

# Ethiopia

## ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY PEAK 2022

 **23.61M** people or **21%** of the analysed population were facing high levels of acute food insecurity in 2022

Source: HRP, November 2022.

## Food crisis overview



At 23.61 million, the number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity in Ethiopia reached an unprecedented level in 2022.

This includes an estimated 10.73 million people who did not have the means to cover minimum food needs, according to the Households Economic Analysis (HEA); 5.4 million people in Tigray estimated by the WFP Emergency Food Security Assessment; 2.76 million IDPs; 1.66 million returnees; and 3.07 million public work clients from the Productive Safety Net Programme (HRP, November 2022).

In 2023, acute food insecurity is expected to peak during the July–September lean season due to the effects of five consecutive below-average rainfall seasons, protracted conflict and macroeconomic shocks, which mainly affect food and fuel prices.

## Acute food insecurity since 2016

Ethiopia has consistently been among the world's ten largest food crises over the seven years of the GRFC.

Between 2020 and 2021, the population facing high levels of acute food insecurity more than doubled at country level (from 8.6 million to 16.7 million).

## Drivers of the crisis, 2022–23



**Weather extremes** The failure of the 2022 March–May Gu rains followed by poor October–December Deyr rains exacerbated drought conditions that began in late 2020, resulting in severe crop and livestock losses in Somali, Oromia, Sidama and SNNP regions (FAO, December 2022). Almost 7 million animals, belonging to about 600 000 households and valued at over USD1.5 billion, have died since the beginning of the drought in 2020. An estimated 60 000 pastoralist households have lost all their livestock, resulting in pronounced human suffering (FAO, 2023). Minimal livestock reproduction led to limited milk production, impacting food security and nutrition, particularly for children (FEWS NET, October 2022). Livestock prices also increased as the prolonged drought reduced the availability of marketable live animals (FAO-GIEWS, August 2022).

While some drought-affected areas received good rains between October and December 2022, the amount of water was insufficient for the regeneration of pasture and the replenishment of water resources. Earlier forecasts for the March–May 2023 rainfall season had pointed to depressed rainfall, coupled with high temperatures, risking a sixth consecutive season of drought. However, improved rainfall in drought-affected areas from mid-March 2023 provided temporary solace through replenished surface water sources and rejuvenated pasture – though not enough for the restoration of livelihoods, which will take time. Heavy rains in some areas caused floods leading to destruction of shelter/houses and public infrastructures, livestock death, and further displacements (FSNWG, March 2023; OCHA, April 2023).



**Conflict/insecurity** The conflict in Tigray and adjacent areas of Amhara and Afar regions has led to high levels of acute food insecurity, widespread displacement, limited access to services and the destruction of the local economy. Shortages of inputs in conflict-affected areas constrained planting for the

main June–September 2022 Meher season (FAO-GIEWS, August 2022).

The humanitarian truce announced in March 2022 improved humanitarian access into the region from early April, but conflict erupted again in late August, contributing to delays in delivery of humanitarian assistance (FAO-GIEWS, August 2022). Intense conflict in October coincided with the Meher harvest, causing disruptions to harvest activities and further hampering market functionality (FEWS NET, December 2022).

Since the November 2022 peace agreement, conflict episodes have become more sporadic, allowing for increased humanitarian access and the re-establishment of basic services. However, the security situation remained volatile, and in February and March 2023, plantings of secondary Belg crops, for harvesting in June and July, are also likely to have been constrained (FAO-GIEWS, March 2023). Recovery of severely eroded livelihoods and the economy in Tigray, Afar and Amhara is not likely to occur quickly due to the long-term nature of the conflict, the heavy damage to infrastructure, markets and livelihoods, and exhaustion of coping mechanisms (FEWS NET, December 2022).



**Economic shocks** Ethiopia continued to face severe macroeconomic challenges, including a large debt burden, high government spending, rising import bills, insufficient foreign currency reserves and continuous national currency depreciation, which contributed to increased costs of living and to the erosion of household purchasing power (WFP, October 2022).

Inflation soared to very high levels in 2022, with food inflation estimated at 43.9 percent in May – the highest recorded in the past nine years. Prices of locally produced maize have increased near-continuously throughout 2022 and were about 20 percent higher than their year-earlier levels in October. Prices of imported wheat and vegetable oils were at near-record to record levels, due to high international prices exacerbated by the war in Ukraine (FAO, December 2022).

## DISPLACEMENT

## 2.73M IDPs, end 2022

Source: IOM, December 2022.



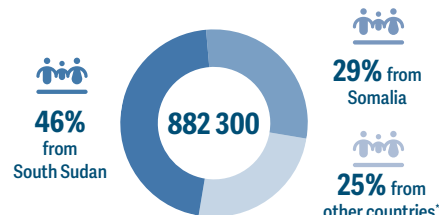
**IDPs** Ethiopia continued to be among the food-crisis countries/territories with the highest number of IDPs throughout 2022 and into 2023 (IDMC April 2022, IOM, December 2022).

Based on the most recent data collected by IOM between August and September 2022, 2.73 million IDPs were identified across 11 regions of the country because of conflict and drought, while 1.88 million had returned across nine regions to their place of origin seeking durable solutions, but still needing urgent humanitarian support. The figures excluded those displaced in and from Tigray as operational constraints in the region prevented data collection in 2022. As of September 2022, drought was the primary cause of displacement for 516 300 IDPs mostly concentrated in the Somali, Oromia and Afar regions (IOM, December 2022).

Overall, the highest levels of displacement (excluding Tigray) were in the Somali, Amhara and Oromia regions. Continued drought conditions and high levels of conflict, including recurrent conflict in the western part of Oromia, and some parts of the Benishangul-Gumuz, Somali and SNNP regions caused further displacement (FEWS NET, December 2022; UNHCR, January 2023). From January 2023, conflict-induced population displacements reached a new high in Amhara, at nearly 383 000. Many IDPs in camps have received limited water, food and basic health and nutrition assistance despite their urgent needs (OCHA, February 2023).

In conflict-affected northern areas, the humanitarian needs of IDPs are likely to increase along with the risk of protracted displacement, unless the peace agreement leads to improved humanitarian access, complete cessation of conflict, and an opportunity for communities to recover and build resilience (UNHCR, January 2023).

### Refugees and asylum-seekers, end 2022



\* Including Eritrea, Sudan, Kenya, Yemen, Syrian Arab Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo.  
Source: UNHCR, December 2022.

**Refugees** Ethiopia hosts the third-largest population of refugees and asylum-seekers in Africa, at over 882 000 people, predominantly from South Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea. The majority (88 percent) live in camps (mainly Gambella bordering South Sudan, and Melkadida near Somalia), with only 3 percent living in settlements and 9 percent residing in the capital Addis Ababa. Around 82 percent are women and children. In 2022, over 22 000 new arrivals were registered, mainly from Somalia and South Sudan (UNHCR, December 2022).

Acute food insecurity in Ethiopia's refugee camps is concerning, with 49 percent of surveyed households recording poor food consumption scores and 25 percent facing borderline food consumption. Around 65 percent of households use negative coping strategies, including reducing or skipping meals, consuming less-preferred foods and borrowing food for survival (SENS, 2022).

During 2022, key nutrition indicators further deteriorated in refugee camps in Gambella and Melkadida, due to the combined effects of food ration cuts, increased food prices, disease outbreaks, drought impacts and a critical nutrition situation among new arrivals from South Sudan and Somalia (UNHCR, December 2022).

In 2022, UNHCR assessments found a 'high' to 'very high' prevalence of wasting in 15 out of 20 refugee settlements. Four camps out of 20 had a 'medium' level of wasting, while only one settlement had a 'low' level. Overall, there was an increase in the prevalence of wasting

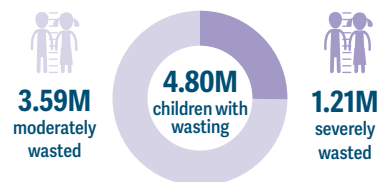
from 12.2 percent in 2021 to 15.5 percent in 2022. The prevalence of severe wasting rose from 1.8 percent to 2.9 percent (UNHCR, December 2022).

Stunting levels are also 'high', with 11 out of 20 refugee settlements having 'high' to 'very high' levels. Anaemia is a severe public health problem (>40 percent) for children aged 6–59 months in 11 out of 20 settlements and for women aged 15–49 years in six out of 20 settlements (UNHCR, December 2022).

In February 2023, more than 83 000 people (mostly women, children and elderly people) reportedly arrived in a dire state in the Somali region, having fled from Lasanood in neighbouring Somaliland. They were in urgent need of food, nutrition, water, health response, shelter and protection (OCHA, February 2023).

### NUTRITION

#### Number of children under 5 years old with wasting, 2022



Source: Ethiopia Nutrition Cluster, 2022.

The number of wasted children increased by 14 percent from 4.2 million in 2021 to 4.8 million in 2022. The number of severely wasted children also increased: from 1.1 million to 1.2 million (GNC, February 2022).

Various assessments in 2022 reported high levels of malnutrition. The Find and Treat campaign implemented in most of the woredas in Somali and Oromia reported proxy wasting levels above 15 percent (GNC, 2022). The nutrition situation was extremely concerning in drought- and conflict-affected northern areas (Tigray, Afar and Amhara), reflected in the highest wasting admissions for the past three years (UNICEF, 2022). In the Oromia, Somali, Amhara, Tigray and SNNP regions, more cases of wasted children are expected in 2023 (FSNWG, October

2022 update). It is estimated that 7.4 million people will need nutrition assistance in 2023 (OCHA, February 2023).

Stunting rates for children under 5 years old are 'very high' according to the WHO classification, with 37 percent prevalence, equating to 5.8 million children (UNICEF, July 2022).

#### Drivers of undernutrition

**Food insecurity and lack of access to healthy diets** Inadequate food consumption in terms of quantity and variety leading to nutrient intake deficits is a significant factor in the poor nutrition situation.

**Inadequate maternal and child-feeding practices** Inadequate infant and child-feeding practices led to high consumption of monotonous starchy diets and poor consumption of iron-rich animal-sourced foods such as milk, meat and eggs. Only 11 percent of children aged 6–23 months eat a Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD) which meets both the recommended dietary diversity and frequency thresholds in Ethiopia.

About 59 percent of children aged under 6 months are exclusively breastfed (UNICEF, October 2021). More than half (52.1 percent) of children aged 6–59 months are anaemic, indicating a severe public health problem (WHO, 2019). Around 24 percent of women of reproductive age (15–49 years) are anaemic (UNICEF, October 2021), indicating a moderate public health problem (WHO, 2019).

In Tigray, while breastfeeding practices are generally optimal, inadequate complementary feeding is widespread (WFP, Emergency Food Security Assessment, August 2022). Only 1.3 percent of children aged 6–23 months are receiving the MAD.

**High prevalence of infectious diseases** Ongoing disease outbreaks in certain regions have contributed to the increase in malnutrition. A cholera outbreak that started in August 2022 in Oromia has spread to Somali (OCHA, Cholera outbreak update January 2023).

The persistent lack of clean water supply adds to the risk of contracting the disease. In addition, there is a measles outbreak in Oromia, SNNP, Afar, Amhara and Somali,

while malaria is worsening the already grave situation (UNICEF, 2022).

#### **Limited access to health and nutrition services**

Damage and destruction of health facilities prevented access to essential health and nutrition services, including routine immunization (UNICEF, January 2023), especially in Afar, Amhara and Tigray which were cut off from humanitarian activities for much of 2022. Even though humanitarian access improved since the peace treaty, several areas remain inaccessible, and essential systems and services remain poor.

**Poor household environment** Lack of sanitation facilities and poor handwashing practices aggravate morbidity levels and ultimately increase the risk of malnutrition. In 2020, a WASH survey found that just 49.6 percent of households have access to safe drinking water (UNICEF, 2020). In Tigray, scarcity of safe drinking water contributed to an increased risk of disease outbreaks (WFP, August 2022).