

IGAD REGIONAL REPORT ON FOOD CRISES 2020



IN BRIEF

The data and the analyses in this report were prepared before the global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and do not account for its impact on vulnerable people in food-crisis situations.

In 2019, 135 million people faced acute food insecurity that required urgent action (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) in 55 countries and territories analysed across the world, according to the *Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) 2020*. Of this population, 20 percent, or 27.6 million people, resided in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region in East Africa.

Worst-affected countries in the IGAD region

Three major crises in the IGAD region were among the 10 worst food crises in the world, namely Ethiopia (8 million), South Sudan (7 million), and the Sudan (5.9 million). In terms of prevalence of acute food insecurity, the highest shares were found in South Sudan, where 61 percent of the analysed population was in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above), followed by Ethiopia (27 percent), Kenya (22 percent), Somalia (17 percent) and the Sudan (14 percent).

Acute food insecurity levels across the IGAD region have steadily increased since the GRFC was launched in 2016. Between 2018 and 2019, the number of people in need of urgent food assistance (IPC Phase 3 or above) increased by 2 percent, or about 650 000 people, largely driven by rising numbers of acutely food-insecure people in South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda. The numbers were stable in Ethiopia (though the method of analysis changed) and decreased in the Sudan and Somalia.

Primary drivers of acute food insecurity

Weather extremes, conflict/insecurity and economic shocks continued to be the main drivers of acute food insecurity across the region in 2019. Most countries faced all three challenges, with negative impacts reinforcing each other, adding to the complexity of the acute food insecurity situation.

In 2019, weather extremes constituted the primary driver of acute food insecurity and malnutrition in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, where collectively 13.2 million acutely food-insecure people were in need of urgent food assistance – around half of the region's total. These extremes included drought during the first half of the year and flooding during the second half.

Armed conflicts, communal violence and other localized tensions continued to disrupt peace and security in the region, and formed the primary driver for 8.5 million people facing acute food insecurity (31 percent of the region's total). The number derives from 7 million people in South Sudan mainly facing intercommunal tensions and



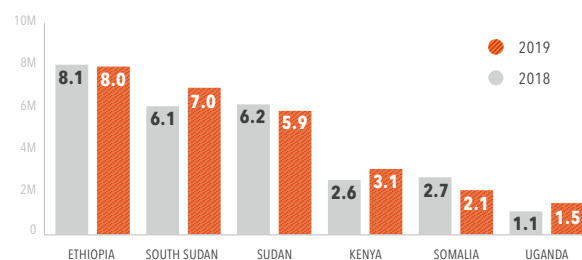
2019

28M people

in 6 IGAD member states were in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above)

Note: Excluding Djibouti and Eritrea

Total number of people (millions) in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above), 2018 vs 2019



Source: FSIN, GRFC 2020

2018-2019

Rising numbers of acutely food-insecure people in Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda increased the aggregate figure

violence, and 1.5 million in Uganda, the majority of them refugees fleeing armed conflict and war in their home countries.

Economic shocks formed the primary driver of acute food insecurity for 5.9 million people in the Sudan, where the ongoing macroeconomic crisis caused staple food prices to spike, with serious implications for food access since a large share of the population buys rather than produces their food.

Acute food insecurity among refugee populations

As of December 2019, there were 4.04 million refugees in the IGAD region, a slight increase since December 2018 when 4.02 million were displaced (UNHCR, December 2019). Uganda continued to host the highest numbers with 1.38 million, followed by the Sudan (1.1 million), Ethiopia (0.73 million), Kenya (0.48 million), South Sudan (0.32 million), Somalia (36 000) and Djibouti (30 000).

Having abandoned their livelihoods and assets, and settled in areas or camps with limited access to basic services, land, education, work

and in some contexts, even facing movement restrictions, refugees tend to face heightened levels of food insecurity. They are heavily dependent on humanitarian food assistance to meet their minimum food and nutrition needs, but funding shortfalls have forced ration cuts in food and non-food assistance to refugee populations, including in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and the Sudan.

Populations in Stressed (IPC Phase 2)

In 2019, 35.2 million people faced Stressed (IPC Phase 2) levels of acute food insecurity in five of the IGAD countries (excluding Djibouti, Eritrea and Uganda), representing 19 percent of the total global population facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity outcomes. These populations require livelihood support and/or disaster risk reduction programming to protect their livelihoods and prevent their future food security status from deteriorating.

Overview of nutrition

Approximately 13.6 million children under the age of 5 years are stunted (short for their age, an indicator of chronic undernutrition), with the highest numbers in Ethiopia, the Sudan and Uganda. These children will likely not reach their full growth and developmental potential because of the irreversible physical and cognitive damage caused by persistent nutritional deprivations at an early age.

At the national level, the prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) is above the 'very high' threshold of 15 percent in Djibouti, the Sudan and South Sudan. At the sub-national level, there are areas in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda that frequently record 'very high' levels of GAM.

The key contributing factors to the high rates of malnutrition include sub-optimal infant and young child-feeding practices – in particular the low proportion of children who receive a diverse diet from 6–23 months – food insecurity, lack of access to adequate safe water and sanitation facilities, and disease.

Outlook for 2020

Without taking into account the effects of COVID-19, projections indicate that 24–25.4 million people will face acute food insecurity requiring urgent action (IPC Phase 3 or above) in 2020, largely as a result of weather extremes, conflict/insecurity and economic shocks. The region has already experienced widespread flooding following heavy rains in March–May. Above-average rainfall is forecast for June–September over western Kenya, northern Somalia, Uganda, the Sudan, most of South Sudan and Ethiopia (ICPAC, 2020).

These rains created ideal breeding conditions for the most severe desert locust infestation in decades. Despite control measures, swarms pose a dangerous threat to agricultural production in

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in 5 IGAD member states were in Stressed (IPC Phase 2)
2019

Note: No estimates for Uganda

13.6M  children under 5 years old are stunted in the IGAD region

Source: UNICEF 2020

Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, and to rural livelihoods in Eritrea, Djibouti, South Sudan, the Sudan and Uganda (FAO, May 2020). The second and third waves of breeding are expected to cause destruction on a wider scale than the earlier invasion (IPC, May 2020).

Though not yet factored into most of the region's food security analyses, as of mid-May, the COVID-19 crisis and its impacts on global and regional economies and food systems could drive significantly higher numbers of food insecure people within East Africa. FEWS NET estimates the total number of acutely food-insecure people in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) to reach between 28.1 and 33.5 million people. WFP projects an increase of up to 100 percent from 25.8 million people requiring urgent humanitarian assistance. In both agencies' analyses, the largest number of food-insecure people is expected to remain in rural areas, though the majority of the population increases due to COVID-19 impacts will likely be among urban poor households.

The impact will be high for informal sector workers, casual labourers and the self-employed, as well as humanitarian aid-dependent displaced people living in overcrowded camps, people in slums and low-income workers.

Border closures and restricted movement are hindering the global supply chain, disrupting the availability of food as well as people's access to it and affecting agricultural labour and the supply of inputs to affected populations (IPC, May 2020). While partners are exploring new ways of adapting to humanitarian access challenges aggravated by the pandemic, movement restrictions are still likely to affect the implementation of food security and nutrition activities.

The region is preparing for a significant increase in the number of acutely malnourished children by pre-positioning supplies of specialised nutrition foods in case of supply chain disruption.

While all partners are in broad agreement with the data and information presented in this report, FEWS NET's analyses suggest that the population requiring emergency food assistance in 2019 was lower than the IPC estimates for Ethiopia.

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