



# **LIFE AMIDST A PANDEMIC:** Hunger, Migration and Displacement in the East and Horn of Africa

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June 2021

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This report is the first joint publication of its kind by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for the East and Horn of Africa region. Facilitated by WFP's Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division and IOM's Regional Data Hub for the East and Horn of Africa, the report reflects multiple inputs from both organizations.

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## FOREWORD

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“Leave No One Behind” is the ambitious pledge that Member States of the United Nations made in 2015, laying out the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This commitment to eradicate poverty, end discrimination and exclusion and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind has been significantly challenged by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In the East and Horn of Africa where there is no universal health care, few social safety nets and where over 44 percent of the population is estimated to live below the US\$1.90 per day poverty line,<sup>1</sup> COVID-19 has further exacerbated inequalities. The East and Horn of Africa is the region with one of the most serious levels of hunger and malnutrition in the world. Conflict and climate-related shocks have pushed over 38 million people into needing humanitarian assistance, and projections for 2021 anticipate a 28 percent increase. Mobility restrictions have

further strained coping capacities, affecting particularly vulnerable populations who rely on mobility as a mode of survival, as well as those who need to move for better job opportunities abroad.

Through this joint analysis, we, the International Organization for Migration and the World Food Programme, express our joint commitment to identify who is being left behind and why, suggest effective measures to address root causes, and support these populations to enjoy their full rights, and live with dignity and in peace. Identifying inequalities and progress towards the SDGs require, at the minimum, the generation of evidence and disaggregated data, an ethical approach to the collection and use of such data, the will to engage transparently and jointly, and ensure that everybody is accounted for and are not left behind.

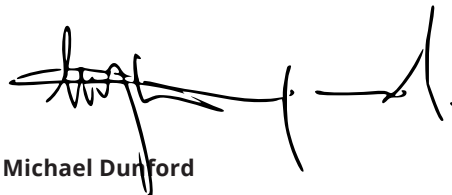
**“Migrants, refugees and other forcibly displaced persons are among the most disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups globally, and understanding their needs and our progress towards meeting them, is essential to understanding where we stand on the SDG commitments.”**

**“COVID-19 has only added to the challenges faced by these already vulnerable populations. We must come together so those in need are not forgotten and receive lifesaving humanitarian assistance to meet their food, nutrition and other vital needs.”**



**Mohammed Abdiker**

Regional Director for the East and Horn of Africa  
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building on the global joint work by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP) on the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on hunger, migration and displacement in the world from November 2020, this report aims to provide an overview of the unique challenges faced by migrants and forcibly displaced populations in the East and Horn of Africa (EHOA) region during 2020. This joint study explores the impacts of COVID-19 and related containment measures on migrant workers, remittance-dependent households and the forcibly displaced, and assesses the implications of the pandemic for people's mobility, food security and other livelihood outcomes in major migration and hunger hotspots in the region.

Already home to some of the most vulnerable populations globally, the EHOA has seen additional displacement and challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, with nearly 9 million people internally displaced by the end of 2020 alongside an estimated 5 million refugees and asylum-seekers. The pandemic has further challenged the situation for the populations on the move in the EHOA, a region that is already weakened by conflict, insecurity, extreme weather conditions, climate change and pests.

## Changes in mobility

The control measures put in place since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic have had an unprecedented impact on human mobility, affecting the lives of societies at large and, in particular, of those communities depending on mobility for their livelihoods. While COVID-19 started spreading globally since the beginning of 2020, the outbreak became concerning in the EHOA region around mid-March.

Although the pandemic has reshaped the regional migration landscape and significantly disrupted cross-border mobility, migration did not cease. The overall movements in 2020 decreased by over a quarter compared to 2019, and were mainly concentrated within the Horn of Africa and less along the Eastern Route via Yemen towards the Arabian Peninsula. COVID-19-related restrictions led to an increase in the use of more risky smuggling services and to a change in migration routes, but also pushed thousands of migrants to be stranded across the region, unable to continue their journey or return home. Additionally, the region witnessed a surge in spontaneous returns of migrants from Yemen to Djibouti and Somalia by sea using the same network of brokers used to travel to Yemen.

## Economy and livelihoods

Millions of people, particularly those living in urban areas, have lost their livelihood and income opportunities due to COVID-19, while the closure of schools has affected school feeding programmes in several countries. Similarly, global lockdowns and restrictions led to regional supply and demand shocks, affecting market functionality as well as food availability and access, which in combination with a decline in global remittances and high food prices, have eroded households' purchasing power.

An increase in return migration has been observed, as jobs and income opportunities shrank in destination countries. Many returning migrant workers were headed home empty-handed and required extensive support for their reintegration, placing significant pressure on home communities. COVID-19 has also severely challenged the flow of remittances across the region owing to migrants' job loss, bank closures, border closures, but also because of friends and relatives losing their jobs abroad and not being able to send money as they used to.

## Food security

The food security situation in the EHOA deteriorated significantly during the year. Sudan, Ethiopia and South Sudan were among the 10 countries with the worst food crises globally. Especially dire was the situation in South Sudan where 108,000 people in Pibor were found to be facing Catastrophe food security outcomes. The escalating conflict in Tigray in Ethiopia remains of greatest concern as the crisis has pushed more than 350,000 people to face Catastrophe food security outcomes. Also dire was the situation in South Sudan; between April and July 2021, 108,000 people in Pibor were found to be facing Catastrophe food security outcomes. Additionally, there were concerning levels of acute malnutrition in the region, while Burundi had one of the highest levels of chronic malnutrition globally. In total, some 54 million people were estimated to be acutely food insecure in the region in 2020, and given the continued impact of COVID-19 on the economy and livelihoods, this number is projected to remain at high levels in 2021.

The level of vulnerability of displaced populations has further increased during the pandemic on account of reduced funding for humanitarian operations leading to food ration cuts for refugee populations in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda, negatively affecting their food security, nutrition and protection situation.

## Protection and gender concerns

As elsewhere in the world, gender-based violence as well as tensions with host communities and instances of marginalization and discrimination have increased across the region. The safety and well-being of children has also been exacerbated by the widespread closure of schools, especially affecting those from vulnerable communities for whom schools offer a safe space. Millions of children have been unable to access any form of formal education, and many have been forced into child labour, sexual slavery, trafficking, or recruited into armed forces.

The existing risks of irregular migration worsened with the pandemic. The Eastern Route was already risky, as migrants' travel conditions in the Horn of Africa and while crossing the Gulf of Aden are fraught with danger and hardship, with reports of smugglers throwing migrants overboard to reduce the risk of capsizing when seas are rough.



## Recommendations

Based on this joint analysis, IOM and WFP propose six key priority actions to mitigate the immediate and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on mobile and displaced populations and remittance-dependent households:

**1: Ensure that migrants and populations affected by displacement have adequate access to lifesaving humanitarian assistance to meet their food, nutrition and other essential needs.**

**2: Ensure inclusivity and access to critical services, including COVID-19 immunization efforts, for migrants and populations affected by displacement.**

**3: Recognize the positive contributions of regional integration, labour migration and diasporas in complementing social protection systems, and facilitate the flow of remittances as an essential financial service in recovering from COVID-19.**

**4: Promote adjustments to national immigration regulations and standard operational procedures.**

**5: Promote gender-sensitive responses and increased protection towards vulnerable groups that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.**

**6: Improve evidence generation and coordination between humanitarian agencies for regular data collection and analysis to better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on mobility and food security dynamics.**



# INTRODUCTION

Since late 2019, the world has faced unprecedented challenges due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In addition to its consequences on public health, the pandemic is also having a devastating impact on economies, livelihoods and food security. While the effects of the pandemic have been felt across the globe, vulnerable groups in low-income countries have been hit particularly hard given existing vulnerabilities. The East and Horn of Africa (EHOA)<sup>2</sup> is among the most disadvantaged regions in the world. Already prior to the pandemic, many countries in the region had low levels of human development, large-scale displacement, high levels of food insecurity, challenged macroeconomic conditions, high unemployment, vulnerable livelihoods and a high dependency on external sources of income and food.

Across the region, countries have been forced to close their borders and impose multiple mobility restriction measures to curb the spread of the virus. As a result, economies have suffered, affecting displaced populations and host communities alike, although those displaced are likely to be worse off because of depleted coping mechanisms and limited community resilience networks. Household food security has remained unstable, and regional food insecurity has increased continuously and is driven by multiple challenges, such as macroeconomic shocks, conflict and instability, drought, floods and Desert Locust infestation. At the end of 2020, the EHOA hosted 4.7 million refugees and asylum-seekers as well as 8.9 million internally displaced

persons (IDPs), the humanitarian needs of whom increased considerably throughout the year. In that respect, the EHOA continues to be a hotspot of hunger and malnutrition: the region hosts three of the world's most severe food security crises in Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan.<sup>3</sup>

Building on the global joint work by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP) on the impact of COVID-19 on hunger, migration and displacement from November 2020,<sup>4</sup> this report aims to provide an overview of the unique challenges faced by the EHOA region during 2020.

The report is structured as follows: Chapter 1 gives an overview of the regional migration landscape with a focus on IDP and refugee population trends and patterns, migration characteristics, trends and migration population profile; Chapter 2 explains how measures related to COVID-19 have affected mobility, livelihoods and food security in the region; and Chapter 3 presents the key protection risks for mobile populations and gender concerns, including gender-based violence and social exclusion impact. A special analysis is provided in Chapter 4 on countries considered to be hotspots for hunger and displacement due to intertwined conflict dynamics, multiple hazards and fragile socioeconomic infrastructure. Special attention is devoted to the most recent crisis affecting the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Finally, Chapter 5 provides key conclusions from the report and recommendations for action.



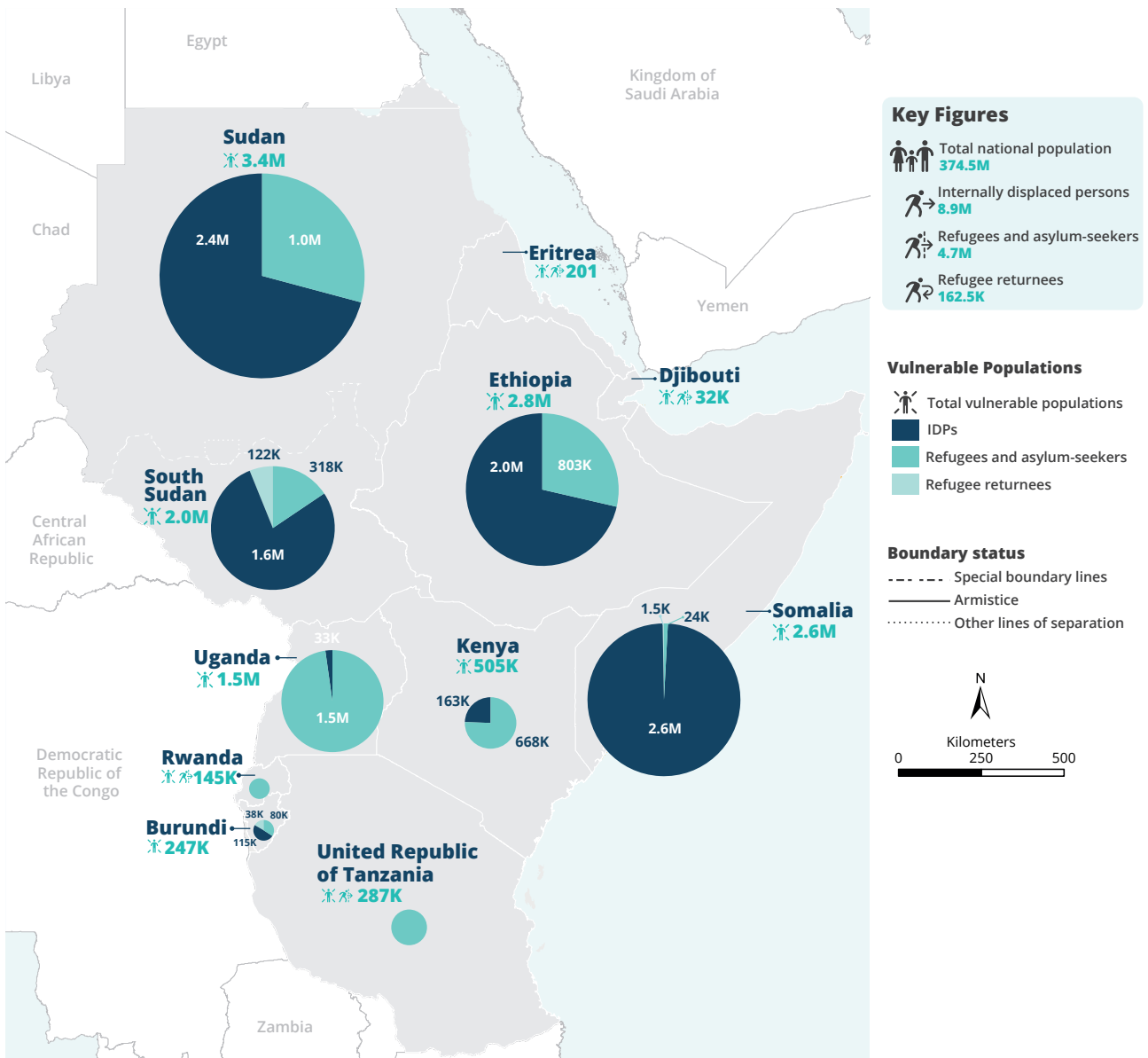
# REGIONAL MIGRATION LANDSCAPE

## IDP and refugee overview

Although COVID-19 was at the forefront of regional news coverage in 2020, the EHoA region continued to be home to Africa's largest displacement crises. Widespread protracted displacement continued alongside new waves of displacement triggered by conflict and natural disasters,

predominantly flooding. By the end of the year, the region hosted a total of 8.9 million IDPs: Somalia (2.6 million), Sudan (2.4 million), Ethiopia (2 million) and South Sudan (1.6 million) accounted for more than 96 percent of the overall displaced population.<sup>5</sup>

**MAP 1: EHoA displaced population groups**

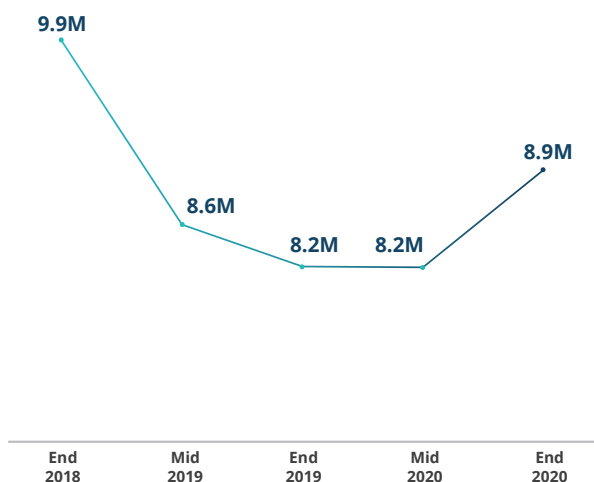


*Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP and IOM concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

Sources: IOM, IDMC, IMWG-TWG Somalia<sup>6</sup>



**FIGURE 1: Overview of the displaced population in the region from 2018 to 2020**



Sources: IOM, OCHA, IDMC

In recent years, displacement peaked at the end of 2018, after which it dropped significantly as the intensity and number of conflicts reduced, namely in Kenya and Ethiopia. However, after having remained relatively stable for nearly a year, displacement increased again at the end of 2020, predominantly triggered by natural disasters. In 2020, an estimated 3.1 million new disaster-related displacements driven by heavy flooding, landslides and renewed drought were recorded in the EHoA region, compared to over 2.3 million new conflict-related displacements.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to having some of the highest numbers of refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa, the EHoA region is also home to several of the largest refugee camps in the world, namely in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.<sup>8</sup> By December 2020, the region hosted a total of 4.7 million refugees and asylum-seekers. Of these, more than half were found in Uganda and Sudan (1.4 million and 1.1 million, respectively).<sup>9</sup> Current domestic challenges, particularly armed conflict and severe food insecurity, contributed to large outflows of refugees in Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and most recently in the Tigray region in Ethiopia. Between the end of 2019 and mid-2020, the refugee population in the EHoA region increased by almost 85,000 individuals due to new displacements and fewer available durable solutions for refugees, as many were unable to return home or access asylum procedures because of COVID-19-related mobility restrictions. During the first half of 2020, only 102,600 refugees returned to their countries of origin, representing an almost 81 percent decrease from the first half of 2019.<sup>10</sup>

**FIGURE 2: New displacements by conflict, violence and disasters in 2020**



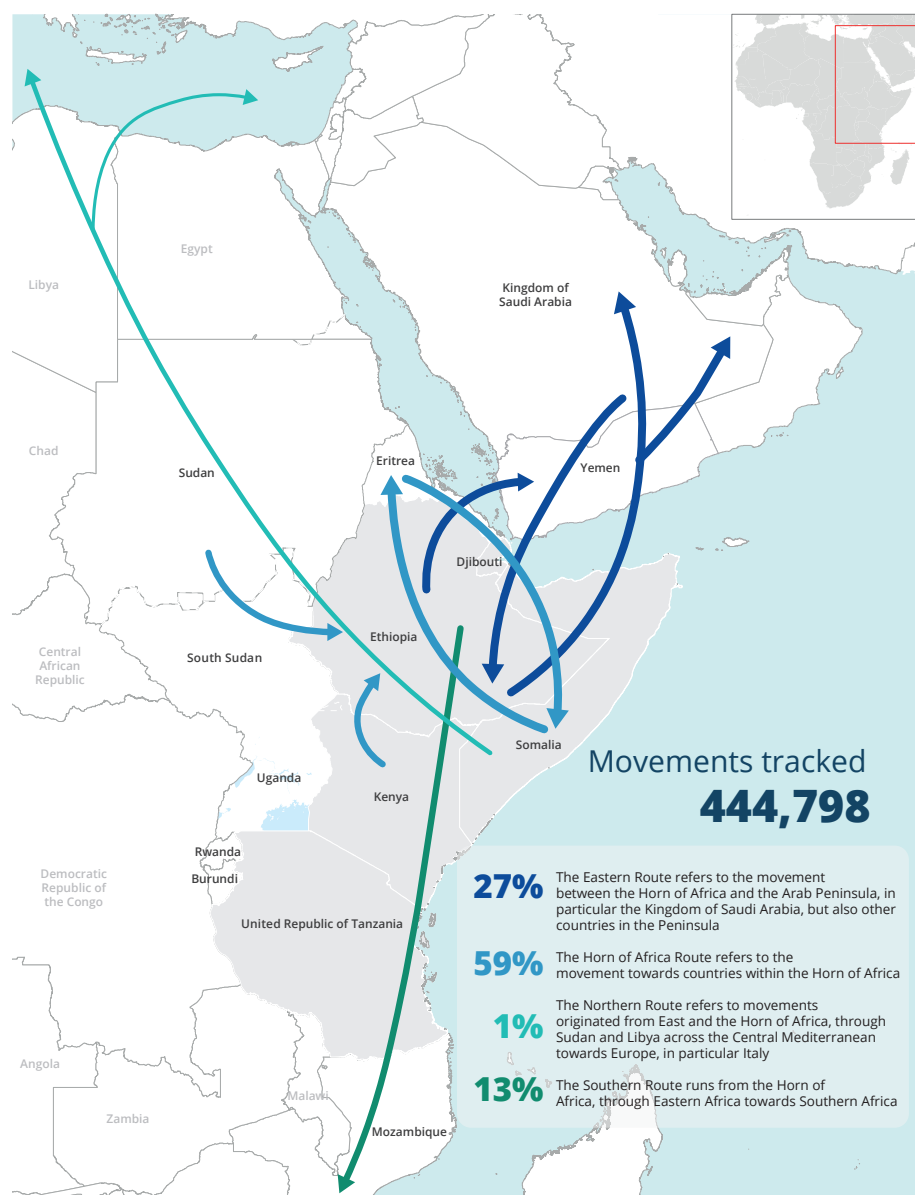
Source: IDMC

## Migration trends overview

Home to an estimated population of 375 million inhabitants, the EHoA had hosted around 7.6 million international migrants by mid-year in 2020.<sup>11</sup> Although the pandemic has reshaped the migration landscape in the region and significantly disrupted cross-border mobility, migration did not cease. Generally, mixed migration flows from and within the EHoA occur along three main routes: the Eastern Route via Yemen towards the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, in particular the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; the Northern Route,<sup>12</sup> including movements through Sudan and Libya, oftentimes with Europe as the intended final destination; and the Southern Route<sup>13</sup> towards Southern Africa.

Almost all the countries in the EHoA region imposed some level of mobility restrictions, in particular the closing of land, air and sea border points. IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)<sup>14</sup> observed a total of 444,789 movements in 2020: 59 percent along the Horn of Africa (HoA) Route,<sup>15</sup> 27 percent on the Eastern Route; 13 percent on the Southern Route; and 1 percent on the Northern Route. The overall movements in 2020 decreased by 27 percent compared to 2019, with the maximum reduction occurring between the months of April and September (55 percent).<sup>16</sup>

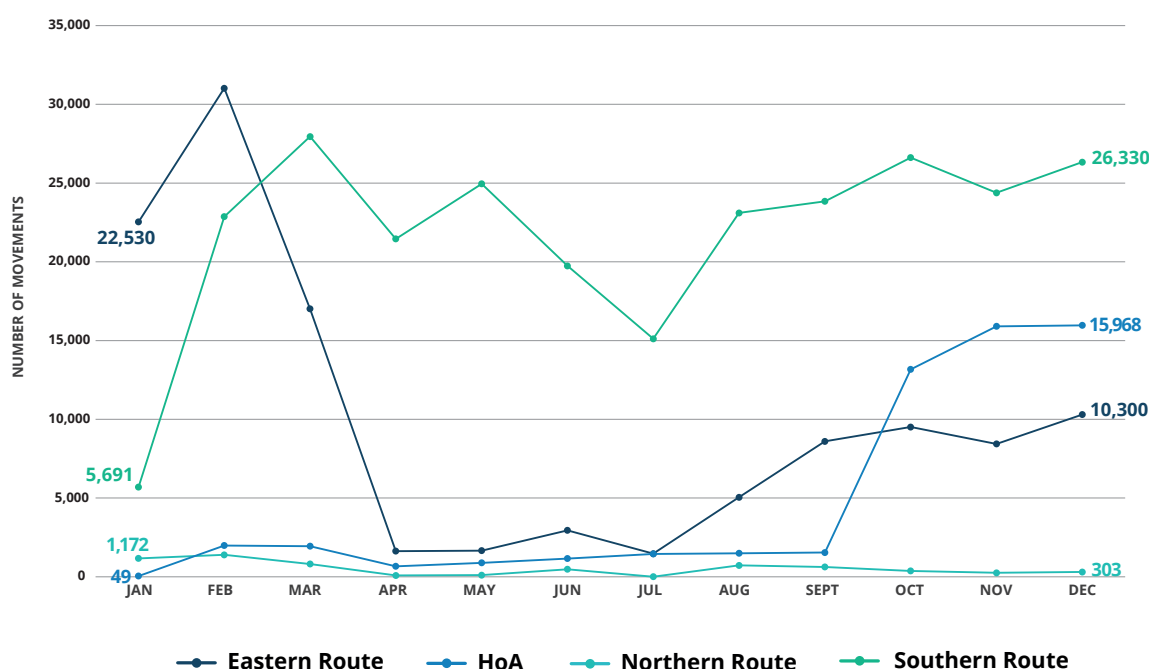
**MAP 2: Main migration routes in the EHoA**



*Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP and IOM concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

Source: IOM <sup>17</sup>

**FIGURE 3: Movements tracked monthly by migration routes**



Source: IOM

Significant restrictions on movements across international borders had an adverse impact on mobile populations and resulted in pockets of stranded migrants. These migrants were unable to continue their journeys nor were they able to return home. Stranded migrants had reduced opportunities in host communities, such as access to informal work to finance onward movement, access health care and other basic services. Cases of discrimination, stigmatization and xenophobia were also reported, wherein migrants were believed to be carriers of the virus or held responsible for other COVID-19-related challenges faced by resident communities. As of January 2021, an estimated 3,000 migrants were stranded across the region, while an additional 32,700 migrants from the EHoA countries were stranded in Yemen, including approximately 6,200 migrants in detention.

Furthermore, restrictions on movements increased the use of more risky smuggling services and slightly modified the usual migration routes. Migrants were dropped off further away from urban centres to avoid checks by the authorities, which forced them to walk much longer distances in extremely hot weather conditions, without water, food or adequate footwear. Additionally, more migrants used the Somalia route through Bossaso as coast guard patrols in Djibouti became particularly rigorous.

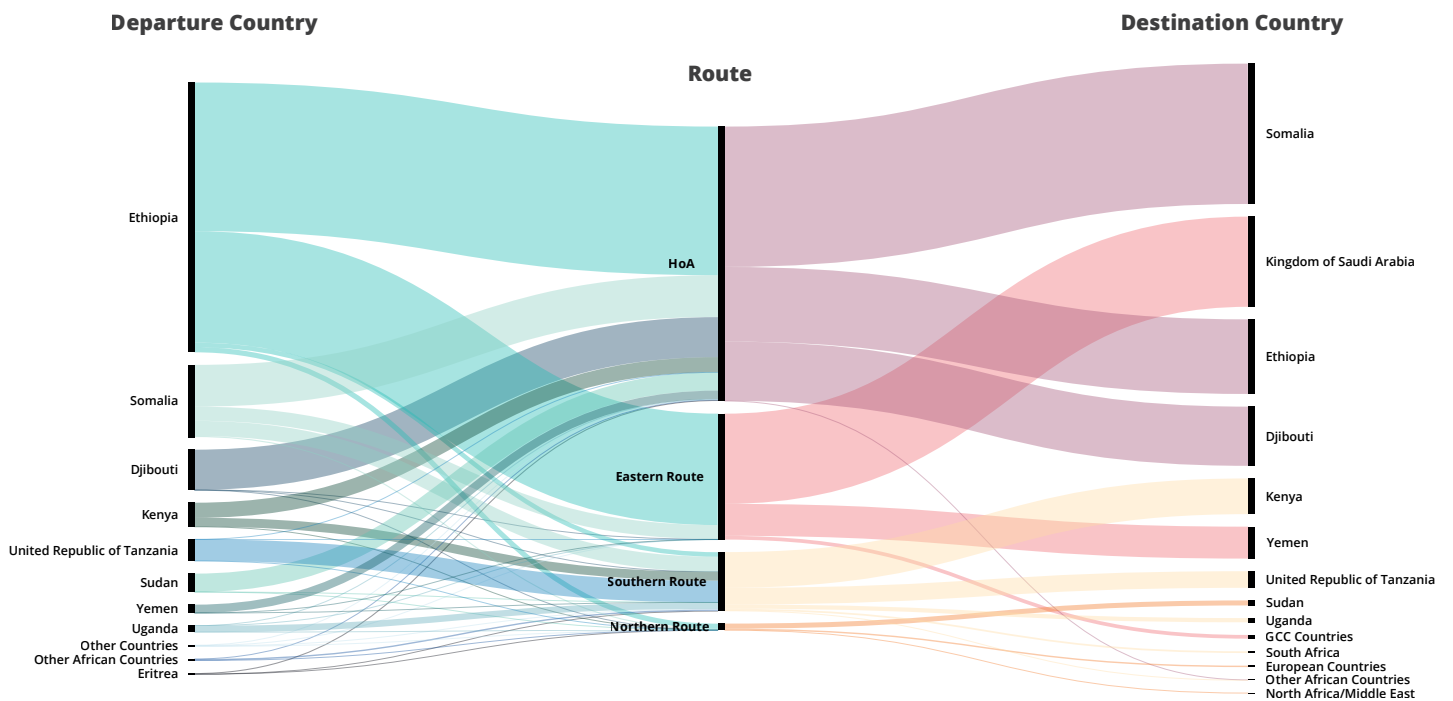
As some restrictions began to lift in the second half of 2020, the region witnessed a surge in spontaneous return of migrants from Yemen to Djibouti and Somalia by sea using the same network of brokers used to travel to Yemen. A total of 6,787 migrants were tracked returning from Yemen to Djibouti (87 percent) and Somalia (13 percent). These return journeys are perilous: migrants were reportedly being forced to disembark in offshore areas or forced to cross the desert on foot with little or no water. In 2020, 58 deaths and disappearances were recorded by IOM's Missing Migrants Project (MMP) in the EHoA region. Most of these cases were predominantly of migrants returning to the EHoA from the Arabian Peninsula, and drowning was the most common cause of death. In addition, involuntary returns are also ongoing from Saudi Arabia. Since May 2017, IOM has electronically registered 345,741 returnees, of whom 36,632 returnees were registered in 2020; this figure represents almost a 70 percent decrease compared to the number of returnees in 2019.

## Migrant population profiling

Migration in the EHoA region has historically been dominated by Ethiopian nationals and is particularly focused on longer term, economically motivated migration that is intended towards affluent countries in the Arabian Peninsula, along the Eastern Route. The drivers of migration are diverse and interlinked, including climatic factors, such as droughts and floods; land-related factors, such as soil degradation and small plot sizes; internal factors, such as conflict; and economic factors, such as unemployment, low wages at origin and lucrative employment opportunities abroad. Simultaneously, many countries in the region have a culture

of migration that encourages young people to attempt perilous journeys, oftentimes with little information or risk awareness of the challenges involved, and even fewer funds. In total, 301,641 Ethiopians were on the move in 2020, of whom around a third were migrating along the Eastern Route, while more than half were tracked on the HoA Route. Though movements originating in Ethiopia continue to overwhelmingly be intended towards Saudi Arabia, these are likely underreported since many Ethiopians who report travelling to Somalia and Djibouti (part of the HoA Route) may likely be continuing to the Arabian Peninsula.

**FIGURE 4: Main migratory routes by departure and destination country**



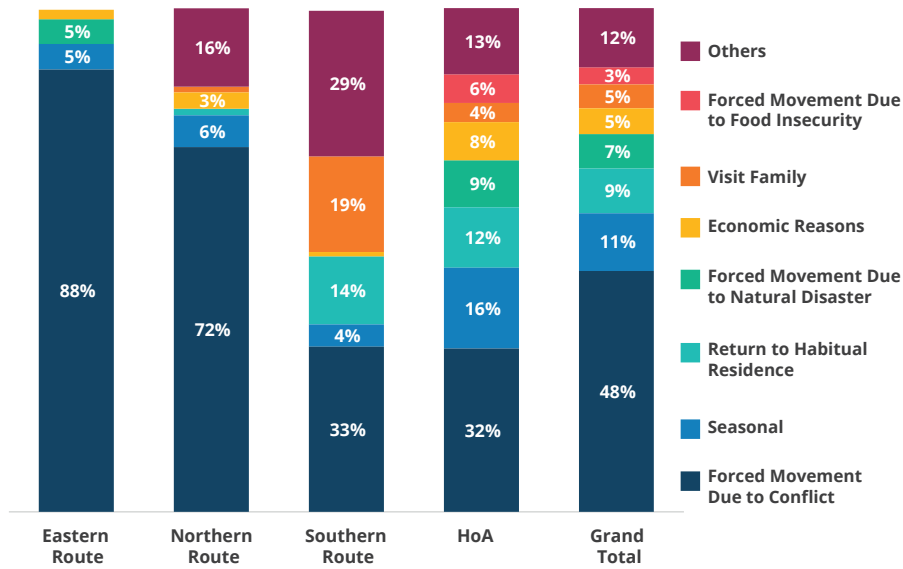
Source: IOM

### REASONS FOR MIGRATION

Most of the movements were driven by economic reasons, particularly along the Eastern and Northern Route. The second most common reason for movement was related to seasonal drivers, which was highest along the HoA

Route. Around 9 percent of the movements were return movements intended towards migrants’ habitual residence, with the highest proportion found along the Southern Route.

**FIGURE 5: Migration drivers by migration route**



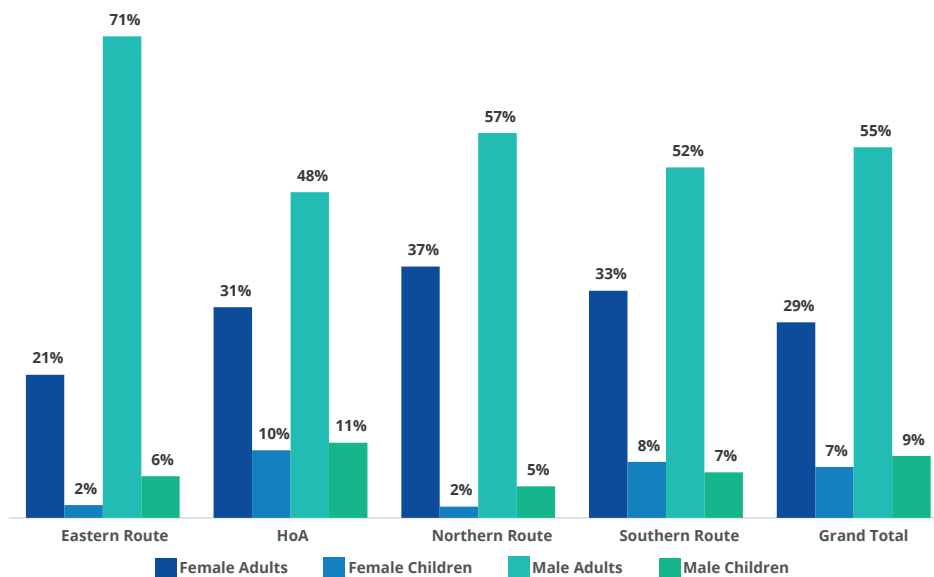
Source: IOM 18

### SEX AND AGE

The majority of migrants across all routes were men, most of whom were recorded along the Eastern Route, while the HoA Route had the smallest proportion of men compared to other routes. Conversely, the highest proportion of migrant

women was recorded on the Northern Route, while the highest proportion of migrant children was present on the HoA Route.

**FIGURE 6: Sex and age distribution by migration route**



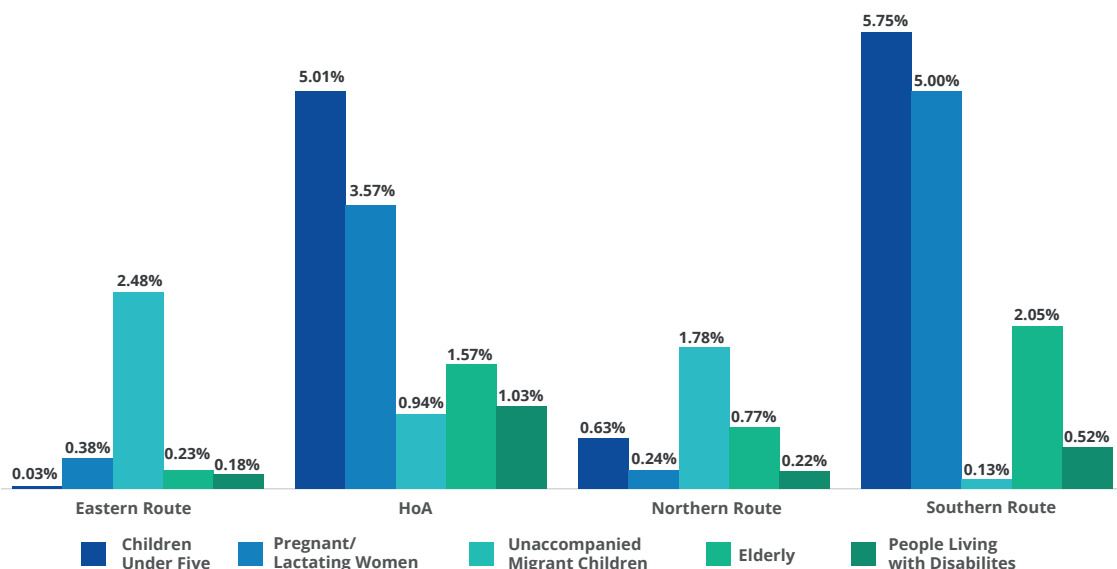
Source: IOM 19

## VULNERABILITIES

The highest proportion of migrants with special needs were children younger than five years of age: these made up around 4 percent of all migrants. There was also a significant proportion of unaccompanied migrant children

(UMC), around 1 percent of all migrants, and 8 percent of all recorded children were unaccompanied. The proportion of UMCs is highest along the Eastern Route, where around one third of all children are unaccompanied.

**FIGURE 7: Vulnerable groups by migration route**



Source: IOM<sup>20</sup>

## Educational background and employment status

Migration in the region is usually undertaken by those with low levels of education. During 2020, almost half of the Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS) respondents reported having no formal education, and only around 3 percent had attained higher than secondary level education.<sup>21</sup> Overall, migrants tend to perceive education as a valuable achievement to build their future, but financial and other barriers often prevent them from staying in school. Migration can also

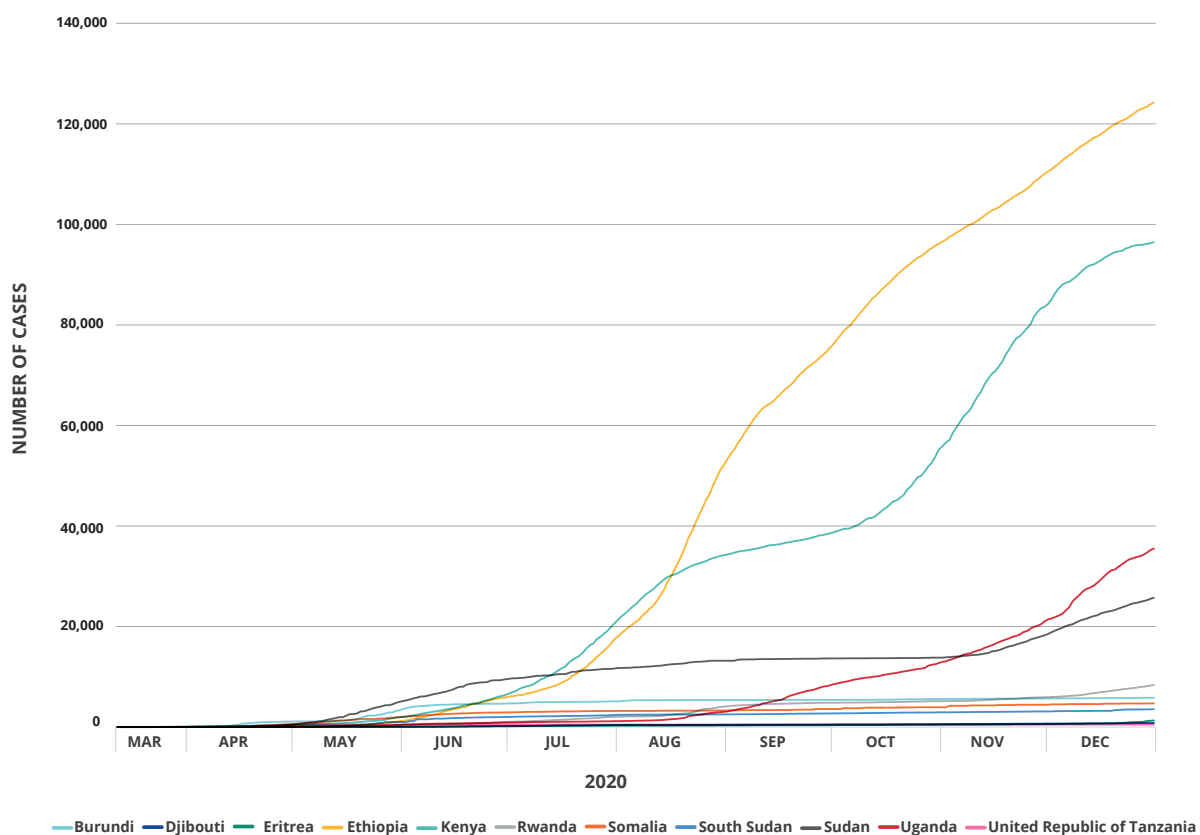
become a choice as a livelihood coping strategy deeply rooted in some countries in the region, particularly in Ethiopia. While migrants in the region generally have a low level of education, they were also often either unemployed and looking for a job, or self-employed prior to migration, which may include migrants working in agriculture.

# IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 FOR PEOPLE'S MOBILITY, LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD SECURITY

Across the region, most restrictions were imposed between March and April 2020 and were readjusted throughout the year. Sudan announced a state of medical emergency in mid-March and a state of economic emergency in early September. Similarly, Ethiopia declared a five-month state of emergency in April, while other countries such as Kenya and Rwanda set up specific measures for “red zones” within their territories to limit the risk of infection. A partial lifting of the restrictions started in mid-May, with Djibouti easing the lockdown in place, Rwanda allowing partial movement between provinces, and both South Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania reopening air travel. Djibouti reopened its borders in mid-July, and most international flights across the region resumed in early August, after which Uganda reopened its borders for tourism. However, as the number of COVID-19 cases started increasing in Djibouti, its land

borders were closed again for a period of 15 days in the second half of October. In Somalia, all ports remained operational and a phased lifting of the lockdown of the main airport started on 1 November as COVID-19 cases started to decrease. Burundi reopened its international airport in early November, but all land and water borders remained closed. South Sudan reopened its land borders at the end of December; however, cross-border movements remain largely suspended due to restrictions imposed by neighbouring countries. Countries in the region have also developed a joint strategy on COVID-19 management along transport corridors given the alarming rise of cases among cross-border truck and cargo drivers at various points of entry (PoEs), which caused a major concern for the spread of the virus among border communities and along transport corridors.

**FIGURE 8: Incidence trend of confirmed COVID-19 cases as of 31 December 2020**

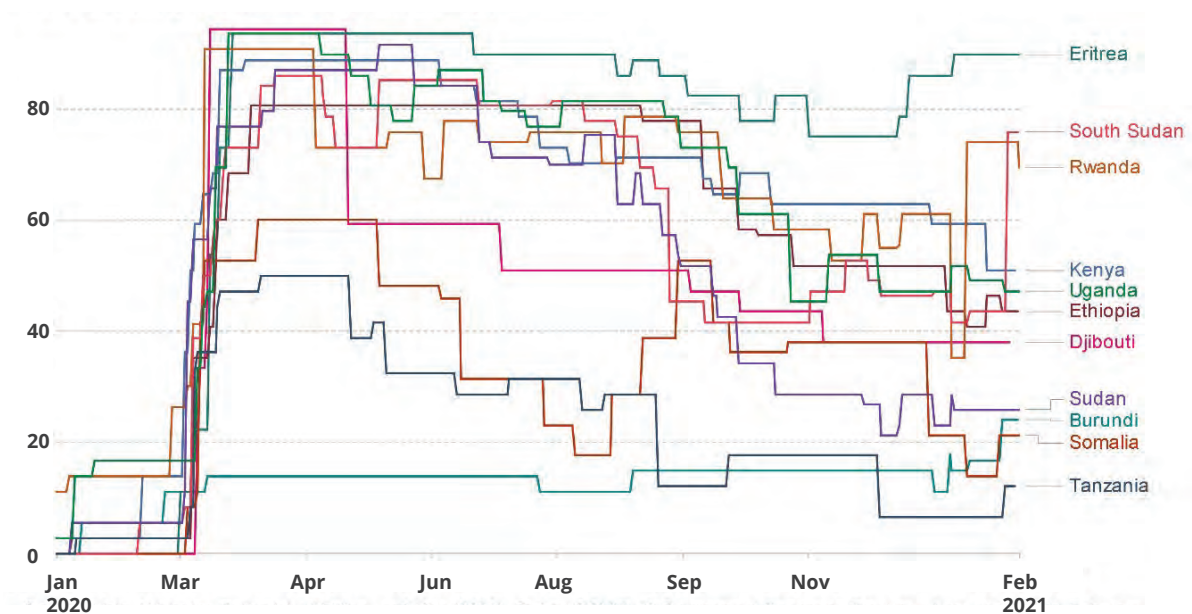


Source: WHO, Ministries of Health

While COVID-19 started spreading globally since the beginning of 2020, the outbreak became concerning in the EHoA region around mid-March. Even though the overall number of cases has remained relatively low, particularly compared to Europe and the Americas, the impact of COVID-19 has been severe. The evolution of the pandemic varied across countries due to several factors, including the different mitigation measures put in place by governments, the level of interconnection with affected areas, population density and physical distancing, and hygiene practices, coupled with the different capacity of national health systems to record and assist COVID-19 affected populations. Despite a relatively low number of confirmed cases in the initial months of the pandemic, the spread increased drastically in Ethiopia and Kenya in the second half of the year, alongside Uganda, which also observed a spike in cases in the last quarter of 2020.

According to the Government Stringency Index (GSI),<sup>22</sup> COVID-19 mitigation measures were introduced at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, though remaining relatively low in Burundi, Somalia, and the United Republic of Tanzania. As 2020 progressed, most countries partly reopened their economies starting from June, mainly benefitting domestic trade flows versus regional cross-border trade. By February 2021, Eritrea, South Sudan and Rwanda had the strictest measures in place, followed by Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia. In Burundi, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania, only few restriction measures were in place. Notwithstanding the different degree of stringency of COVID-19 mitigating measures, overall restrictions have been in force for over a year, which has resulted in continued unpredictability that is affecting movements, trade and practically all service sectors.

**FIGURE 9: Government Stringency Index in the EHoA region, January 2020 - February 2021**



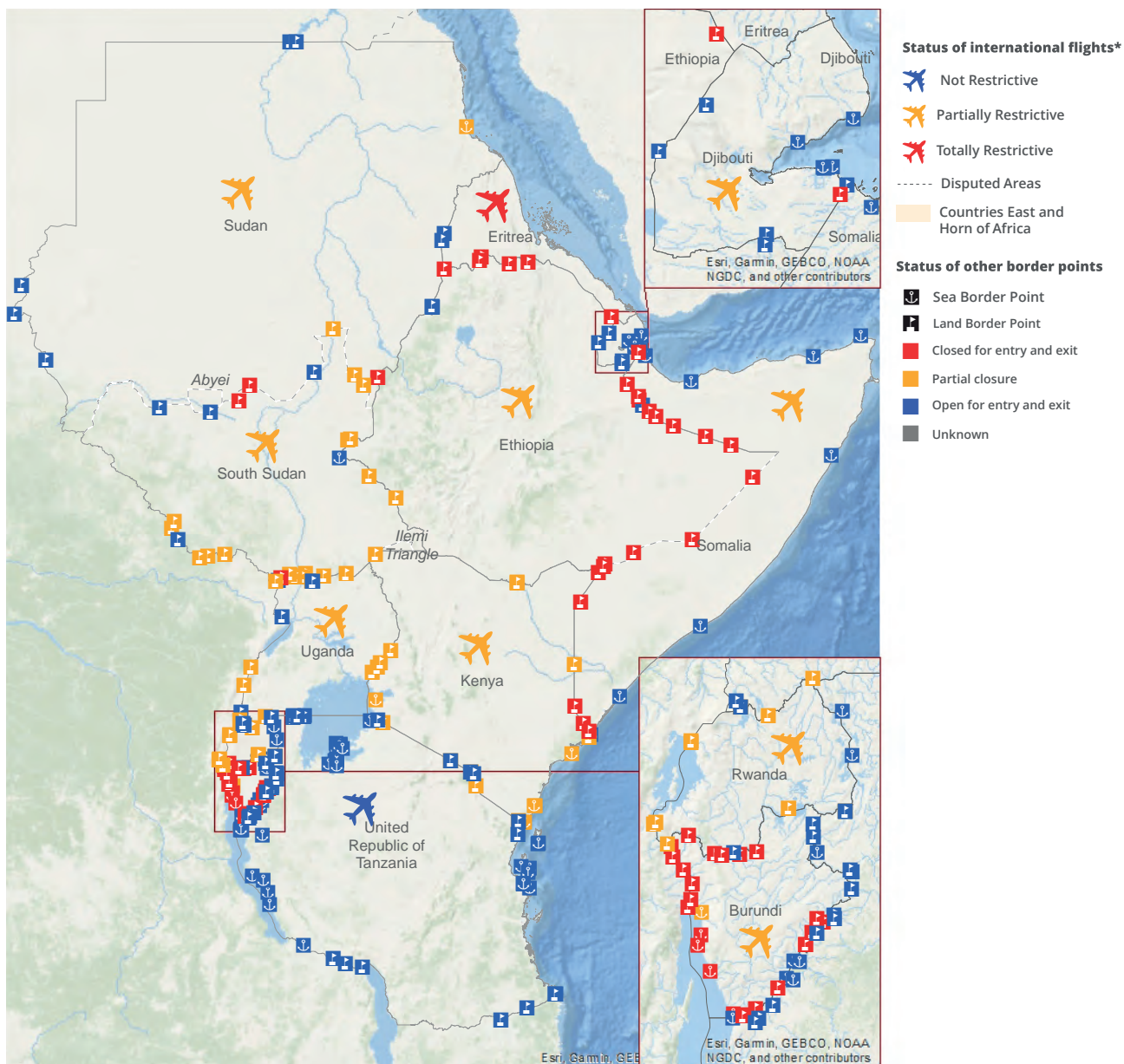
Source: Our World in Data



## Mobility and migration tracking

After governments across the region started implementing restrictions, IOM's DTM quickly set up a system to monitor restrictions at key PoEs by type (air, land and sea), operational status (open, closed or partially open), type of restrictions in place (new immigration requirements and health measures) and the most affected populations.

**MAP 3: Overview of travel restrictions at points of entry in the EHoA region on 31 December 2020**



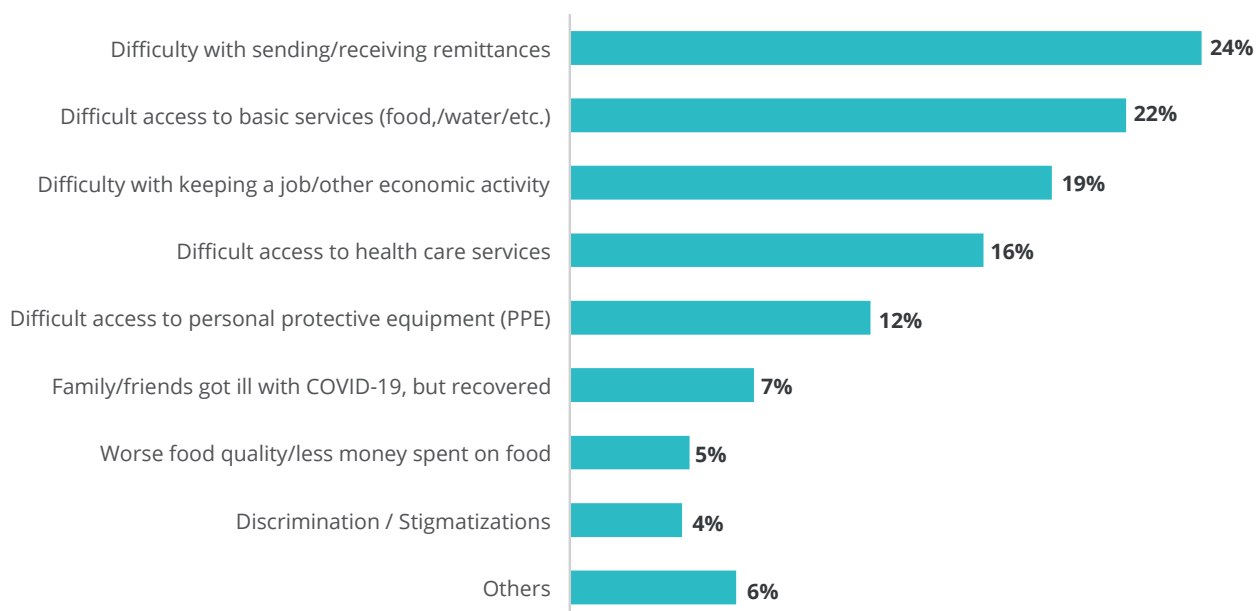
*Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP and IOM concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

Source: IATA, IOM<sup>23</sup>

At first, the exercise was focused on building an inventory of PoEs in collaboration with governments in the EHoA, but information on their operational status was often unknown. However, as the geographical coverage expanded and governments became more proactive in their efforts to limit the spread of the virus, more PoEs adopted restrictive measures. Thus, by June, around half of the PoEs were closed partially, including those that were open for commercial traffic only, or were open only for returning nationals and residents. In addition, one third of PoEs were closed for all types of movement, and only 11 percent were open. By the end of December, governments in the region began resuming operations under the new normal, with free movements resuming with certain precautions in place. Most PoEs were completely open, and 19 percent were partially open, with only 22 percent closed.

DTM also surveyed the COVID-19 awareness level of migrants at flow monitoring points in the region during their migration journey. Although most migrants were unaware of the outbreak in March, most had gained some awareness about the outbreak during subsequent months.<sup>24</sup> Migrants did, however, face several challenges because of the outbreak, particularly in regards to sending and receiving remittances as well as accessing services and retaining employment. Issues with remittances were mostly due to migrants' job loss, bank closures, border closures, and also because of friends and relatives losing their jobs abroad and not being able to send money as they previously used to.

**FIGURE 10: Main challenges experienced by migrants following the pandemic**



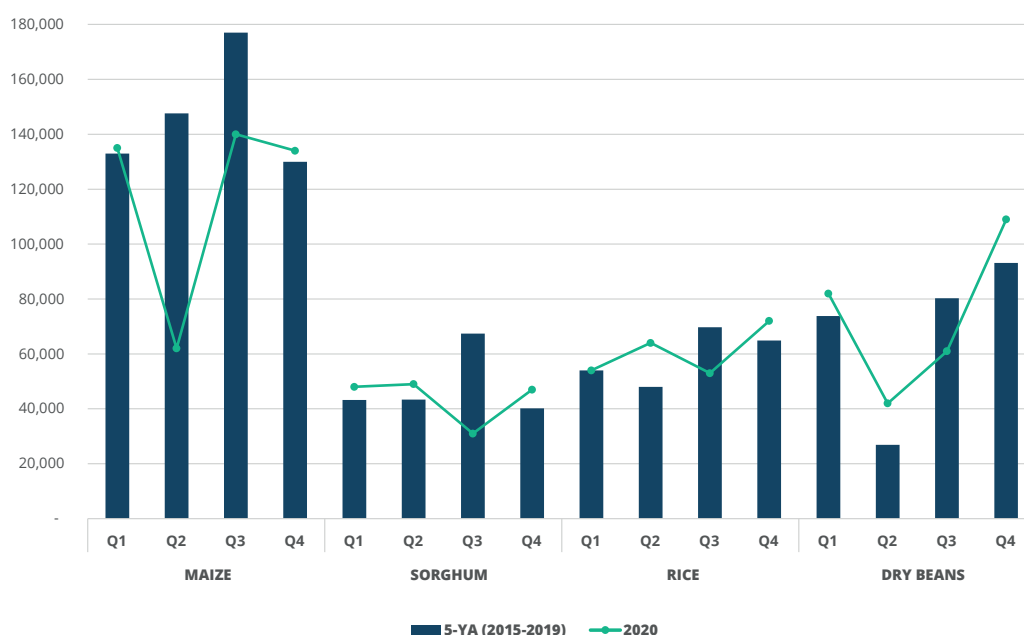
Source: IOM

## Market and trade

Global lockdowns and restrictions led to regional supply and demand shocks, affecting market functionality as well as food availability and access. Demand went up as consumers stockpiled staple foods, while supply declined as long queues of cargo trucks piled up at border points. This was a direct consequence of the new testing measures that affected transport costs and ultimately increased prices with import-dependent countries, such as Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, South Sudan and Uganda being the most affected.

Consequently, regional cross-border trade flows reduced significantly in the second quarter, but quickly recovered as traders adapted to the control measures and testing capacity was increased at key PoEs. However, with the recent increase in the number of cases, fears of renewed measures that can disrupt regional trade are also mounting, especially for exports originating from or passing through Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

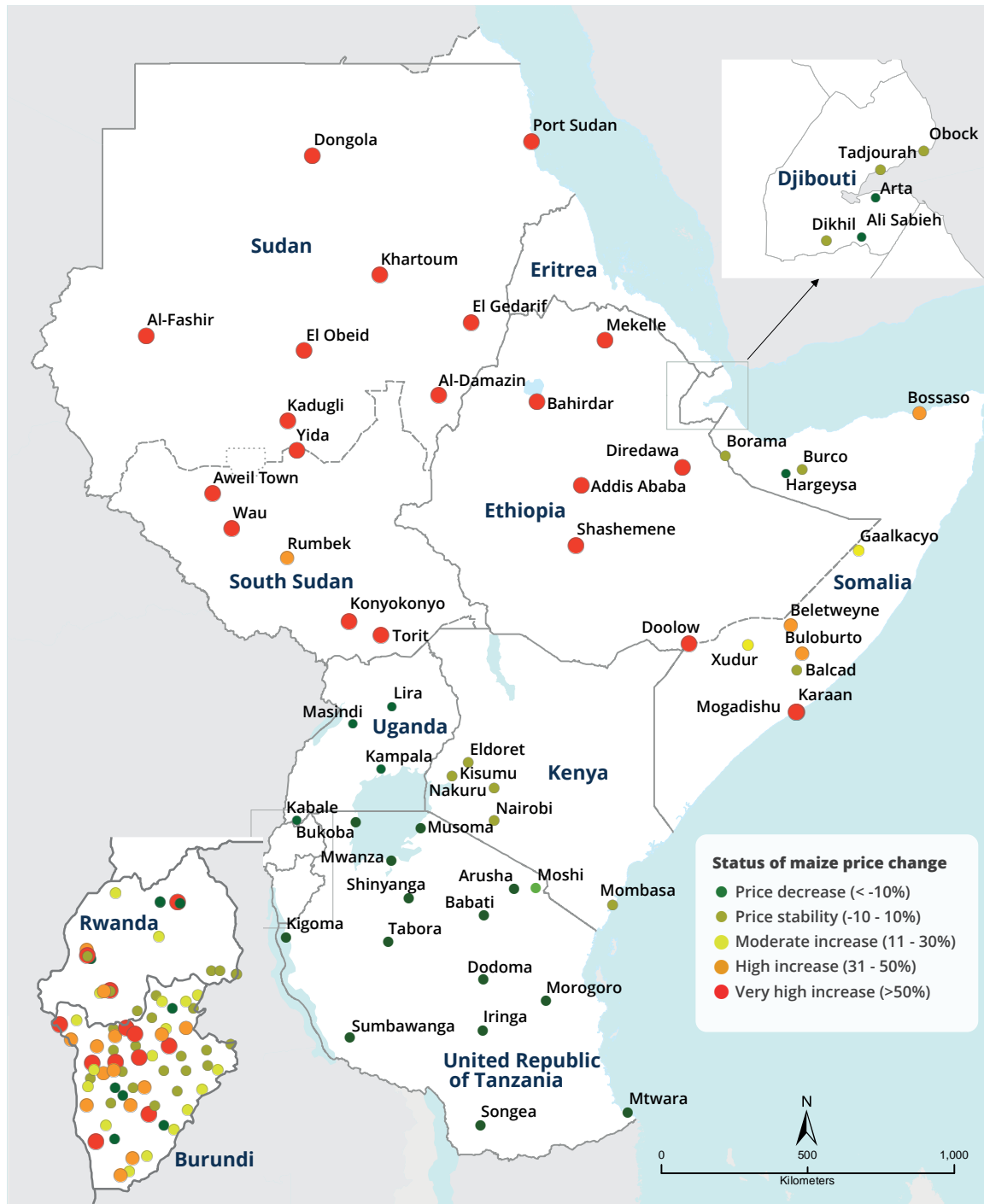
**FIGURE 11: Development in cross-border trade exports during 2020**



Source: WFP

Overall, prices of staple cereals were high, especially in Burundi, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan, while they were relatively low in Kenya and Uganda. By December 2020, the price of maize, a key staple food in the region, was more than 50 percent above the five-year average in most markets. This price hike particularly impacted low-income households and households affected by the increasing unemployment rates. These households have limited purchasing power and are typically more vulnerable to price shocks. Moreover, displaced populations were also affected because of unstable sources of livelihood, low income and a high reliance on markets.

**MAP 4: Changes in staple food prices, January - February 2021 compared with the five-year average**



*Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP and IOM concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

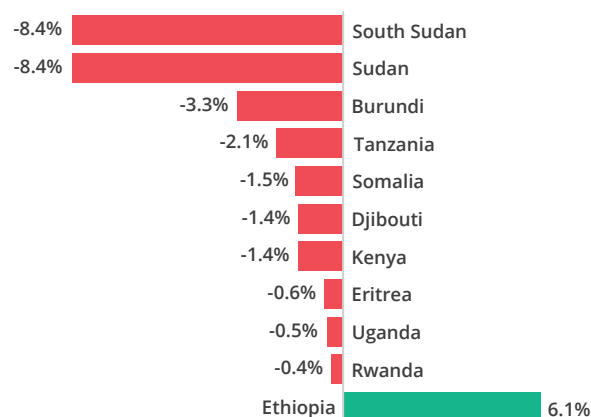
Source: WFP<sup>25</sup>

## Livelihoods and food security

The pandemic has triggered economic hardship across the region. Ethiopia was the only country that experienced positive growth, however, at a lower level than the years before the pandemic. Millions of people have lost livelihood and income opportunities, and the closure of schools has affected school feeding programmes in several countries, while high food prices have eroded households' purchasing power.

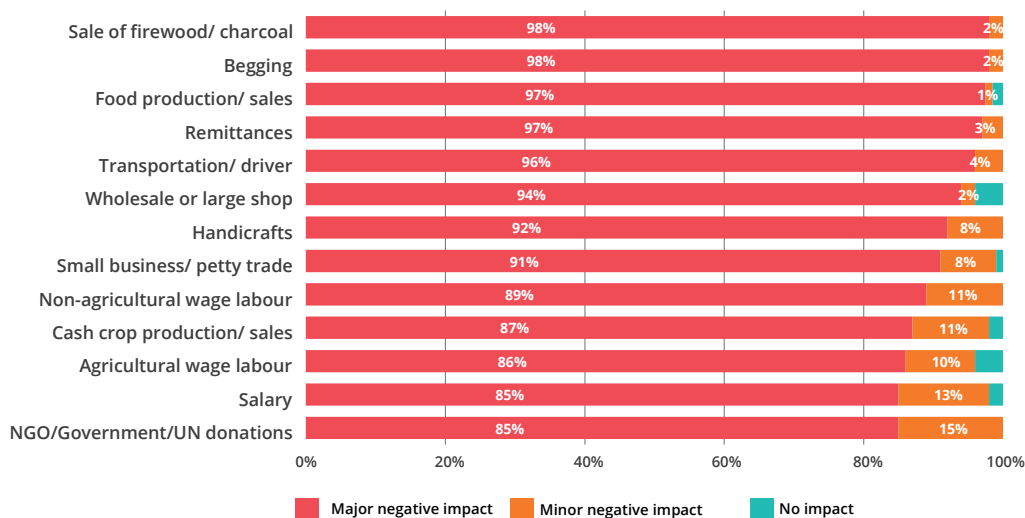
A WFP survey carried out in urban Uganda found that seven out of ten households reported a major negative impact of the COVID-19 restrictions on their main livelihood sources. This added challenge has likely widened already existing social inequalities, as households with unstable, vulnerable sources of livelihoods were more severely affected than those with stable income sources.<sup>26</sup>

**FIGURE 12: 2020 gross domestic product growth**



Source: IMF

**FIGURE 13: Household livelihood impact in 13 urban centres of Uganda (May – June 2020)**



Source: WFP

## Impact on migrant workers

The pandemic not only hampered the employment opportunities available to migrant workers abroad, but also marred their current working and living conditions. Many migrants have faced high salary cuts, non-payment of wages, layoffs, forced labour, extended working hours, and reduced paid leave benefits as well as difficulties in accessing healthcare, social protection and justice. Migrant workers in the informal economy have been particularly vulnerable as they often lack financial reserves and may not be able to afford protective equipment for jobs that require it.<sup>27</sup>

Border closures left migrant workers stranded without housing or income. Some migrants were arbitrarily detained for months in unsanitary facilities without the ability to legally challenge their detention or eventual deportation. This issue was of particular concern in the GCC countries, where large-scale forced returns of EHoA nationals continued during the pandemic. Overcrowding, poor health conditions and beatings were amongst the hardships experienced by Ethiopian returnees who were detained when they got stranded in Saudi Arabia. In addition, many migrant workers are still in conditions that put them at greater risk of contracting the virus.

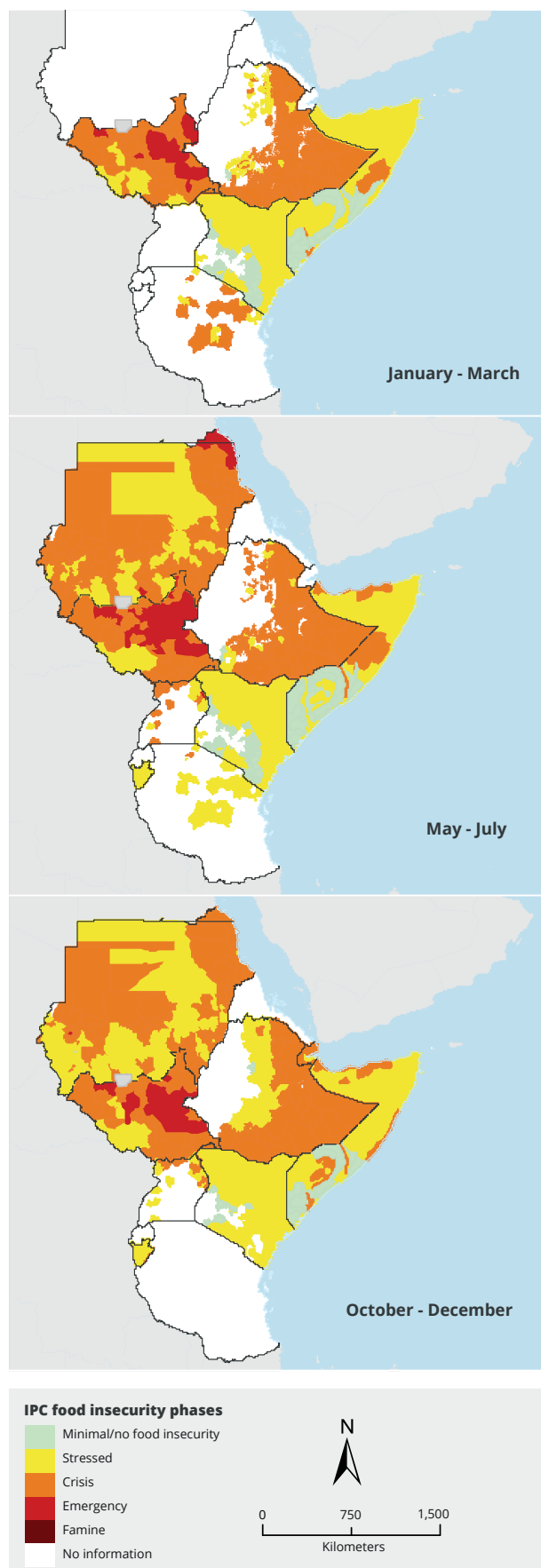
Furthermore, an increase in involuntary return migration has been observed, as jobs and income opportunities shrank in destination countries. Many returning migrant workers were headed home empty-handed and required extensive support for their reintegration, placing significant pressure on home communities.

## Impact on food security

Already one of the most food insecure regions in the world, the food security situation in the EHoA region deteriorated during 2020 because of the pandemic, further exacerbating the concerning levels of malnutrition; Burundi had one of the highest levels of chronic malnutrition globally. The year 2020 saw an increase in the populations facing Crisis or worse [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 or above] food insecurity level over the May–July period compared to the pre-pandemic figures.<sup>28</sup> This worsening of IPC levels was mostly due to a combination of COVID-19 consequences and the effect of seasonality, as the May–July period corresponds to the lean season for several countries in the region. Similarly, serious levels of food insecurity were recorded during October–December despite this period being the harvest season in most countries, when the food security situation usually improves. Based on IPC analyses and an additional spike in urban food insecurity, WFP estimated that regional food insecurity peaked at 54 million people in 2020. Given the continued impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods and economies, this figure is expected to remain high in 2021.

Displaced populations are disproportionately vulnerable to food insecurity because of their fragile and disrupted livelihoods, and predominantly rely on humanitarian assistance and government social safety nets to cover basic food needs. IDPs' level of vulnerability has further increased during the pandemic because of reduced funding for humanitarian operations that support displaced populations. This decrease in funds has led to food ration cuts for refugee populations in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda, thus negatively affecting their food security and nutrition situations as well as increasing protection-related risks, especially among women and children.

**MAP 5: Development in food insecurity in 2020**



*Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in the maps do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP and IOM concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

Source: IPC<sup>29</sup>

## REFUGEES IN UGANDA

With more than 1.3 million refugees, Uganda hosts one of the largest number of refugees in the region and the fifth largest globally—most of these refugees are South Sudanese. From June to August 2020, a total of 2.6 million people were in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse food security situation in Uganda, including 459,493 refugees, 995,355 people living in host communities and 835,125 urban poor.<sup>30</sup> Despite below-average food prices limiting some of the negative impact of the refugee ration cuts introduced in early 2020, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that poverty among refugees increased from 44 percent to 52 percent after the lockdown. Once food prices start increasing, this figure is expected to rise further.

By October, nine in every ten refugee households reported a decline or loss in income as many refugees were forced to stop working after the lockdown in the Kampala and southwestern regions. In that respect, humanitarian assistance has remained key to survival, while farming is the second most frequent source of livelihood. Income from non-farming businesses, salaried employment, remittances and informal assistance were the most common sources of income among refugees in Kampala City.<sup>31</sup>



# KEY PROTECTION RISKS AND GENDER CONCERNS

## Overview of protection risks for mobile populations

While human mobility is an important survival and coping mechanism, forced displacement and migration also challenge people's ability to access basic services and to enjoy full inclusion in family, community and social protection networks. Displacement exposes individuals to risks and makes them potentially less resilient in the face of conflict, disaster or deliberate actions that exploit their condition. The Global Protection Cluster highlights that COVID-19 became "a crisis within a crisis – a health, protection, access and service delivery nightmare", and reported that more than 100 million people globally are now in need of protection assistance due to conflict, violence, epidemics and climate-related disasters.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Sudan, Ethiopia and South Sudan were among the 10 countries with the worst food crises globally in 2020, with 9.6 million, 8.6 million and 6.5 million people acutely food insecure (IPC Phase 3 or above), respectively. In South Sudan, over half of the population (55 percent) was food insecure.<sup>33</sup>

## People in need of protection

The number of people in need of protection in Ethiopia has increased from 3.9 million in 2020 to 5.3 million in 2021, a majority of whom are displaced.<sup>34</sup> Across Sudan, there are 4.7 million people in need of protection support, including 1.5 million IDPs, 369,000 returnees and 1.1 million refugees.<sup>35</sup> In South Sudan, around 4.8 million people are estimated to face protection risks and violations in 2021. Over half are children, the majority of whom are internally displaced, alongside 310,000 refugees and asylum-seekers who also need protection.<sup>36</sup> In Somalia, the complex and protracted protection crisis is complicated by the diverse societal landscape in which competition between social groups, clans and ethnic groups over scarce resources is a major factor fuelling conflict, marginalization and discrimination. It is estimated that 3.2 million people will need protection services in 2021 including 1.2 million IDPs, 28,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, and 110,000 refugee returnees.<sup>37</sup>

## Impact on children

The impact of the pandemic on the safety and well-being of children across the region has been exacerbated by the widespread closure of schools, especially affecting those from vulnerable communities for whom schools offer a safe space. Millions of children have been unable to access any form of formal education, and many have been forced into child labour or recruited into armed forces, sexual slavery or have been trafficked.<sup>38</sup>

- **Somalia:** The closure of schools and the depletion of family assets particularly exposed girls to exploitation, a higher domestic labour burden, female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriages.<sup>39</sup> There is also growing concern that children who stayed out of school will not go back. In Puntland, 7 percent of children did not return to school once schools re-opened in the last quarter of 2020.<sup>40</sup> Overall, the factors increasing the likelihood of exclusion from school include disability, child marriage and recruitment, with over 6,900 children identified as associated with armed forces and groups.<sup>41</sup>
- **Uganda:** Among the child protection issues faced by refugees and migrants are physical violence, child marriage and child labour. Up to a 50 percent increase in sexual violence has been reported in some refugee-hosting districts.<sup>42</sup>
- **South Sudan:** The country's refugee situation continues to be characterized as a 'children's crisis'. Many refugee children continue to be exposed to increased levels of risk, especially when travelling alone, and over 66,000 children are registered as unaccompanied or separated from their parents or usual caregivers.<sup>43</sup>
- **Ethiopia:** Children account for more than half of those in need, and nearly half a million children in Ethiopia are at risk of exploitation and child labour. Children with a disability (447,790) are among those who face the most severe protection risks, alongside unaccompanied and separated children (21,659), who are often at heightened risk of discrimination, violence and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in displacement sites.<sup>44</sup>



## Increase in gender-based violence (GBV)

As elsewhere in the world, GBV has increased across the region. Specific challenges facing the countries are described below.

- **Ethiopia:** Reports of GBV and of transactional sex have increased, where economic hardship has resulted in mass relocations and increased insecurity and exploitation.<sup>45</sup> Conflict- and climate-induced displacement have also contributed to the marked increase of GBV across the country. *Woredas*, or administrative divisions, with severe needs for GBV prevention and response services almost doubled since 2019. More than half of DTM respondents reported that IDPs face two or more safety concerns when accessing aid.<sup>46</sup>
- **Burundi:** Female returnees from the United Republic of Tanzania have lost the benefit of any GBV support and services that they had access to in the refugee camps. Denial of resources and increased psychological and emotional abuse have also reportedly increased for IDPs, refugees and returnees during 2020.
- **South Sudan:** In Wau and Juba, displaced women have reported widespread SEA as they struggle to survive without income and away from their community structures. Travel restriction measures have also contributed to a rise in GBV incidents. Some 2 million people are estimated to be affected by GBV in 2021, with six counties falling under the 'catastrophic' category.<sup>47</sup>
- **Somalia:** A GBV/FGM COVID-19 assessment indicated that 38 percent of respondents reported an increase in GBV incidents. The number of survivor calls to GBV hotlines increased by 283 percent in Federal Members States and by 767 percent in Somaliland.<sup>48</sup>

## Social exclusion impact

Different forms of displacement often result in not only experiences of isolation and marginalization, but also in tensions with the local or host community that lead to discrimination, harassment and violence. Movement restrictions have cut off individuals and families from their social networks and have left them unable to access support from family, friends and communities.<sup>49</sup> In South Sudan, the competition over scarce resources has caused tensions between displaced persons and host communities, where the presence of combatants around IDP sites has led to increased levels of violence and insecurity.<sup>50</sup> The provision of adequate mental health and psychosocial support will thus be needed throughout 2021 in all five refugee-hosting counties where COVID-19 has had a dramatic impact on the refugee population: a rise in psychological distress as well as attempted suicide rates have also been reported.<sup>51</sup> In Somalia, the marginalized and minority communities have always been extremely vulnerable to discrimination and persecution by the multiple armed actors, reducing their capacity to provide meaningful protection to each other.<sup>52</sup>

## Risks related to irregular migration during the pandemic

The pandemic has exacerbated the existing risks of irregular migration along the main corridors in the EHoA, which are often dangerous and fraught with protection concerns en route, in transit and at destination countries. Protection concerns are physical and psychological abuse, GBV, human trafficking, extortion, and exploitation including forced labour and arbitrary arrests. The Southern Route was already particularly dangerous as migrants transit through several countries where the risk of detention is high.<sup>53</sup> The Northern Route is another risky route, as protection challenges in Libya are numerous, and conditions in detention centres are of particular concern.<sup>54</sup> The Eastern Route was also already risky, as migrants have to go through the searing heat and desolation of the Djiboutian desert on foot, and then cross the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea in boats that are often unseaworthy: reports indicate that smugglers often throw migrants overboard to reduce the risk of the boats capsizing when seas are rough.<sup>55</sup>

## Gendered aspects of irregular migration in the EHoA

Migration patterns along the Southern and Eastern Routes are largely gendered by migration type. Irregular migration along the Southern Route is comprised largely of young men, likely due to the nature of most migrants' intended work in South Africa. While Middle Eastern and GCC countries, such as Saudi Arabia have a long history of offering domestic labour opportunities for young female migrants. Labour migration to South Africa is characterized by small businesses operated by members of the diaspora and driven by strong networks between Somalis and Ethiopians. Female migrants make the journey to South Africa to get

married or re-join family, and tend to travel by air rather than through the arduous overland route.<sup>56</sup> Migration from the EHoA to Saudi Arabia goes back several decades to the seventies, and Ethiopians have established strong migration networks, including networks of brokers and facilitators present in all transit countries. Female migration to Saudi Arabia is driven by a strong demand for domestic labour, while male migrants are most commonly employed as manual workers on construction sites, in agriculture and in the fishing industry.<sup>57</sup>

### MIGRANTS IN MATHARE, KENYA

Nuriya left Ethiopia with her parents and travelled to Kenya seeking a safer political environment, increased economic opportunities and an improved democratic voice. Since Nuriya had experienced many of the challenges migrants face, such as shattered expectations, misinformation, police harassment and language barriers, she decided to dedicate her time to volunteering and providing meals and lodging to those migrants who need assistance. She has seen first-hand how fellow migrants from Ethiopia are increasingly misled and extorted by human traffickers. With Ethiopia's continued and growing insecurities, people's desperation is exploited through exaggerated stories of opportunity in Kenya. The reality, Nuriya says, is far from these stories. Migrants struggle to find work and integrate, and routinely face harassment from the authorities because of their irregular status.

COVID-19 has made matters worse. As restriction measures have sapped aid programmes and livelihood opportunities, people are increasingly going hungry. Overcrowding has made government directives on social distancing and sanitation challenging to follow. Nuriya's nephew arrived recently, fleeing political insecurity and seeking new opportunities in Kenya. However, as he does not speak the local language and does not have documentation, he has been compelled to join the informal *khat* trade. Business has suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic, and his family has had to reduce their food intake to cope. He wishes that the host community and migrants had better relations, noting that "we are the same, no different. I wish they would take us in and protect us from the police as the community, not sell us out for profit."





## SPECIAL FOCUS

### Ethiopia



**1,959,979**  
IDPs

(excluding displacement in Tigray)



**802,821**  
Refugees



**8.6M**  
People In Need  
(2021: **23.8M**)



**8.6M**  
Food Insecure People  
(2021: **12.9M**)

Initially, the year 2020 brought promising signs of continued change and transformation to Ethiopia following Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for the historical peace deal with Eritrea. The country was one of the fastest growing economies in the region with a remarkable economic growth of 9.4 percent from 2010 to 2020. This growth enabled poverty reduction in both urban and rural areas as well as supported job creation and improved governance.<sup>58</sup> However, the outbreak of the pandemic has severely challenged this progress. In 2020, 8.6 million Ethiopians needed humanitarian assistance, and because of COVID-19, this number was expected to nearly triple to 23.5 million in the beginning of 2021 and rise to 23.8 million later in the year.<sup>59</sup>

Almost 2 million people were internally displaced - not including the Tigray region, as insecurity has prevented data collection. Higher IDP concentrations were mainly found in the Somali (43 percent) and Oromia (31 percent) regions. Displacement was predominantly driven by conflict, followed by drought and flash floods.<sup>60</sup> Overall, displacement has continued to increase despite a temporary reduction following the government-led return operations that were

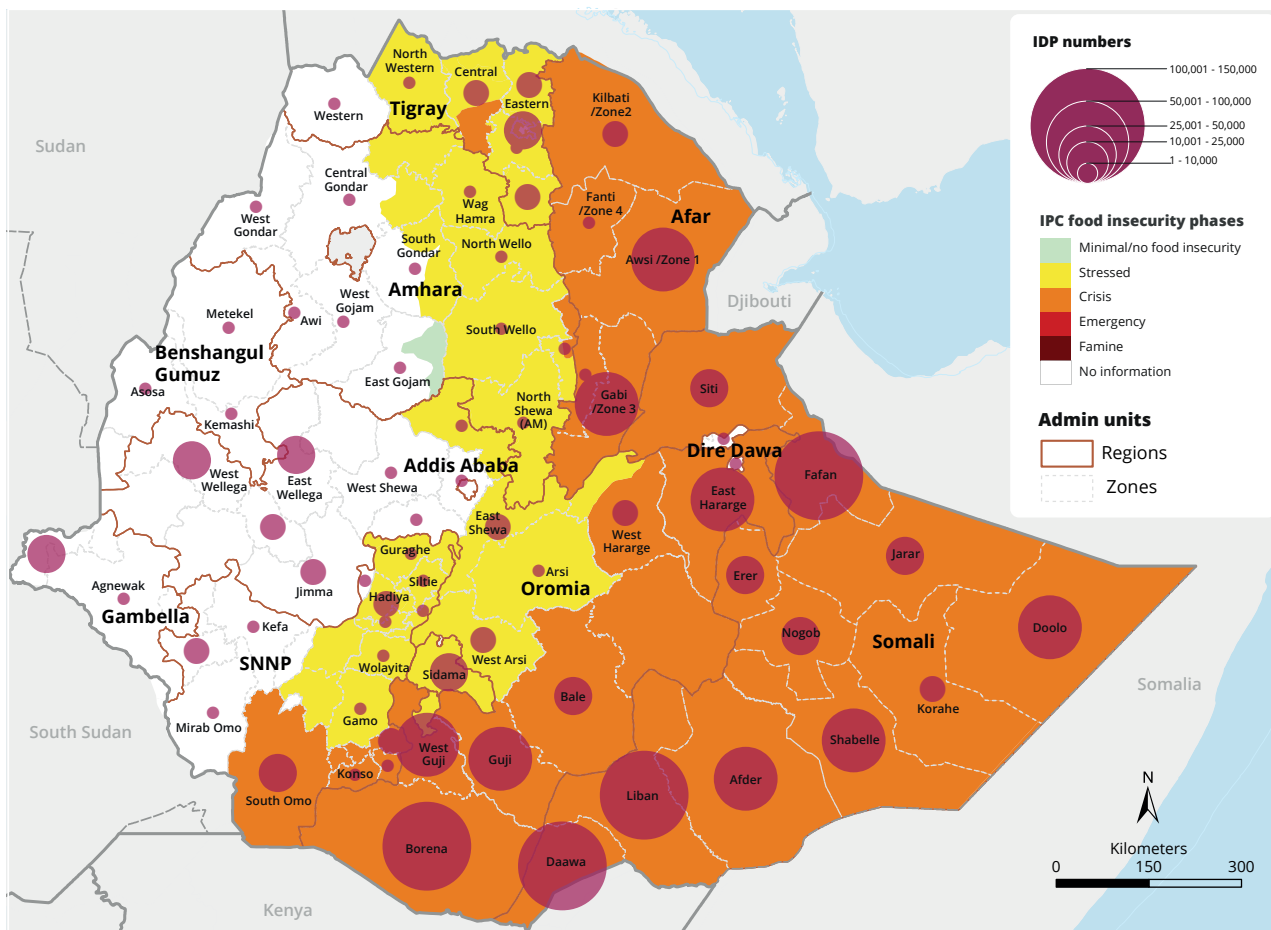
initiated in April 2019, through the Ministry of Peace (MoP) and the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC). Despite its domestic challenges, Ethiopia remains the third largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, with a total of 802,821 registered refugees and asylum-seekers by the end of 2020.<sup>61</sup> Over the years, the government has continued to advance promising initiatives including the revised national refugee law to facilitate a better local integration of refugees in the Ethiopian economy, labour market and education system.<sup>62</sup>

Between October and December 2020, food insecurity peaked at an estimated 8.6 million people facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse levels of food insecurity in seven *Meher* and *Belg* pastoral and agro pastoral-dependent regions.<sup>63</sup> As these projections were made before the outbreak of the Tigray conflict in November 2020, assessments estimate that an additional 5.5 million, corresponding to 61 percent of the population in Tigray and neighbouring zones of Afar and Amhara, need lifesaving food assistance.<sup>64</sup> Between January and June 2021, a total of 12.9 million people are projected to be in IPC Phase 3 or above,<sup>65</sup> excluding the Tigray region.

COVID-19-related measures worsened the economic situation and contributed to currency depreciation, severe shortage of foreign currency and high inflation. The economic fallout has led to rapidly increasing food prices, and the vulnerable urban households have been hit disproportionately hard. Furthermore, unemployment rose and by May 2020, an estimated 2.4 million jobs were lost, while a fall in remittances exacerbated the effect on incomes.<sup>66</sup> As a result, 31 million people were estimated to be living below the poverty line in 2020, up from 26 million people in 2019.<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, conflict increased in the regions of Tigray; Benishangul Gumuz; Oromia; Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples (SNNP) and Amhara, which has led to displacement, protection concerns and rising humanitarian needs.

Heavy rains during the April–May and June–September periods resulted in severe floods and landslides, impacting nearly 1.1 million people across the country, of whom over 313,000 were IDPs. The regions of Afar, Amhara, Gambella, Oromia, Somali and SNNP were the most affected, considering that more than 1.1 million people were already displaced by violence before the floods hit.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, the Somali region received poor rains, sustaining drought conditions during October and November. Subsequently, the NDRMC triggered its first national drought alert on 1 November 2020.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, the Desert Locust infestation damaged 365,000 hectares of cropland across multiple regions, devastating livelihoods in at least 76 *woredas*,<sup>70</sup> while 44 percent of farming households and 52 percent of livestock-rearing households in locust-affected areas experienced locust-related losses.<sup>71</sup>

**MAP 6: Food insecurity and IDP numbers in Ethiopia**



*Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP and IOM concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

Sources: IPC, UNCHR and IOM <sup>72</sup>



## Tigray

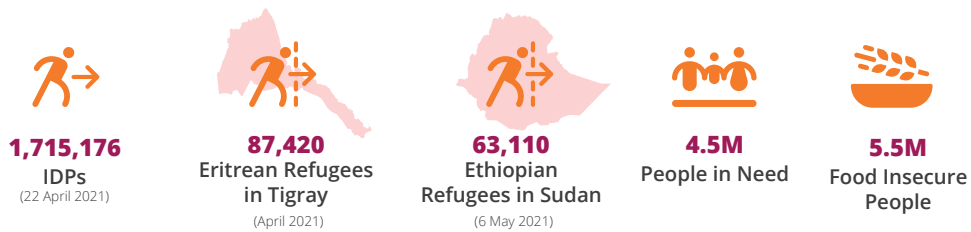
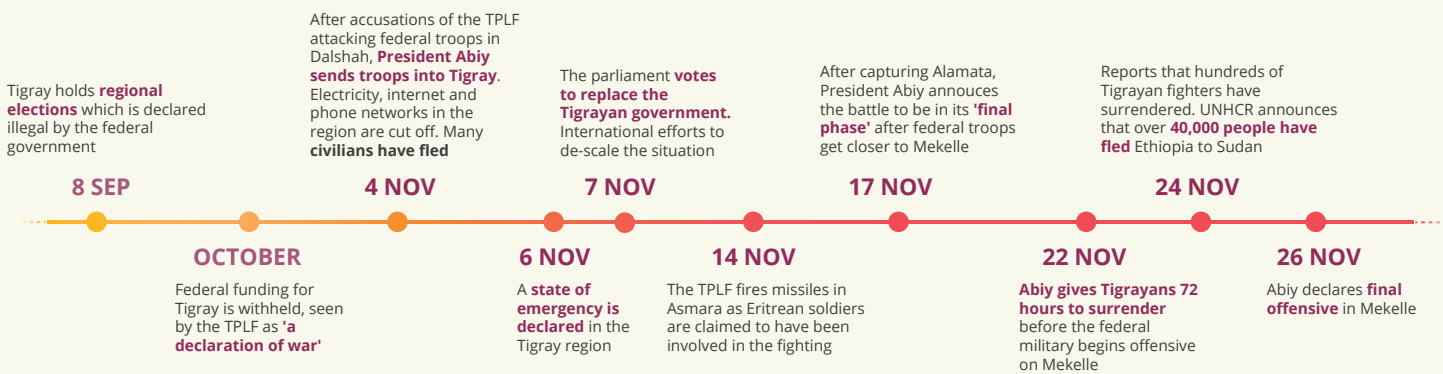


FIGURE 14: Timeline of the conflict in Tigray

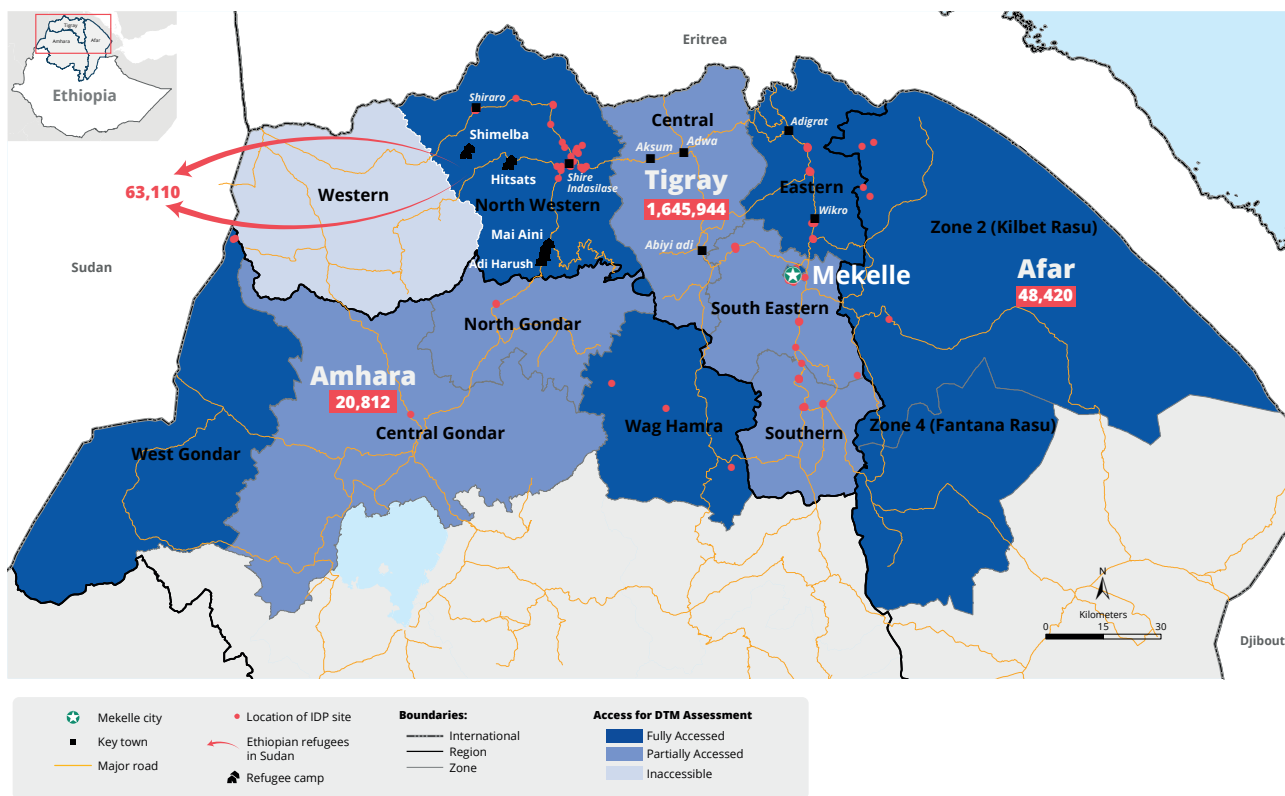


Sources: UN, Reuters, The Economist, UNHCR, BBC, The Guardian, Washington Post, Amnesty International

Ethiopia's northern Tigray region has been experiencing a worsening humanitarian crisis since armed conflict erupted on 4 November 2020. Official figures on internal displacement come from IOM's DTM, which recorded, as of 22 April 2021, 1,715,176 IDPs (354,516 households) across 265 sites in Tigray, Amhara and Afar regions. A total of 1,645,944 IDPs were in Tigray region, 48,420 IDPs in Afar region and 20,812 IDPs in Amhara region.<sup>73</sup> Currently, it is still not possible for humanitarian actors to assess the full scale of the displacement. However, the number of IDPs continues to increase as more areas become accessible. People mostly fled Western Tigray to Shire, Adigrat, Axum and Shiraro, with additional influx recorded from parts of North Western and Central zones.

According to UNHCR, over 63,000 people have sought refuge in neighbouring Sudan as of 6 May 2021, with around 100 new arrivals every day.<sup>74</sup> Before the conflict started, some 96,223 Eritrean refugees were registered in four UNHCR camps in the Tigray region. Of the 19,200 who had been sheltering in Hitsats and Shimelba refugee camps, which were heavily damaged by fighting and have subsequently been closed, only 4,600 have been relocated to Adi Harush and Mai Aini camps.<sup>75</sup>

**MAP 7: Tigray crisis - displacement**



*Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP and IOM concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

Source: IOM, UNHCR <sup>76</sup>

As of June 2021, an estimated 5.5 million people, corresponding to 61 percent of the population in Tigray and neighbouring Afar and Amhara regions, are in urgent need of life-saving assistance. This figure includes 353,000 people in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), which is the highest number of people in IPC Phase 5 since the 2011 famine in Somalia, in addition to 2.1 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and 3.1 million people facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity. The analysis is based on worrying findings of high levels of inadequate food consumption, severe household hunger scores and high use of emergency coping strategies.<sup>78</sup>

Many humanitarian actors fear that continued conflict could lead to worsening levels of hunger and malnutrition in areas already classified as one step away from famine.<sup>79</sup> A rapid nutrition assessment in March 2021 found proxy global acute malnutrition levels of up to 34.5 percent in Emohoni, 34.3 percent in Kawlalo and 31 percent in Hintalo.<sup>80</sup> Reports of cholera and COVID-19 outbreaks also cause serious public health concerns.

Already before the conflict, food insecurity in the Tigray region was high, with over 600,000 people needing emergency food assistance, including 100,000 IDPs and 5,000 IDP returnees.<sup>81</sup> The poverty rate remains above the national average, and it is estimated that one third of those living in the Tigray region cannot meet minimum caloric needs.<sup>82</sup> The conflict erupted at the peak of the harvest season (October–November), which led to pre-harvest losses and substantial harvest being wasted, while the conflict is disrupting food supply chains and humanitarian access. As the conflict has continued throughout the traditional land preparation period (January to early May), it

is likely that planting for next season will be disrupted, with higher-than-usual food insecurity expected during the lean season in June–September.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions reportedly led to food shortages and soaring food prices. Though still above pre-crisis levels, cereal prices in Mekelle started declining in December, after rapid increases in the last months of 2020. Overall, food availability in the markets has improved, however, households' purchasing power has seriously declined due to loss of income and livelihood opportunities.<sup>83</sup>

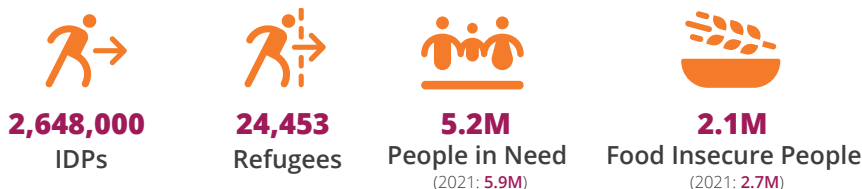
From July to September 2021, an estimated 4.4 million people in the Tigray region are expected to be facing acute food insecurity. This figure corresponds to 74 percent of the total analyzed population, considering that this projection does not include Afar, North Wello and southern Tigray zone due to lack of data. Of the overall figure, 401,000 people (7 percent of the analyzed population) are projected to be facing Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) food security outcomes, while 1.8 million (30 percent) are expected to be facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity.<sup>84</sup>

At the government's request, WFP began providing emergency relief assistance. By mid-June 2021, WFP provided emergency food assistance to 1.3 million people in Tigray and is aiming at increasing it further to 2.1 million. Prior to the conflict, WFP was already supporting the Ethiopian Government in providing food assistance for 1.6 million people under the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the government's PSNP.





## Somalia



Somalia's situation remains one of the world's most complex and severely protracted humanitarian crises. The upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for 2021 are causing political tensions and heightening armed violence. Consequently, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Somalia has continuously increased over the last years, from 4.2 million in 2019 to 5.2 million in 2020 and 5.9 million in 2021. This last figure represents 48 percent of the estimated total population living in Somalia in 2021.<sup>85</sup>

Somalia ranked amongst the top five countries in the world with the highest numbers of new displacements in the first half of 2020. With an estimated 514,000 new disaster-related displacements and 189,000 new displacements associated with conflict and violence, Somalia's mid-year figures were already higher than those for the whole of 2019.<sup>86</sup> By December, the total estimated number of IDPs was still at 2.6 million, representing almost 17 percent of Somalia's population.<sup>87</sup> Overall, flooding displaced 919,000 people in 2020 and destroyed essential infrastructure, property and 144,000 hectares of agricultural land. Heavy rains in April and May led to flash floods, triggering new waves of displacement and causing the destruction of farmland, crops and property. Heavy rains in July led to the destruction of about 15,000–20,000 hectares of crops, mainly in rural

areas along the Juba and Shabelle river valleys.<sup>88</sup> Over the October–December period, nearly 278,000 people were affected by *Deyr* flash floods and rainfall across the country, and an additional 108,000 people were forced to flee their homes.<sup>89</sup> Simultaneously, the strongest tropical cyclone to ever make landfall in Somalia, Cyclone Gati, hit the Bari region of Puntland on 22 November, affecting an estimated 120,000 people.<sup>90</sup>

At its peak in December 2020, an estimated 2.1 million people were facing acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or higher), representing 17 percent of the total population, due to the compounded effects of weather extremes, conflict, Desert Locust infestation and economic shocks.<sup>91</sup> As of April 2021, Somalia's food security situation was projected to have worsened with 2.7 million people (22 percent of the population) facing acute food insecurity and nearly 839,000 children under the age of five years facing acute malnutrition. A significant proportion of IDPs in Somalia are poor and their food security condition is expected to deteriorate between April and June 2021, particularly for urban poor populations, owing to the adverse effects of the prolonged socioeconomic impact of COVID-19. Climatic shocks are expected to continue to affect the country, including the effects of the previous regional flooding, in combination with prospects of upcoming regional droughts.<sup>92</sup>



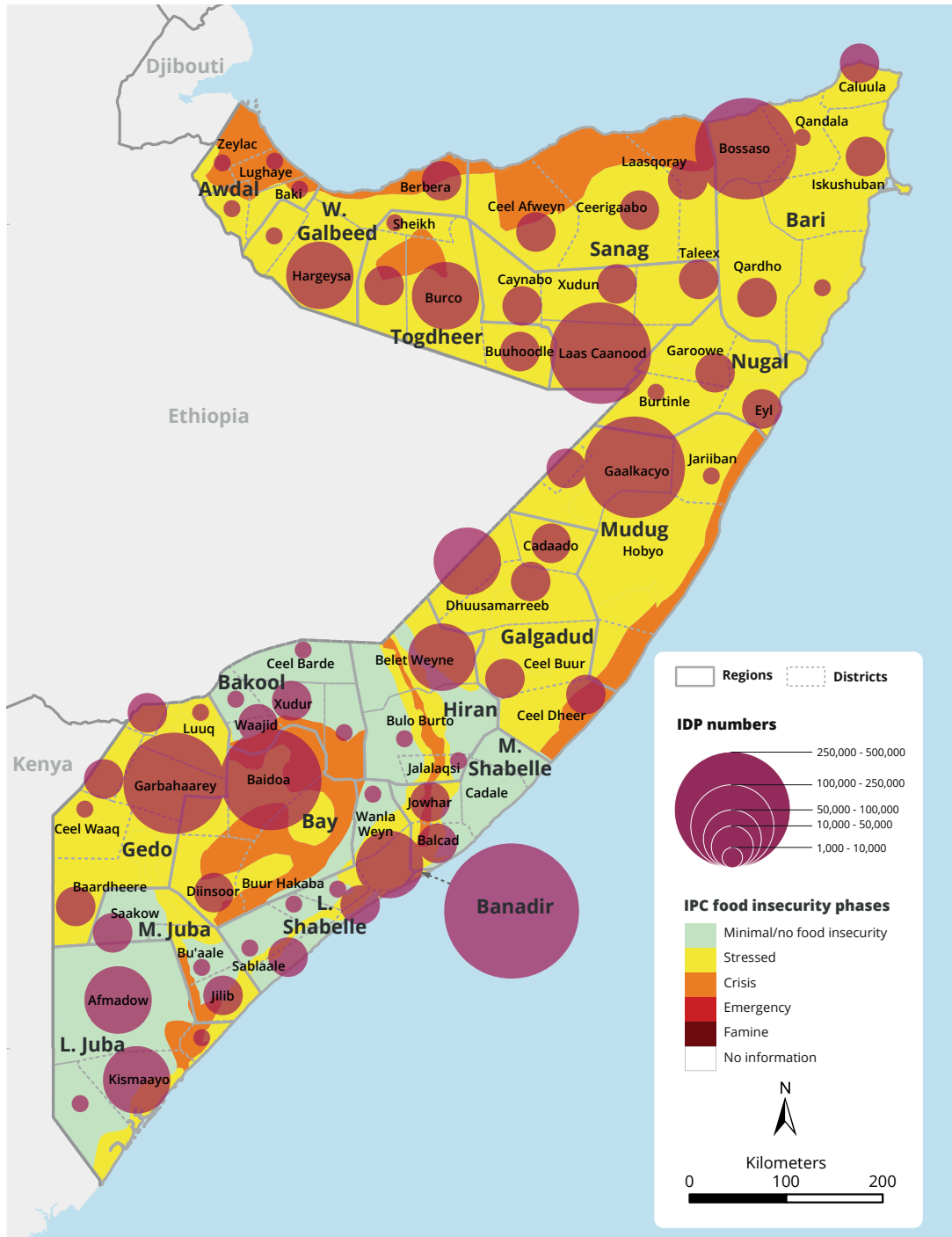
Estimates attribute one third of Somalia's gross domestic product (GDP) to remittances, which exceeds the international aid flow and foreign direct investment. The Federal Government of Somalia projected a 40 percent decline in inward transfers and remittances for 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>93</sup> Although precise data for Somalia is currently unavailable, the drop in remittance flows has not been nearly as dire as foreseen. Yet, migrants are no longer able to maintain the same level of remittances for their families and communities throughout the region, pushing them into hardship and vulnerability. Household surveys conducted by Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) in Somalia in November and December 2020 indicated that up to 22 percent of urban, 12 percent of rural and 6 percent of IDPs received remittances over the August–September and October–November periods. More than half of the recipients reported significant declines ( $\geq 10$  percent) in remittances compared to before the pandemic.

Concurrently, in 2020 Somalia experienced the worst Desert Locust invasion in 25 years, with renewed infestations reported throughout the year as excessive rainfall sustained favourable conditions for locust breeding. Considering its threatening effect on food security, a state of emergency over locust swarms was announced in February 2020. Even though control operations took place, Desert Locusts damaged close to 300,000 hectares of cropland and

pasture, impacting livelihoods and food security for almost 200,000 people, mainly in the northern regions. Between October and December 2020, roughly 27 percent of cropping respondents and 59 percent of livestock rearing respondents experienced Desert Locust-related crop and pasture losses, respectively.<sup>94</sup> In addition to locusts, parts of Somalia also experienced droughts, which deepened food insecurity. From mid-May 2020, extended dry conditions in large parts of the country contributed to the 2020 *Gu* (April to June) harvest in southern Somalia, but in November 2020 harvest was 45 percent lower than the 2010–2019 average cereal production. In December, pre-drought conditions, including widely depleted *berkedes* (traditional Somali water cisterns) and shallow wells, loss of livestock, as well as extensive critical loss of pasture returned to large parts of the country.<sup>95</sup>



**MAP 8: Food insecurity and IDP numbers in Somalia**

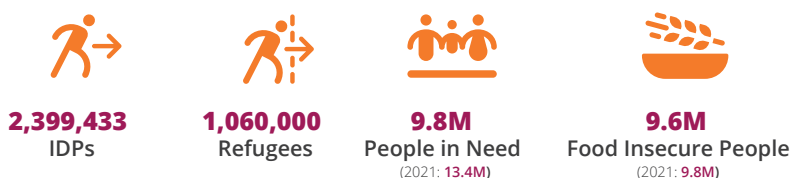


*Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP and IOM concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

Source: IPC, FSNAU, IMWG-TWG Somalia and UNHCR <sup>96</sup>



## Sudan



The humanitarian situation in Sudan remained complex throughout 2020. The country retained its status as one of the world’s most protracted humanitarian emergencies. Sudan faces numerous challenges despite the appointment of a transitional government in August 2019 after President Omar al-Bashir (in power since 1989) was ousted and the Juba Peace Agreement by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok was signed in the presence of various armed actors in October 2020. The peace agreement paved the way for ongoing peace negotiations. In 2020, 9.8 million people needed humanitarian support and this figure is projected to increase to more than one quarter of the population (13.4 million) throughout 2021.<sup>97</sup>

Approximately 2.4 million displaced persons are settled across Sudan. Of these, 64 percent were initially displaced between 2003 and 2010, at the height of the Darfur crisis; 31 percent were displaced between 2011 and 2017; and 5 percent have been displaced since 2018.<sup>98</sup> In 2020, IOM’s DTM captured a total of 351,451 new displacements, a large majority (69 percent) of which were displaced due to record-breaking seasonal floods and 30 percent were displaced because of inter-communal conflict. Flooding was so severe and devastating in many states that the Transitional Government of Sudan declared a three-month nationwide state of emergency on 4 September.<sup>99</sup> Heavy rains across

Khartoum state from mid-July to September 2020 caused flooding and destruction of infrastructure, houses and livelihoods, affecting an estimated 116,000 individuals. DTM captured a further 89,700 individuals displaced during the rainy season in North Darfur, over 28,300 individuals in South Darfur, and around 9,900 individuals in Central Darfur.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to floods, new waves of displacement were also triggered by conflict. In January 2020, at the peak of the political crisis, violent clashes in Ag Geneina, West Darfur displaced an estimated 49,000 individuals from Krinding 1, 2 and Sultan House IDP camps, representing almost half of the overall population displaced by conflict.<sup>101</sup> Conflict displacement was also prevalent in South Darfur and West Darfur, affecting an estimated 23,000 IDPs for each, followed by North Darfur, West Kordofan and Central Darfur. Despite its domestic challenges, Sudan hosted over 1 million refugees and asylum-seekers at the end of 2020, mostly from South Sudan,<sup>102</sup> along with the recent influx of 63,110 Ethiopian refugees fleeing the ongoing crisis in the Tigray region.<sup>103</sup>

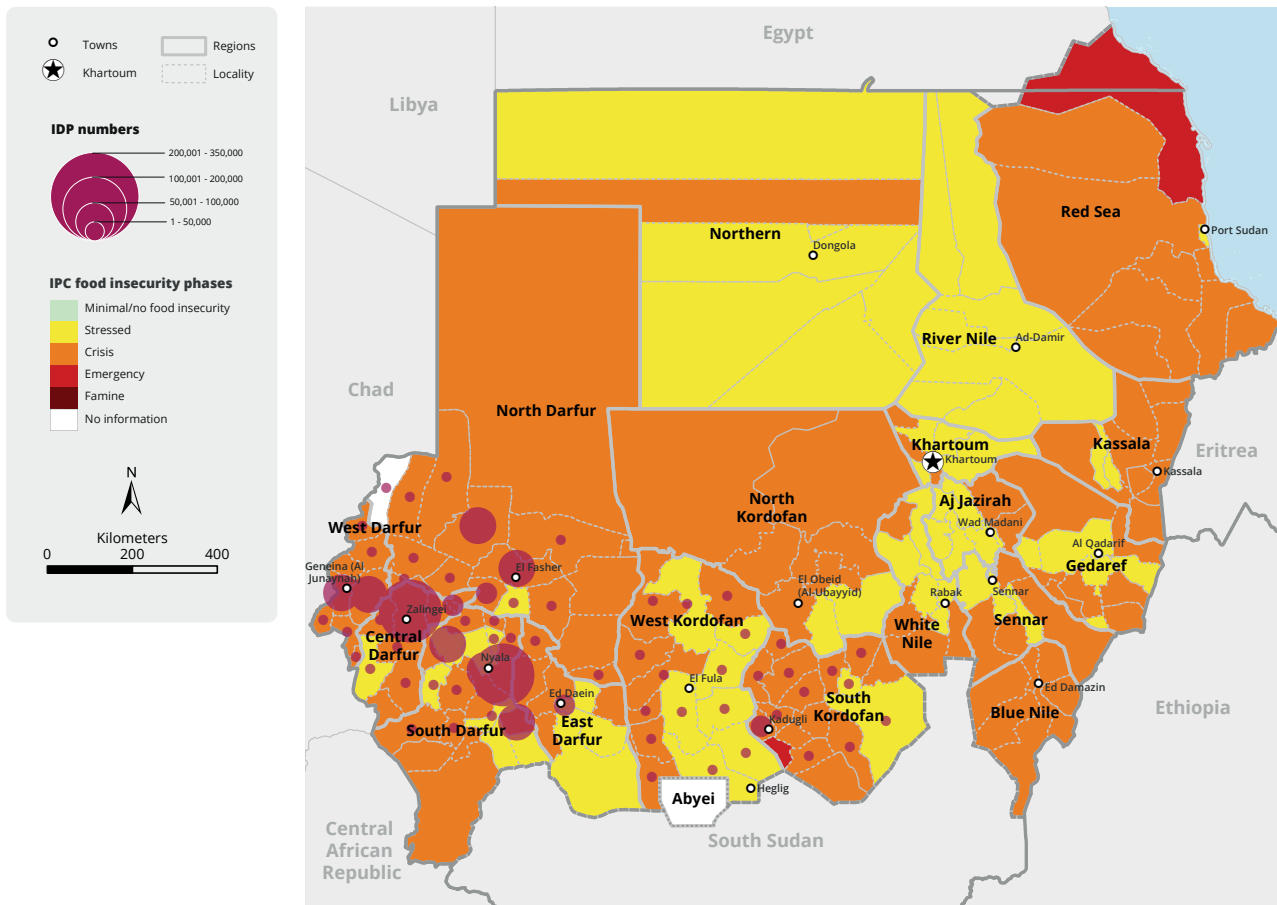
A record 9.6 million people (21 percent of the population) experienced Crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) in the peak period between June

and September. When compared to the same period in 2019, this figure represents an increase of roughly 2.5 million people since June–August 2019. Except for South Kordofan, South Darfur and Red Sea, where the situation remained as concerning as it was in 2019, in all states the number of people needing urgent food and livelihood assistance increased. The most marked increases were in Blue Nile, North Darfur, Central Darfur, Kassala and North Kordofan, where food insecurity was driven by an extremely challenging economic situation, combined with severe flooding, conflict and displacement.<sup>104</sup>

In March 2020, the Government of Sudan declared a nationwide public health emergency and introduced mitigation measures, thus severely affecting the already crippled economy, and worsening unemployment rates. In particular, the increased demand for imported essential food and non-food items exacerbated shortages of foreign exchange. Prices of food and non-food commodities rose as the Sudanese pound devaluated, transport costs spiralled,

and market and household stocks fell. By August, year-on-year inflation was 214 percent, resulting in high prices of agricultural inputs and production.<sup>105</sup> Remittances accounted for roughly 10 percent of the Sudanese economy. Projections suggest that the impact on remittances caused the Sudanese GDP to drop by roughly US\$ 500 million in 2020, further impacting the already debt-distressed state.<sup>106</sup> In late October, the government stopped all fuel subsidies, which led to an initial 400 percent increase in fuel prices, and a further increase in food and non-food prices.<sup>107</sup> This inflation substantially decreased the purchasing power, especially of urban households. Accordingly, the number of people in Crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity in Khartoum state almost doubled, going from 793,000 between June and August 2019 to 1.4 million during the same period in 2020. Meanwhile, pastoralist households were hit by the restrictions in livestock movements with the cancellation of Hajj and border closures, which led to the deterioration of livestock health and natural resources.<sup>108</sup>

**MAP 9: Food insecurity and IDP numbers in Sudan**



*Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP and IOM concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

Source: IPC, IOM and UNHCR <sup>109</sup>




## South Sudan

  
**1,615,765**  
 IDPs

  
**318,212**  
 Refugees

  
**7.5M**  
 People in Need  
 (2021: 8.3M)

  
**6.5M**  
 Food Insecure People  
 (2021: 7.2M)

The protracted humanitarian crisis in South Sudan has continued to deteriorate in 2020. Two years after the signing of the Revitalized Peace Agreement, the country witnessed a decline in political conflict but a growing trend in localized, sub-national conflicts, namely intercommunal and livestock-related clashes. Similar to past periods in the country's short history, the peace deal and the establishment of the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) in February 2020 have not put an end to violence and displacement. Overall, 7.5 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2020, and this number is expected to increase to 8.3 million people throughout 2021.<sup>110</sup>

By the end of 2020, there were an estimated 1.6 million IDPs in South Sudan, of which 95 percent were displaced within the country and 5 percent were previously displaced abroad; a 3 percent decrease compared to the end of 2019.<sup>111</sup> A large majority of IDPs was living in host communities (77 percent) with the remainder living in displacement sites. The displaced population was mainly concentrated in the states of Warrap (18 percent), Jonglei (15 percent), Central Equatoria (15 percent) and Upper Nile (14 percent).<sup>112</sup>

Similarly, 2.2 million South Sudanese refugees and asylum-seekers remained displaced across the region at the end of 2020. Most were hosted by Uganda (40 percent) and Sudan (33 percent), followed by Ethiopia, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>113</sup>

Seasonal floods in the second half of the year affected more than 1 million individuals, including an estimated 480,000 flood-displaced people. Jonglei State and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) were amongst the most impacted areas with 495,000 people affected, followed by Lakes (147,000 people affected) and Unity (126,000 people affected).<sup>114</sup> The floods affected key infrastructure, livestock and crop production. The indirect effect of flooding was felt across affected regions during the 2020 lean season peaking in July–August, when net cereal production was 4 percent below average and there was a cereal deficit of 22 percent (below the 2014–2019 average). Additional flooding between July and October further weakened infrastructure, livelihoods and market access across recovering communities along the White Nile, Pibor, Sobat, Lol and other rivers. Meanwhile, over 15,000 people in Upper Nile were displaced by violence in late 2020 and were forced to seek shelter in three IDP camps.<sup>115</sup>

The pandemic disrupted the provision of relief services, thus delaying emergency responses and worsening the severity of needs. More specifically, pandemic-related measures restricted the movement of humanitarian staff and the shipping of essential cargo from April to August.<sup>116</sup> The spread of COVID-19 in IDP sites, some of which known as Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites, became an additional challenge to South Sudan's prevention and containment efforts. Several collective centres were closed in April,<sup>117</sup> and various temporary and permanent movements due to congestion inside the sites were observed in the second half of the year, which raised individual concerns for the spread of COVID-19, particularly in Bentiu PoC and Naivasha IDP camp (former Wau PoC Adjacent Area).<sup>118</sup> By mid-February 2021, a total of 161 COVID-19 positive individuals were reported in Bentiu PoC, the largest displacement site with close to 100,000 residents, with a further 41 cases reported in Malakal PoC, home to 30,000 individuals. Seven IDP deaths were also reported in these two sites (5 and 2, respectively).<sup>119</sup> More severe outcomes were avoided thanks to the fact that PoC residents conducted many activities outdoor, such as business, cooking and eating, and given the various mitigation measures that were put in place by humanitarian organizations, including shelter decongestion, re-design of potentially crowded events, installation of handwashing stations, temperature checks at the gates, and closure of schools in the PoCs.

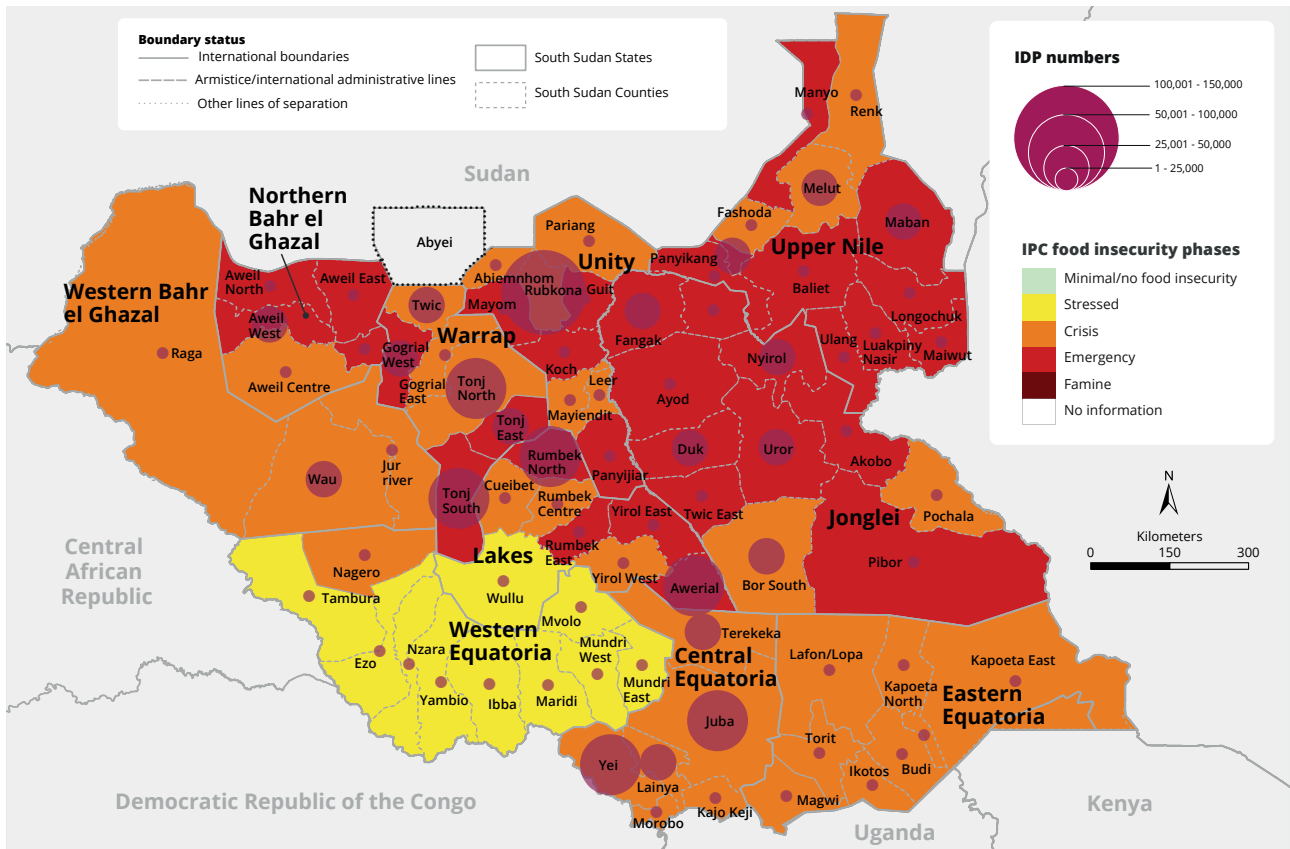
South Sudan is highly import dependent, and in 2019 the cropping season production only met 63 percent of the 2020 national cereal needs. Although this percentage represents a slight improvement from 2018, it remains lower than pre-conflict levels.<sup>120</sup> The reliance on markets stressed the availability and prices of imports following the pandemic,

while the loss of livelihood sources eroded households' purchasing power. Moreover, currency depreciation has led to heavy price increases, particularly on imported goods, contributing to the drop of 50 percent in import volumes.<sup>121</sup> Additionally, remittances, which account for more than 34 percent of South Sudan's GDP, the highest of any country in sub-Saharan Africa, are projected to drop by around 23 percent in the region because of the pandemic, which would significantly impact the South Sudanese economy.<sup>122</sup>

In 2020, food insecurity peaked between May and July, when an estimated 6.5 million people (55 percent of the population) faced acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). Of these, 1.7 million faced emergency (IPC Phase 4) food security outcomes. Over the April–July 2021 period, an estimated 7.2 million people (60 percent of the population) are expected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse food insecurity, the highest number since IPC was introduced in the country. Of these, 2.5 million people are estimated to be facing Emergency food insecurity (IPC Phase 4).<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, the Famine Review Committee found that 108,000 people are facing Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) food insecurity with Famine Likely conditions in four payams (administrative divisions), Risk of Famine in two payams and insufficient evidence in four payams of Pibor county. For those facing Emergency and Catastrophe (IPC Phase 4 and 5), an immediate scale-up of humanitarian assistance to save lives and to prevent a total collapse of livelihoods in the affected counties is required. For the population facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3), the scaling up of assistance to reduce food consumption gaps and protect livelihoods is urgently needed.<sup>124</sup>



### MAP 10: Food insecurity and IDP numbers in South Sudan



*Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP and IOM concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

Source: IPC, IOM and UNHCR <sup>125</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic in the EHoA has further stressed a region that is already affected by conflict and insecurity, extreme weather conditions, climate change and pests. Mitigation measures aimed at reducing the spread of the virus have been generally effective in the region. However, the effect of the pandemic has caused food insecurity to spike due to the unintended negative consequences on the economy that have increased commodity prices, including staple food prices, thwarted access to basic services, and hindered people's capacity to use mobility as a coping mechanism. As a result of these combined drivers of food insecurity, some 54 million people were estimated to be acutely food insecure in the EHoA region in 2020. As the pandemic's impact lingers on the economy and livelihoods, this number is projected to remain at these high levels in 2021. Among the most vulnerable are displaced populations; by the end of 2020, the region hosted a total of 8.9 million IDPs and 4.7 million refugees and asylum-seekers.

Humanitarian needs for 2021 remain elevated across the region, as the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 continue to reverberate. In addition to the current epidemic, the presence of genomic variants of the virus, already confirmed in most countries in the region, further challenged the capacity to control the spread of the disease. These variants are extremely alarming considering the slow uptake of vaccination and the ability of governments in the region not only to secure, but also distribute vaccines received through COVAX or bilateral agreements. The pandemic has disrupted, and will continue to disrupt the health, social, economic and mobility conditions of most people in the region. Pre-existing, new and recurring challenges will continue to destabilize the EHoA and strain the capacity of affected populations to cope with shocks. These challenges will have implications on migration and hunger dynamics, with broader consequences for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Based on this joint analysis, IOM and WFP propose six key priority actions:

**1: Ensure that migrants and populations affected by displacement have adequate access to lifesaving humanitarian assistance to meet their food, nutrition and other essential needs.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has strained the capacity of both governments and donors to meet the needs of displaced populations. The Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs), the Regional Refugee Response Plans (RRPs) as well as the Regional Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen (MRP) were all revised to reflect the increased needs of the affected populations. However, donor contributions to meet the food and nutrition needs of the populations and other essential needs outlined in these plans have not been able to keep pace with the growing demand. Equally, governments in the region have diverted public expenditure into national safety net programmes to support local populations affected by the economic downturn, but to a large extent, displaced populations are not incorporated into these mechanisms.

**2: Ensure inclusivity and access to critical services, including COVID-19 immunization efforts, for migrants and populations affected by displacement.**

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the lack of inclusivity of social safety nets in general and of health services in particular. Among the most excluded and disenfranchised are displaced and migrant populations. Furthermore, the pandemic has underlined the notion that no one is safe unless everyone is safe, as excluded populations are left vulnerable to the propagation of the virus, therefore exposing everybody at large. This notion equally underscores the importance of rolling out COVID-19 recovery plans and vaccination plans that are inclusive of displaced and migrant populations. A conscious effort should be made to shape programmes that strengthen access to services and labour markets. These efforts aim to respond to the needs and characteristics of mobile populations, which often include low-skill and part-time labourers.



**3: Recognize the positive contributions of regional integration, labour migration and diasporas in complementing social protection systems, and facilitate the flow of remittances as an essential financial service in recovering from COVID-19.**

COVID-19-related restrictions had devastating effects on job opportunities and people's livelihoods. Recognizing the importance of labour mobility, remittances and regional integration for the development of the region, it is crucial that the momentum for advancing the mobility dimensions of regional integration is maintained to unlock its potential for the socioeconomic recovery of the region. Moreover, remittances are the most significant source of external financial inflows to Africa and are essential in low-income households to purchase food and meet basic needs. In this regard, facilitating the flow of remittances by increasing avenues for regular migration and decreasing barriers in the provision of affordable financial services used to send remittances, is critical in accelerating recovery.

**4. Promote adjustments to national immigration regulations and standard operational procedures.**

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to strain the mobility regimes, public health and the economic development of the countries in the EHoA. Migrants have in some cases become stranded, facing the risk that their immigration status would no longer comply with immigration regulations. Consequently, thousands of migrants became irregular, unable to safely return to countries or areas of origin and with no access to support from authorities as government offices were operating at limited capacity. Extensions of visas and work permits are essential measures to be considered in 2021 to protect migrants from falling into irregular situations due to administrative complications and be exposed to detention, harassment and deportation. Moreover, COVID-19 has fuelled xenophobia, stigmatization and discrimination towards migrants, calling for a conscious effort to protect those who are most vulnerable to these kinds of violations by limiting their exposure and by providing them with access to legal services. In addition, public disinformation and prejudice against migrants should be addressed through targeted sensitization.

**5. Promote gender-sensitive responses and increased protection towards vulnerable groups that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.**

Unsurprisingly, the economic strain, the isolation of families and the school closures caused by the pandemic have had significant gender implications. With increasing levels of unemployment across multiple sectors, many parents have struggled to meet the basic needs of their families, and children have spent prolonged periods out of school and without access to feeding programmes and education. As a result, many vulnerable children and families were more likely to adopt negative coping strategies, including child marriage, child trafficking and transactional sex. Women faced heightened rates of intimate partner violence and increased exposure to GBV, which also increased the risk of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) transmission and other sexually transmittable diseases. Humanitarian assistance in combination with social programmes should be planned and executed with special attention to the protection violations that were reported to be on the rise in 2020.

**6: Improve evidence generation and coordination between humanitarian agencies for regular data collection and analysis to better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on mobility and food security dynamics.**

Responding to life-saving needs, particularly as food insecurity is on the rise, and recovering from the effects of COVID-19 require comprehensive and reliable data. Similarly, understanding the repercussions that COVID-19 restrictions caused on human mobility, and especially on those depending on mobility for their survival, such as displaced and migrant populations, is key to informing recovery plans. Data-driven approaches enable the humanitarian community to provide informed responses and help prioritize policies and interventions. As different data exercises have been adapted to limit the risks of spreading the virus, it is important to maintain all the necessary precautions while ensuring access and safe field presence in the implementation of solid and transparent methodologies. Collaboration in all phases of data management, including data sharing and analysis, is critical to the common definition of problems and to the designing of shared solutions.

## ENDNOTES

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- 14 DTM monitors migration trends along the main corridors affecting the region through a network of points established in locations of high mobility. DTM has been operational in eight countries of the EHoA region during 2020, with a network of 108 FMPs operational across the region. The main aim of all FM operations that are active in the region is to track cross-border movements through FMPs which are established at key areas of high mobility.
- 15 The Horn of Africa (HoA) Route consists of migration movements intended towards countries in the HoA, namely Djibouti, Somalia, Eritrea or Ethiopia, irrespective of where they originate.
- 16 Due to different geographical coverage, these percentages do not include Yemen, which falls under the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.
- 17 Due to different geographical coverage, these percentages do not include Yemen, which are instead reported in other IOM publications.
- 18 These indicators are compiled using a sample of 444,789 tracked movements: Eastern Route (120,176), HoA Route (262,051), Northern Route (6,341), Southern Route (56,221).
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 The indicators on education and employment are compiled using a non-representative FMS sample of approximately 28,000 respondents, administered in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia.
- 22 GSI is a composite additive score which records the strictness of government policies and it is composed of nine response indicators including school closures, workplace closures, and travel bans, etc on an ordinal scale. This is then rescaled to a value from 0 to 100 (100 = strictest). It is for comparative purposes only and should not necessarily be interpreted as a rating of the appropriateness or effectiveness of a country's response. If policies vary at the subnational level, the index is shown as the response level of the strictest sub-region.
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## PHOTO CREDITS

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### Cover Page

© IOM/Alexander Bee

*Caption: Two migrants are walking in the desert on the way to Obock, north of Djibouti.*

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*Caption: Two migrants are pouring water taken from a hole in the ground into a plastic can in Alat Ela.*

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*Caption: Djibouti, Obock. Ethiopian migrants line up for NFI distribution at the Massagara site.*

### Page iv -3

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*Caption: Margaret Tadita waits for family members to help carry her rations to her household, a kilometre from the food distribution point.*

### Page 1

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*Caption: General views of homes in Koloji IDP camp.*

### Page 17

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*Caption: For refugees who live too far from the food distribution point food is transported to their houses via cars, trucks and even boda bodas. Imvepi Refugee Settlement, which hosts South Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda.*

### Page 20

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*Caption: Nuriya's parents took her to Kenya from Ethiopia when she was a teenager. Her parents were fleeing political insecurity under the Ethiopian Derg military junta.*

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*Caption: 132 migrants from Ethiopia are sitting in the transit center in Obock before boarding the bus to Loyada.*

### Page 23

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*Caption: A woman prepares a meal outside her temporary shelter.*

### Page 25

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*Caption: Bishara, 12 months, sits on the floor of their home with her mother, Fatuma, eating PlumpySup to treat moderate acute malnutrition (MAM).*

### Page 26

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*Caption: Fatuma Abdulahi, 50, (left) stands in front of her shelter at Gaxandhale IDP camp in Abuwaq, Somalia, on Friday 03 May 2019. Fatuma and her 5 children moved here a day before the WFP team visit. Her other children are in town looking for food, as the family have depended on handouts for well wishers.*

### Page 27

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*Caption: People collect water in an IDP settlement in Abudwaq, Somalia.*

### Page 29

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*Caption: Ethiopian refugees under a makeshift shelter in Um Rakuba refugee settlement, Sudan. The United Nations refugee agency says about 43,000 people have fled Ethiopia's embattled Tigray region into neighbouring Sudan.*

### Page 31

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*Caption: Women collecting bags of WFP food assistance delivered via WFP air drops in Nyal village.*

### Page 32

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*Caption: a group of South Sudanese beneficiaries look on as a WFP aircraft drops food assistance into the drop zone on the outskirts of Nyal village in South Sudan.*

### Back Cover

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*Caption: Djibouti, Obock. Ethiopian migrants line up for NFI distribution at the Massagara site.*



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