps. As a key partner of the GNAFC, FSIN coordinates the publication of the *Global Report on Food Crises*.