



Central and Southern Africa

Although some countries in the region experienced marginal improvements, levels of acute food insecurity remained extremely worrying and similar to 2022.

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The impacts of conflict disrupted food security and livelihoods in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic and northern Mozambique, while weather extremes and economic shocks contributed to driving food crises throughout the region in 2023.

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Large numbers of people were newly displaced by conflict in Democratic Republic of the Congo, which continued to have more than half of the region's total population facing high levels of acute food insecurity.

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Tropical storms, cyclones and severe drought, exacerbated by the El Niño weather phenomenon, contributed to disease outbreaks, exacerbating acute malnutrition levels in areas with already limited health services.

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The outlook for 2024 is concerning because of the impacts of El Niño-related drought, especially in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, as well as Angola, Madagascar, Mozambique and Namibia.

Central and Southern Africa

Widespread economic shocks characterized by soaring inflation and low purchasing power, the lingering impacts of tropical cyclone Freddy, drier-than-average conditions linked to El Niño, and continued conflict in three of the 13 countries drove continued high levels of acute food insecurity across the region in 2023 and into 2024.

49.6M 

people or 21% of the analysed population faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2023 in 13 countries.

10.1M 

forcibly displaced people in 13 food-crisis countries in 2023 – consisting of 8.9 million IDPs and 1.2 million refugees and asylum-seekers.

3.9M 

acutely malnourished children in five food-crisis countries with 1.2 million of them suffering the most severe form of wasting.

Angola | Central African Republic | Congo (refugees and residents) | Democratic Republic of the Congo | Eswatini | Lesotho | Madagascar | Malawi | Mozambique | Namibia | United Republic of Tanzania | Zambia | Zimbabwe

MAP 2.1 Number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity in 13 countries in 2023

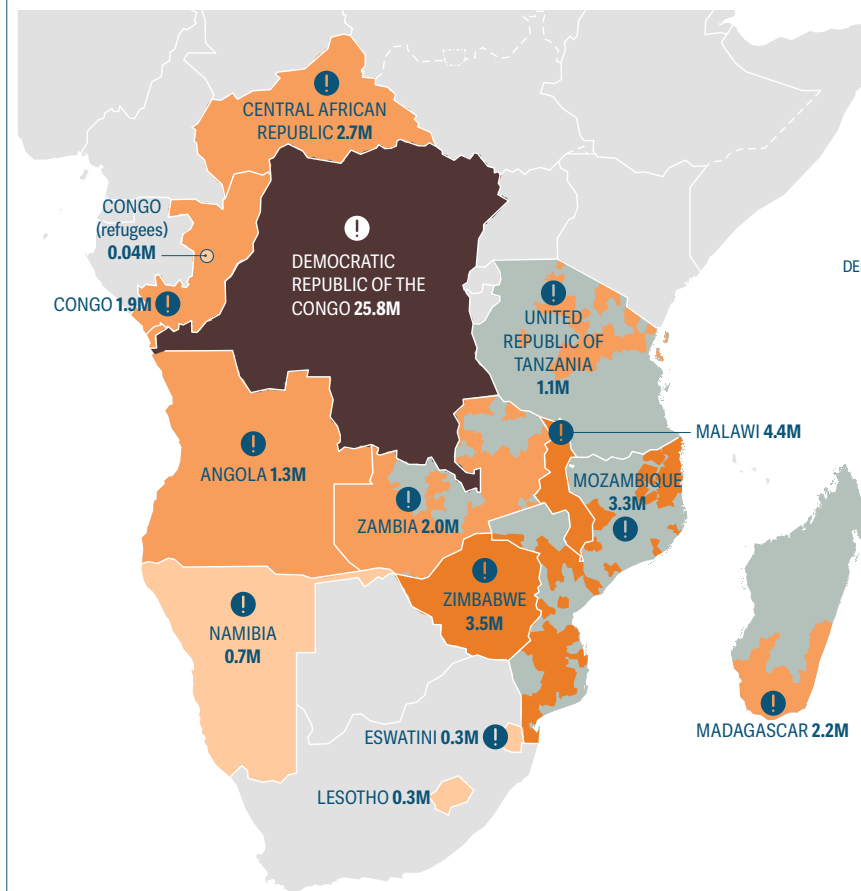
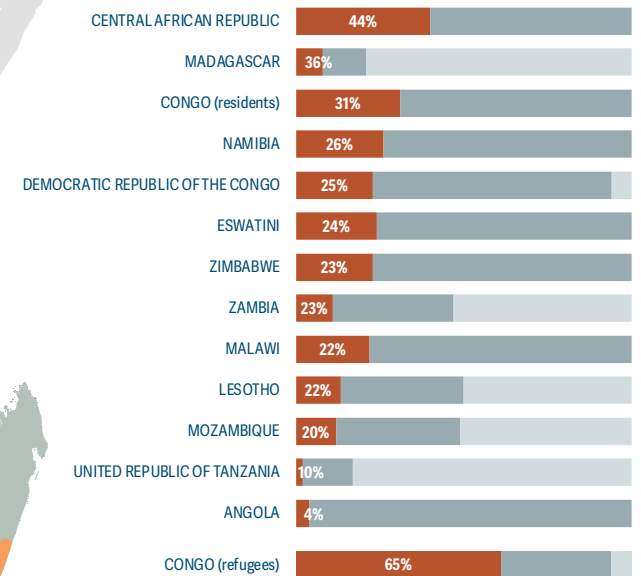


FIG. 2.1 Share of analysed populations facing high levels of acute food insecurity, 2023



The total population was analysed in all countries, except: United Republic of Tanzania (17%), Madagascar (21%), Zambia (47%), Mozambique (49%), Lesotho (55%) and Democratic Republic of the Congo (94%). 94% of Congo's refugee population were analysed.

Legend:
■ Share of analysed population in IPC Phase 3+ or above or equivalent
■ Population analysed
■ Population not analysed

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Legend for population size:
■ <1.0 million
■ 1-2.99 million
■ 3-4.99 million
■ 5-9.99 million
■ 10-14.99 million
■ ≥15 million
■ Not selected for analysis
■ Data not meeting GRFC technical requirements/population not analysed
■ Data gap

Legend for icons:
 Major food crisis
 Refugee populations (colour coding as legend)

Source: IPC TWGs; FEWS NET (Zimbabwe and Angola); WFP CARI (Congo).

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

The scale of the food crisis across the region remained similar to 2022. Democratic Republic of the Congo remained the largest in terms of the number, and Central African Republic largest in terms of share of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity.

Some countries (Malawi and Zimbabwe) and localized areas of others (Mozambique and Zambia) experienced worsening acute food insecurity since 2022. Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho and Namibia all saw slight improvements.

A regional-level year-on-year comparison in numbers is not possible due to a change in methodology for Angola, the inclusion of Congo for the first time and the fact that, for Central African Republic, Madagascar and United Republic of Tanzania, the peak period of acute food insecurity was the same as it straddled 2022 and 2023.

Considering the countries with data in both years, the share of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity can be considered stable, passing from 22 to 21 percent. As in previous years, the highest prevalence of high acute food insecurity was in Central African Republic, at 44 percent.

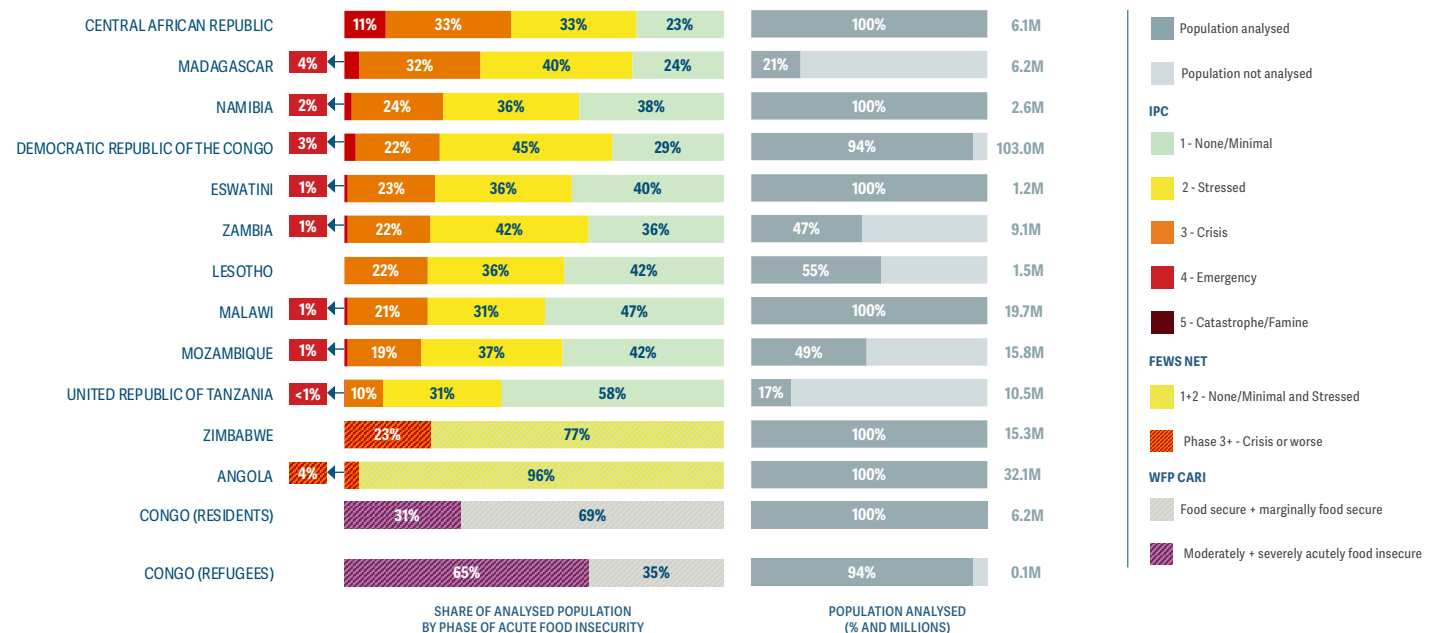
Out of the 13 countries with analyses, all except Lesotho were considered major food crises with at least 1 million people or 20 percent of their total country population facing high levels of acute food insecurity.

Severity of acute food insecurity

Out of 13 food crises in the region, ten had IPC analyses that provide data disaggregated by severity phase of acute food insecurity.

Seven of the ten are protracted major food crises – Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe. No populations were in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in 2023.

FIG. 2.2 Share of analysed populations by phase of acute food insecurity, 2023 peak



Source: IPC TWGs; FEWS NET (Zimbabwe and Angola); WFP CARI (Congo).

4.9M people or 3% of the analysed population were in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) across nine countries in 2023

All ten countries with disaggregated data had populations in IPC Phase 4, except Lesotho. Conflict-affected countries continued to host most of the population in this phase – 3.4 million in Democratic Republic of the Congo, 0.6 million in Central African Republic and 0.2 million in Mozambique.

Severity was particularly high in Central African Republic where 11 percent of the population were in this phase. Compared with the previous year, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique and Namibia all had fewer people in this phase.

37.9M people or 22% of the analysed population were in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) across ten countries in 2023

Across the region, the prevalence of people in IPC Phase 3 ranged from 10 percent in United Republic of Tanzania to 33 percent in Central African Republic. Overall, there is no significant change since last year in terms of number of people in this phase, with Malawi and Mozambique accounting for the slight regional increase.

72.4 million people or 41% of the analysed population in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) across ten countries in 2023

In each of the ten countries, at least 30 percent of analysed populations were in Stressed (IPC Phase 2), rising to 45 percent in Democratic Republic of the Congo and some areas of Madagascar, and 42 percent in parts of Zambia.

The additional 8 million people in this phase since 2022 is almost equivalent to the decrease in the number of people in Minimal (IPC Phase 1), indicating an overall deterioration of the situation. Without long-term support for disaster risk reduction and livelihood protection, these people risk slipping into IPC Phase 3, requiring urgent action, if they face an additional shock.

Acute food insecurity since 2016

The increase year after year in the estimated number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity in Central and Southern Africa from 2018 to 2023 reflects multiple interconnected shocks as well as increases in the size of the population analysed in Angola, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Madagascar, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

The region's low level of economic development and reliance on agriculture – namely cereal crops and livestock – leave it highly susceptible to weather extremes. Disastrous weather events of the last eight years include the El Niño-related drought of 2016–2017, recurrent droughts in localized areas of several countries, including Angola, Madagascar, Namibia and Zimbabwe, and tropical cyclones Idai and Kenneth in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe in 2019, as well as cyclone Freddy in Mozambique, Malawi and Madagascar in early 2023.

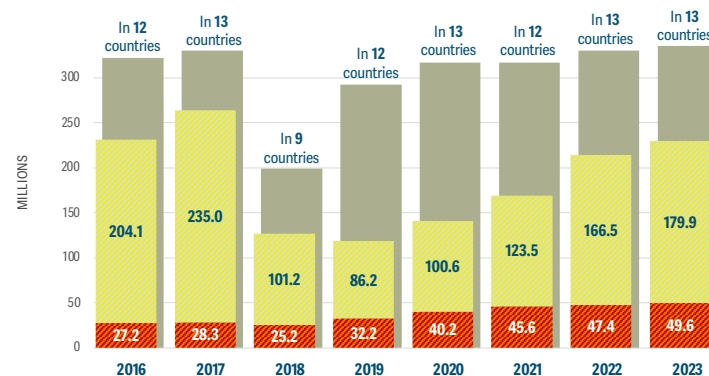
Three countries in the region have experienced protracted conflicts and worsening insecurity: Democratic Republic of the Congo since at least the late 1990s, Central African Republic since 2013 and Mozambique since 2017.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in widespread income losses, currency depreciation in many countries was increasing the costs of servicing external debt, triggering an increase in prices of imported food and creating domestic inflationary pressures, especially in Zimbabwe.

Looking at the nine protracted food crises with data available throughout the eight GRFC editions Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe), the number of highly acutely food-insecure people more than doubled between 2016 and 2023.

Regarding prevalence, the sharpest increase was between 2018 (when 20 percent of the analysed population faced high levels of acute food

FIG. 2.3 Numbers of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity, 2016–2023



Source: IPC TWGs; FEWS NET (Zimbabwe and Angola); WFP CARI (Congo).

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

insecurity) and 2019 (when it reached 27 percent). By 2020, the prevalence reached 29 percent before declining after 2021 to 22 percent in 2022.

Increased data availability played a major part in the rising numbers in these nine countries. The population analysed increased by 40 percent between 2016 and 2022. For instance, in Democratic Republic of the Congo, analysis coverage increased from 65–69 percent of the population in 2018–2020 to 91–96 percent since 2021.

All nine countries except Lesotho and Zambia have continuously faced major food crises over the past eight years. Projections available as of January 2024 point to a similar share (22 percent) of analysed population facing high levels of acute food insecurity across the nine countries as in 2022, with decreases in Madagascar, Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Outlook for 2024

Drier and hotter conditions associated with El Niño will significantly impact the April 2024 harvest in much of Southern Africa and lead to an earlier and deeper 2024/25 lean season from October 2024.

Projections for 2024 indicate that 44.6 million people or 20 percent of the analysed population will face high levels of acute food insecurity in 12 countries in the region.

For six of the countries – Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia – the projections are the same as the 2023 peak since they refer to the typical lean period (October 2023–March 2024). The prevalence of high acute food insecurity was projected to decrease slightly in Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Madagascar. It was projected to rise in Angola and remain at similarly high levels in Zimbabwe.

Overall, the impacts of El Niño pose a downside risk to yields, limiting crop production and poor households' ability to access sufficient food to meet their needs, especially in rural areas.

The projections may not have fully reflected the impact of extreme drought and low crop production in Zambia, parts of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, about which there was little evidence at the time the projections were made.

Areas of high concern include deficit-producing areas of southern and western Zimbabwe, southern Malawi, southern and central Mozambique, and southern Madagascar, which are likely to be worst affected by rainfall deficits and expected below-average 2024 harvests. They are expected to exhaust household food stocks earlier than usual.

Seasonal improvements in food security outcomes associated with the harvest in April/May 2024 are expected to be short-lived across much of the region, as household and locally produced market stocks will decline atypically early (FEWS NET, November 2023).

The exceptions include Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Madagascar, northern Mozambique, and central and northern Malawi, where average to above-average rainfall was anticipated to support normal crop production, livestock conditions and labour opportunities.

In eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, conflict will likely continue to limit income-earning opportunities and agricultural production despite the forecast of favourable rainfall.

Drivers of the food crises, 2023–2024



Conflict/insecurity was the primary driver in three countries where 31.8 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity.

Intensified conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, ongoing insecurity in northern and southeastern areas of Central African Republic, and deteriorating security in parts of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, continued to displace households, reduce participation in agricultural activities, and disrupt trade and market access. Living costs were especially high in conflict-affected areas where employment opportunities were limited.

In the first 11 months of 2023, almost 2 million people were newly displaced in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri in Democratic Republic of the Congo, bringing the total of IDPs to more than 5.5 million in the three provinces alone. Over 85 percent of these displacements were due to armed attacks and clashes (OCHA, November 2023).

In Central African Republic, despite ongoing volatility with clashes between armed forces and non-state armed groups, the humanitarian situation was relatively better in 2023 compared with the last five years, with a 20 percent decrease in IDPs between 2022 and 2023 (UNICEF, February 2024).

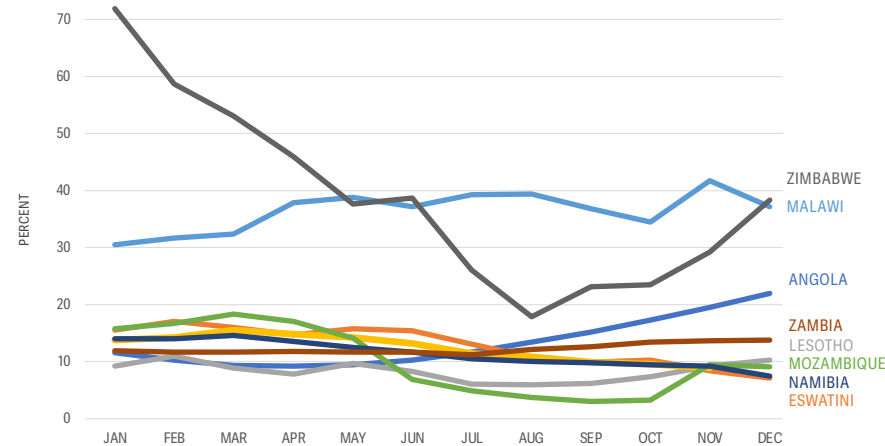


Weather extremes were considered the main driver in seven countries where a total of 12 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity.

In 2023, weather extremes continued to affect crop production and pastoralism, including excessive rainfall and waterlogging notably in Lesotho, northern Zimbabwe and Zambia, as well as erratic rainfall and dry spells (FAO-GIEWS, July 2023; FEWS NET, June 2023).

Dry conditions in localized areas of southern Angola and northern Namibia constrained food availability and reduced income-earning opportunities from crop sales. United Republic

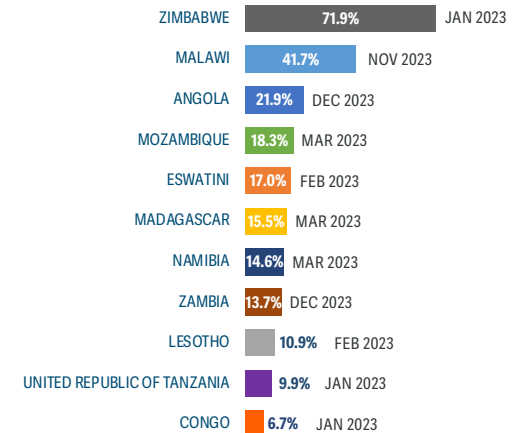
FIG. 2.4 Persistently high food inflation in 2023 for most countries in the region



This graph only includes countries where food inflation peaked at over 10 percent in 2023.

Source: Trading Economics, 2024.

FIG. 2.5 Highest annual food inflation rate by country, 2023



Source: Trading Economics, 2024.

of Tanzania, southern Zimbabwe and Zambia experienced consecutive pest infestations (FAO-GIEWS, July 2023; FEWS NET, June 2023). In February and March 2023, cyclone Freddy caused extensive flooding and crop damage and losses in southern Malawi, as well as in Madagascar and Mozambique where localized flooding damaged crops (FAO-GIEWS, July 2023).

The various weather shocks during the 2022/23 agricultural season resulted in mixed harvests across the region, with a bumper harvest in the maize triangle of South Africa and poor harvests in parts of southern Zimbabwe, southern Mozambique and southern Malawi (FEWS NET, November 2023).

The prevailing El Niño climate event, which was forecast to reach peak intensity in late 2023 and dissipate by mid-2024, drove hotter and drier-than-normal conditions across much of Southern Africa during the October 2023–March 2024 cereal cropping cycle (FEWS NET, November 2023).

February 2024 has proved the driest February on record over parts of Zambia, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique (OCHA, February 2024). In February 2024, a national drought disaster and emergency was declared in Zambia where the dry spell from mid-January affected most of the central and southern half of the country, destroying almost half of the country's maize cultivation (UN, March 2024).

Production downturns in maize, the region's key food staple, particularly in surplus-producing South Africa and Zambia, could trigger supply-related price spikes across the subregion and curb import availabilities. Given the high susceptibility of maize to drought stress and the high prevalence of rainfed agricultural systems, a poor rainy season is highly likely to lead to a poor harvest, with worrying consequences for household food availability and food access due to income losses for rural households (FAO, November 2023).

Poor pasture and water conditions from early 2024 were already leading to an atypically high number of livestock deaths in southern Angola, Namibia, southern Zambia and western Zimbabwe, ahead of the July–September 2024 dry season (OCHA, February 2024).

In Democratic Republic of the Congo, the October–November 2023 rains were delayed at the start of the agricultural season in the east-central and southeast of the country, which is likely to impact crop production (FEWS NET, November 2023).



Economic shocks were the primary driver of acute food insecurity in three countries where a total of 5.8 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity.

In most countries, currency weakness with consequent increases in fuel and transport costs, pushed up food prices and limited the transmission of lower international cereal prices to domestic markets (FAO, November 2023). Despite

the recent easing of international fertilizer prices, farmers' access to agricultural inputs is being constrained by weak national currencies. This, in turn, is curbing yields and reducing the area under cultivation, contributing to lower agricultural work opportunities and wages, lower harvests and higher food prices (FAO, November 2023).

Most countries in the region experienced double-digit annual food inflation, with the highest rates in Zimbabwe and Malawi (WFP, December 2023).

In particular, maize prices, the main food staple in Southern Africa, climbed to new record highs in Malawi and Zambia (usually a maize exporter) in October 2023 due to currency weakness coupled with reduced domestic supply in Malawi and strong export demand for Zambian maize, while in Zimbabwe maize meal prices were more than four times higher in September compared with the year-earlier values (FAO, November 2023).

In the net-importing countries of Eswatini, Lesotho and Namibia, retail prices of maize meal generally declined in the second and third quarter of 2023 – though still well above their year-earlier levels – mirroring earlier falling prices in South Africa, the main source of cereals for these countries. However, subsequent price increases in South Africa were expected to trigger upward movements later in the year (FAO, November 2023).

In Democratic Republic of the Congo, while currency stability kept commodity prices stable, fuel prices increased by 12 percent during October in the eastern area, which could cause food prices to rise (FEWS NET, November 2023).

The anticipated below-average cereal and cash crop harvests in 2024 will lead to an atypical increase in imported maize volumes from outside the region to meet consumer demand in 2024, exacerbating already-inflated maize prices. Staple food prices across the region are likely to be higher than both 2023 and the five-year average. The combination of high food prices and limited access to income are expected to keep household purchasing power low across the region (FEWS NET, November 2023).

Structural vulnerabilities underlie the region's food insecurity crises

Persistently high levels of acute food insecurity across the region reflect structural factors such as high levels of poverty, government debt, high population growth, high exposure to natural hazards, gender and income inequality, and low levels of education that decrease households' and communities' ability to withstand and recover from shocks.

Weak governance structures and high public debt burdens undermine governments' efforts to deliver social services, alleviate poverty and achieve zero hunger (WFP, 2023).






With debt levels already high and spending on interest payments rising, the fiscal space to borrow more to finance policy responses to a food shock is extremely limited. The latest IMF/WB debt sustainability analysis concluded that Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe are in debt distress (ADB, 2023).

Angola, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Mozambique and United Republic of Tanzania received Very High or High INFORM risk scores, which are a composite indicator of a country's ability to respond to disasters based on hazard exposure, socioeconomic vulnerability and institutional coping capacity. Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo rank eighth and tenth globally for weak institutional capacity according to the INFORM Risk Index (INFORM Risk, 2024).

All food-crisis countries in the region are in the lowest 50 of the 191 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI). Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar and Mozambique are in the lowest 20, a reflection of the compounding effects of poor health resources, limited education opportunities and low incomes in these countries.

The region is particularly susceptible to erratic weather patterns, including prolonged droughts

TABLE 2.1 Structural vulnerabilities indicators

	Annual population growth: UNDESA for population (%)	Cereal import dependency weighted by caloric relevance (%)	Share of agricultural, forestry and fishery employment (%)	Crop growing period affected by drought condition (%)	INFORM Risk Index (0–10)	HDI global ranking (1–192)
						
ANGOLA	2.0	42.9	58.7	11.29	5.2	148th
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	1.4	N/A	68.5	2.93	8.7	188th
CONGO	2.1	96.2	36.1	6.63	5	153rd
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	2.0	19.8	55.3	1.61	7.7	179th
ESWATINI	2.5	61.2	12.4	13.05	3.3	144th
LESOTHO	1.7	100	30	16.15	3.6	168th
MADAGASCAR	2.4	19.6	73.9	13.48	5.5	173rd
MALAWI	1.7	4.4	61.9	11.1	4.4	169th
MOZAMBIQUE	1.4	45.9	70.3	10.1	6.7	185th
NAMIBIA	1.2	65.2	22.1	19.23	3.8	139th
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA	2.6	2.6	64.3	16.15	5.1	160th
ZAMBIA	2.8	-0.1	58.7	8.43	3.9	154th
ZIMBABWE	3.2	60.3	61.6	17.67	4.1	146th

Source: UNDESA (Annual population growth); FAO (Cereal import dependency weighted by caloric relevance); FAO (Share of agricultural, forestry and fishery employment); EC-JRC (Crop growing period affected by drought condition); EC-JRC (INFORM Risk Index); UNDP (HDI Global Index).

and erratic rainfall, which disrupt traditional farming practices, diminish crop yields and contribute to food scarcity. Limited access to financial resources and reliance on rainfed agriculture in many parts of the region increase susceptibility to climate-related shocks.

Agriculture, forestry and fishing represented the main livelihoods for 78 million people across the region in 2021 – reaching more than half the total employment in most protracted food crises and around 70 percent in Central African Republic, Mozambique and Madagascar (FAO, 2023).

According to the ASAP system, Lesotho, Namibia, United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe experience drought for more than 15 percent of the crop growing period on average.

Population growth places additional strain on existing resources. The rapid increase in population (the rates are above 2 percent in eight countries) outpaces improvements in agricultural productivity, leading to a growing gap between food supply and demand.

Many food-crisis countries in the region – particularly Congo, Lesotho, Namibia, Eswatini and Mozambique – have a high dependency on imports, exposing them to regional and/or global food price fluctuations.

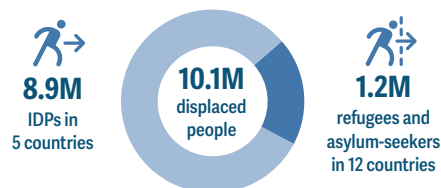
DISPLACEMENT | Nearly 90 percent of the region's forcibly displaced people are internally displaced by conflict in Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique, and political violence in Central African Republic

High vulnerability among IDPs

The increase in displacement since 2022 is largely driven by the escalating violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo where the number of IDPs rose from 5.7 million in 2022 to a record 6.9 million in 2023. As the security situation, particularly in North Kivu and Ituri, deteriorated throughout 2023, humanitarian needs soared amid significant humanitarian funding constraints. From October to mid-December 2023, 0.7 million people were displaced by escalating violence across North Kivu alone (IOM, October 2023). Out of the country's 25.4 million people facing high levels of acute food insecurity in the latter half of 2023, IDPs, returnees and host families were among the most affected (IPC, October 2023).

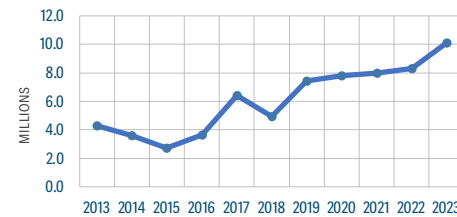
In Mozambique, around 0.7 million remained displaced by the conflict in Cabo Delgado. Although a reduction in violence in 2023 allowed about 0.6 million IDPs to return to their home

FIG. 2.6 Numbers of displaced people in 13 food-crisis countries in the region (in millions), 2023



Source: UNHCR, IOM, December 2023.

FIG. 2.7 Numbers of forcibly displaced people in the region 2013–2023



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

areas, they lacked the means to restart subsistence farming activities and produce their own food (IPC, November 2023). A deterioration of the security situation in February 2024 triggered a new wave of displacement (almost 70 000 people), further impacting agricultural production after the main planting season (IOM DTM, February 2024).

In Central African Republic, improved security in certain areas also allowed for some voluntary repatriation to stabilized areas (UNHCR, January 2024). Still 0.5 million IDPs were among the most acutely food-insecure population groups in the country (OCHA, January 2024).

The regional situation is further complicated by the growing impact of weather extremes, which had internally displaced over 1 million people in Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique as of January 2024 (UNHCR, January 2024).

Refugees face increasing challenges

More than 1 million people live as refugees in camps, settlements and urban areas across 12 food-crisis countries in the region, having fled conflict in neighbouring countries.

The highest numbers are in Democratic Republic of the Congo (from Central African Republic and Rwanda), United Republic of Tanzania (mainly from Burundi and Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Malawi (mainly from Democratic Republic of the Congo). Many of these refugee

populations have been displaced for decades (UNHCR, 2023).

The difficulties faced by forcibly displaced populations across the region continued to be aggravated by food ration reductions and cuts to other essential services in camps and settlements due to funding shortages. In March 2023, WFP was forced to reduce rations for more than 200 000 refugees in United Republic of Tanzania from 80 percent to 65 percent and to 50 percent by June, which was likely to have left thousands of refugees struggling to meet their nutritional needs just as food prices rose and more people sought refuge in the country from Democratic Republic of the Congo (WFP, May 2023).

New arrivals prompt rising nutrition concerns

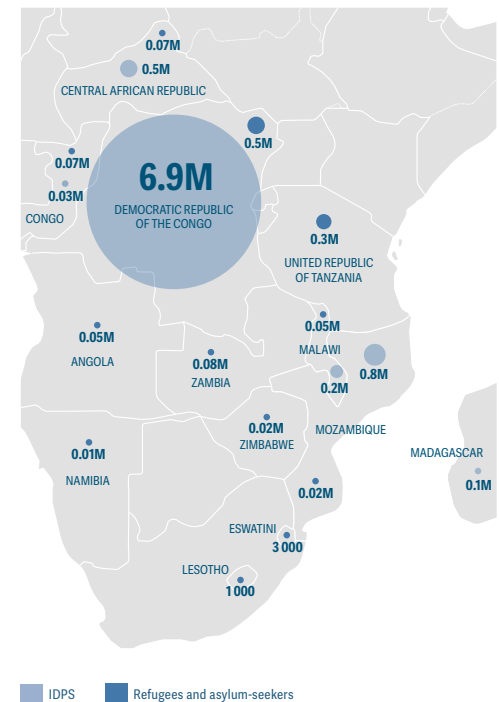
Throughout 2023 and into 2024, thousands of Chadians as well as Central African returnees fleeing violence and intercommunity tensions related to transhumance have been arriving in the northwestern Ouham prefecture of Central African Republic, one of the most food-insecure areas in the country. Staying with host families, themselves facing high levels of vulnerability, both population groups have very limited access to fields for food production. According to local authorities, the number of inhabitants in some villages has increased almost tenfold, straining infrastructure and access to basic services (OCHA, January 2024).

Nutrition in refugee settlements and camps

Over the last two years, SENS surveys have collected nutrition data in refugee camps in Malawi (one camp), Congo (five camps), the United Republic of Tanzania (three camps), Zambia (three camps) and Zimbabwe (one camp).

The prevalence of acute malnutrition was above 5 percent, considered Medium, in one camp in Congo and in all three monitored camps in Zambia. Across the remaining nine monitored camps, the prevalence of acute malnutrition was Low. Micronutrient deficiencies led to high levels of anaemia among children under 5 years old in

MAP. 2.2 Numbers of IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers by country, 2023



Source: UNHCR, IOM, December 2023.

all countries except in Malawi and Zimbabwe, and to high levels of anaemia among women in all the monitored camps in Congo and Zambia. Exclusive breastfeeding targets of 75 percent for children under 6 months old were not met, except in Malawi and two camps in the United Republic of Tanzania.

Indeed, malnutrition in Mantapala camp in Zambia was very concerning. Around 2.6 percent of children aged under 5 were suffering severe acute malnutrition and around 27 percent of pregnant and breastfeeding women were acutely malnourished (MUAC < 23cm). It had critically low rates of exclusive breastfeeding (20 percent) and a very high prevalence of poor food consumption (43 percent), measured by the FCS (UNHCR, October 2021).

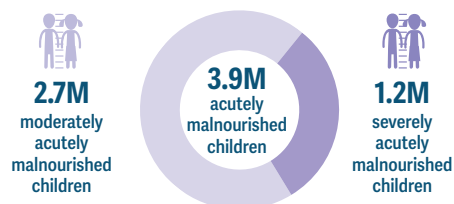
ACUTE MALNUTRITION | Five food crises in the region had data for acute malnutrition, with an estimated 3.9 million children under 5 years old acutely malnourished, of which 1.2 million were severely malnourished.

The majority of children and women with acute malnutrition were estimated in Democratic Republic of the Congo, the largest food crisis at global level.

Out of the five countries with IPC AMN analyses covering 2022 and 2023, the prevalence of acute malnutrition reached Critical (IPC AMN Phase 4) levels in some analysed areas of Angola, Central African Republic, western Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar's Grand Sud and Grand Sud-Est, and northern Mozambique.

Democratic Republic of the Congo had the highest number of acutely malnourished children under 5 years old, with 2.8 million children, of whom 0.9 million were severely malnourished, according to a partial IPC analysis (IPC AMN, December 2022). **Madagascar** had the next highest number (again according to a partial analysis of the Grand Sud and Grand Sud-Est), followed by **Central African Republic, northern Mozambique, Angola** and **Congo**.

FIG. 2.8 Number of children under 5 years old with acute malnutrition in five food crises, 2023



Source: IPC TWG and UNICEF WCARO, 2023.

Data for acute malnutrition among pregnant and breastfeeding women (PBW) were only available for six of the 13 countries, where a total of 2.5 million PBW were acutely malnourished in 2023, with 88 percent of them in Democratic Republic of the Congo (IPC AMN, December 2022).

In Central African Republic, over 162 000 PBW were affected by acute malnutrition with particularly high numbers in the northwest and southwest, and the capital Bangui (IPC AMN, January 2023).

The highest national prevalence of acute malnutrition among children aged under 5, based on SMART surveys conducted in 2021 and 2023, occurred in Mozambique (13 percent, considered High). However, the national prevalence can often mask a concerning local nutrition situation in these countries, specifically in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar and Mozambique. In Democratic Republic of the Congo, localized prevalence reached as high as 11 percent in areas of South Kivu (SMART 2023).

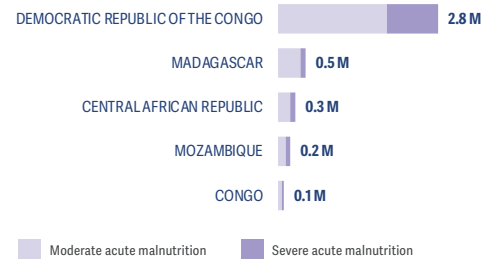
Drivers of acute malnutrition

Lack of food High levels of acute food insecurity – due to limited access and availability of nutritious foods, especially during the lean season – were identified as a major contributing factor to acute malnutrition in the five countries with IPC AMN analyses. Pockets of conflict/insecurity in Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique led to high acute malnutrition among displaced populations.

Inadequate practices Low rates of exclusive breastfeeding and poor complementary feeding practices were considered major contributors to acute malnutrition in the Grand Sud and Grand Sud-Est regions of Madagascar (IPC AMN, October 2022).

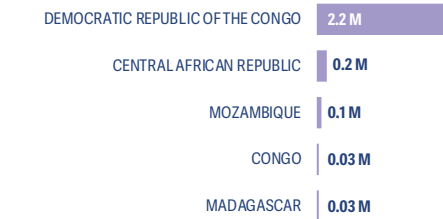
Inadequate feeding practices were common across the Cabo Delgado region of Mozambique, as evidenced by poor dietary diversity with fewer than 10 percent of children under 5 years old consuming a Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD)

FIG. 2.9 Number of children under 5 years old with acute malnutrition by country, 2023



Sources: Central African Republic IPC TWG, January 2023; Democratic Republic of the Congo IPC TWG, December 2022; Madagascar IPC TWG, October 2023; Mozambique IPC TWG, November 2023; UNICEF WCARO, 2023 (Congo).

FIG. 2.10 Number of pregnant and breastfeeding women with acute malnutrition by country, 2023



Sources: Central African Republic IPC TWG, November 2023; Democratic Republic of the Congo IPC TWG, December 2022; Madagascar IPC TWG, August 2023; Mozambique IPC TWG, November 2023; UNICEF, 2023 (Congo).

(IPC AMN, November 2023). In United Republic of Tanzania, exclusive breastfeeding of children under 6 months old has increased substantially over time to 64 percent in 2022, but only 8 percent of children aged 6–23 months received an MAD (DHS, October 2023).

Conversely, in eastern areas of Democratic Republic of the Congo, where conflicts and population displacements are the main drivers of acute food insecurity, acute malnutrition classifications are less severe than that of acute food insecurity thanks to protective practices such as high exclusive breastfeeding rates, consumption of non-wood forest products, and adults reducing their food intake in favour of children and other vulnerable household members, which seem to limit acute malnutrition among children (IPC AMN, June 2023).

In parts of Central African Republic, other factors mitigate the nutritional situation, including good exclusive breastfeeding rates (80 percent), and high coverage of measles vaccination and vitamin A supplementation (IPC AMN, January 2023).

Inadequate services In drought-affected areas, water scarcity had a deleterious effect on WASH services, while across Malawi and Mozambique, flooding and damage caused by cyclone Freddy destroyed infrastructure, while

hampering access to health and other basic services. This exacerbated the cholera outbreaks the two countries were experiencing (UNICEF, March 2023).

About 188 000 cholera cases, including 3 000 related deaths have been reported in eight countries in Southern Africa since January 2023. Malawi reported 59 000 cases, the highest in the region. Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe reported between 10 000 and 50 000 cases (OCHA, January 2024).

A severely malnourished child is 11 times more likely to die from cholera than a well-nourished child (UNICEF, March 2023). Infectious diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea can exacerbate wasting among children and increase mortality risk, but also, acutely malnourished children are more likely to be affected by such diseases.

In western, central and southern areas of Democratic Republic of the Congo not affected by conflict and population displacements, acute malnutrition was worse than acute food insecurity. This may be attributable to high levels of isolation in certain areas of the country, poor hygiene conditions and poor access to health infrastructure leading to low coverage of measles vaccination and vitamin A supplementation (IPC AMN, December 2022).



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*.