Economic shocks

Insecurity severely affected trade activities and contributed to high food prices and macroeconomic difficulties. Two in three households depended on markets for food during the lean season from May–August 2019 (IPC, June 2019). In May, cassava prices increased by 54 percent, while maize and rice increased by 19–23 percent compared to the same period in 2018 (WFP, May 2019).

A bowl of cassava was six times more expensive in eastern markets than in western in September. The same month, the closure of the border between the Sudan and Vakaga and Upper Kotto prefectures in response to the hostilities had a further negative impact on trade (FEWS NET, September 2019). In November, insecurity-related supply and trade disruptions kept the prices of cassava, maize and rice 50 percent higher year-on-year (FAO-GIEWS, December 2019).

Returnees, IDPs and refugees faced lack of assets and inputs to restart agriculture and cattle-rearing (IPC, November 2019).

Weather extremes

Delayed rainfall affected the first agricultural season and contributed to localized production shortfalls in western prefectures, the breadbasket of the country (IPC, November 2019). Flooding of the Oubangui and Ouaka rivers affected at least 57,000 people in October (FEWS NET, November 2019), and damaged crops in the prefectures of Bangui, Ombella-Ponko, Ouham, Ouaka and Basse-Kotto (FAO-GIEWS, December 2019).

Nutrition overview

The latest nutrition survey in 2018 found that 7 percent of children aged 6–59 months were acutely malnourished, 2.1 percent severely so. Vakaga (11.1 percent) and Basse Kotto (10.1 percent) had the highest rates of wasting, indicating a ‘high’ prevalence (MoH, December 2018).

According to the most recent estimates, 178,000 children aged 6–59 months were acutely malnourished, 49,000 of them severely so. Children in IDP sites and remote rural locations with limited access to basic services were more likely to be affected by wasting. The supply chain for nutritional products is challenged by persistent insecurity in some areas in the centre and south-east (OCHA, October 2019).

In 2018, stunting among children under 5 years of age was considered ‘very high’ with a 37.7 percent prevalence (MoH, December 2018). An estimated 367,000 children were chronically malnourished and in need of malnutrition treatment and prevention (OCHA, October 2019).

Child-feeding practices in 2018 were far from optimal with just 17.4 percent of children aged 6–23 months consuming the minimum acceptable diet required for their growth and development (MoH, December 2018).