SOUTH SUDAN | MAJOR FOOD CRISSES IN 2019

Weather extremes

Abnormally heavy seasonal rains since July caused severe flooding in large parts of the country, including areas already experiencing high levels of conflict-related vulnerability.

In late October, the Government of South Sudan declared a state of emergency in 30 counties after the flooding submerged entire communities and destroyed livelihoods or rendered them inaccessible, and cut off basic services and markets (OCHA, November 2019). By early November, an estimated 908,000 people had been affected, of whom around 420,000 were displaced (OCHA, November 2019).

Humanitarian needs were very high in the east and north-east, especially in the counties of Pibor and Maban, home to over 150,000 refugees (OCHA, October 2019). According to WFP, 755,500 people were in need of food and nutrition assistance as a result of the floods (WFP, November 2019).

According to the preliminary findings of the 2019 FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission, 2019 aggregate cereal production was estimated at about 818,500 tonnes, 10 percent above the record low 2018 output and 4 percent below the average of the previous five years. Cereal production benefitted from a bigger harvested area than 2018 due to security improvements and from abundant seasonal rains, but the widespread floods resulted in significant crop losses, especially in former Jonglei, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Unity, Upper Nile and Warrap states (FAO-GIEWS, March 2020).

NUTRITION OVERVIEW

The national prevalence of GAM increased from 13.3 percent in 2018 to 16.2 percent in 2019, which is considered ‘very high’ (FSNMS, July 2019). Based on IPC acute malnutrition protocols, 58 counties had a GAM of 10 percent and above.

Some 43 counties were classified as Critical (GAM of 15.0–29.9 percent, IPC Phase 4) and 14 counties as Serious (GAM of 10.0–14.9 percent, IPC Phase 3). Most counties in Unity, Upper Nile, Jonglei and Warrap and parts of Eastern Equatoria and Lakes had Critical levels (IPC, September 2019).

The drivers of malnutrition are mainly sub-optimal childcare and feeding practices, food insecurity, illness, poor water quality and sanitation practices. Just 6.9 percent of children aged 6–23 months received minimally adequate diets.

The prevalence of GAM in seven of the eight refugee camps in South Sudan was serious (5–9 percent), while the remaining camp faced acceptable levels (GAM <5 percent). The prevalence of stunting was ‘very high’ in four camps and ‘high’ in three. Anaemia among children aged 6–59 months was at severe levels (≥40 percent) in six of the camps. The prevalence of anaemia among non-pregnant women aged 15–49 years was severe (≥40 percent) in one camp and of ‘medium’ public health significance (20–39 percent) in four camps. The remaining camps had acceptable levels (SENS, 2018). Rates of early initiation of breastfeeding (84–93 percent),