



World Food Programme

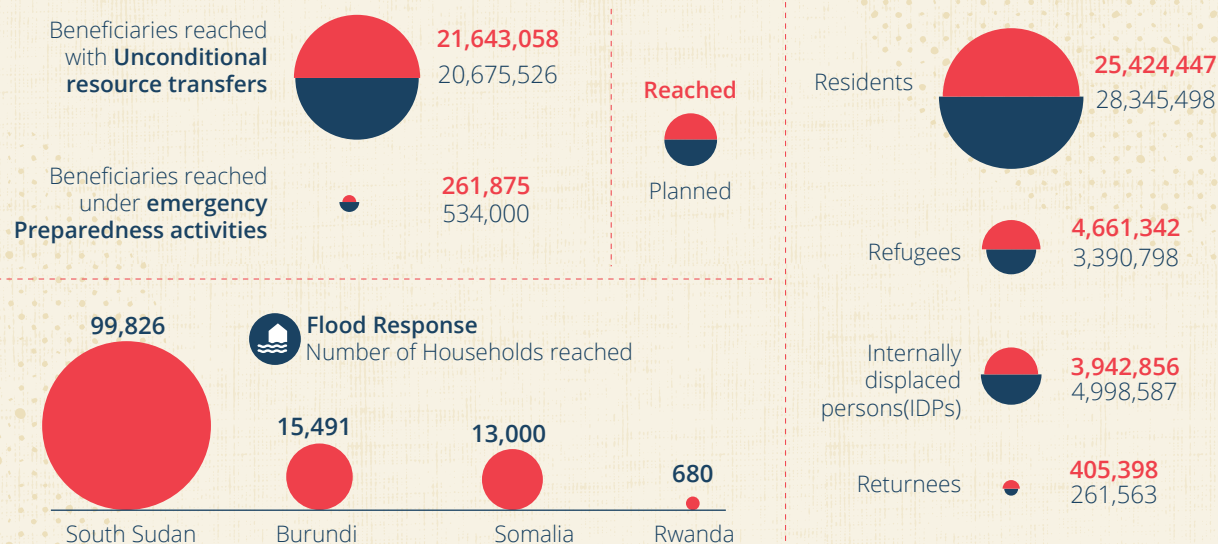
SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

REGIONAL BUREAU FOR **EASTERN AFRICA**

Emergency Response and Preparedness

2021 Regional Achievements & Outlook

MAY 2022



Regional Overview

In the Eastern Africa region, the emergency and humanitarian context has become increasingly complex and frequently entails cross-border implications. The regional food security situation is alarming. As at the end of 2021, **approximately 63 million people are food insecure in WFP's ten countries of operation in the region. Sudan, Ethiopia, and South Sudan** are among the ten worst food crises globally in terms of numbers of people facing Crisis or worse IPC Phase 3 and above) levels of food insecurity.

This deep food insecurity is driven by numerous compounding shocks encompassing climate hazards, conflict and insecurity, disease outbreaks and economic shocks. Climatically, **a sub-regional drought across the Eastern Horn of Africa is affecting some 12-13 million people with acute food insecurity** and severe water shortages across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia. Three consecutive failed rainy seasons have led to drought and failed crops with harvests 60-70 percent below normal in affected areas. At the same time, heavy rains and floods are affecting the region, with heavy flooding recorded in 2021 in Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan. In South Sudan alone, record flooding is affecting more than 850,000 people in 33 out of 78 counties.

Conflict and insecurity compound the impact of these climate hazards. **In northern Ethiopia, conflict has resulted in over 9 million people in need of relief food assistance across the three regions of Afar, Amhara and Tigray.** In addition to driving suffering and food insecurity, conflict has been a key driver of displacement. In the past ten years, the total number of refugees in

Eastern Africa has more than tripled **from 1.4 million to 4.7 million.** Uganda alone is generously hosting some 1.4 million refugees, the highest number of any country in Africa. In addition to refugees, the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) has more than doubled over the same time period from **5.4 million to 12.4 million.**

Moreover, COVID-19 and associated containment measures have disrupted the informal economy, hitting the urban poor the most. The drastic economic slowdown resulted in a disproportionate loss of income and employment. A combination of disrupted food systems, food price volatility, inflation and high food prices meant reduced household capacity to afford food from markets across much of the region. Food price inflation in 2021 was over 100 percent year on year in Sudan, and 30-40 percent in both South Sudan and Ethiopia.

Looking forward into 2022, food insecurity is expected to deteriorate through to June due to ongoing drought, compounding impacts of conflict and COVID-19, likely floods in South Sudan and macro-economic instability in Burundi, Ethiopia, and Sudan. In northern Ethiopia, challenges with humanitarian access will also continue to drive high food insecurity numbers even if a peace deal is reached soon.

These shocks continue to disrupt the lives and livelihoods of populations in the region, increasing the number of food-insecure people and malnourished children in the region. In response, WFP together with Governments, UN Agencies and Partners continue to prepare for and respond to avert regional food and nutrition crises.

Regional Achievements

In 2021, WFP responded to numerous large-scale and more localised humanitarian shocks across Eastern Africa. Together with Governments, UN Agencies and other partners, WFP continue to prepare for and respond to regional food and nutrition crises while following an accountability, inclusion and do no harm approach, supporting populations affected by conflicts, droughts, floods, desert locusts and COVID-19.

Conflict response:

WFP Ethiopia

Over a year into the conflict in northern Ethiopia, more than 9 million people across the three regions of Afar, Amhara and Tigray are in dire need of food assistance. WFP estimates, that on average, only 29 percent of the caloric needs of crisis-affected populations in northern Ethiopia were covered in the past months. In the Tigray region, 83 percent of the population (4.6 million people) are food insecure and struggle to find enough to eat.² Moreover, 50 percent of nutritionally vulnerable pregnant and lactating women (PLW) were found to be malnourished and three quarters of the Tigray population are using unsustainable coping strategies to deal with food shortages. This includes limiting portion sizes, the number of meals per day, and almost exclusively relying on cereals, indicating an extreme lack of dietary diversity.

WFP response: As of end of 2021, WFP has reached approximately 3.5 million people in northern Ethiopia with emergency food and nutrition assistance. WFP is also serving some 88,000 camp-based Eritrean refugees in the three affected regions with a combination of relief food and nutrition programmes.

The impact: WFP has been providing food assistance to conflict-affected areas of North Gondar in the Amhara Region since September 2021. To assess the food security of households participating in relief assistance, a food security survey was undertaken in December 2021. The assessment indicated that WFP food assistance is having a positive impact in diversifying household food consumption and improving beneficiary households' ability to cope with the situation. For instance, the proportion of households deemed to have acceptable food consumption increased from 34 percent in May 2021, to 82 percent after the WFP intervention.

Shock Response:

WFP Rwanda and Burundi

WFP has been responding to more localised shocks across the region. In May 2021, the Nyiragongo Volcano erupted near Goma city in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with lava streams pouring East in the direction of **Rwanda**. The volcanic/tectonic activity also caused many earthquakes in both DRC and Rwanda, resulting in a mandatory evacuation of several parts of Goma. Following the evacuation, residents of Goma started to enter Rwanda for safety reasons. To respond to this situation, WFP provided high energy biscuits (HEBs) and hot meals to approximately 1,600 displaced people from DRC until June 2021, when the majority of those displaced could safely return to the DRC.

Moreover, in neighbouring **Burundi**, WFP led successful emergency response to the flooding of Lake Tanganyika. Engagement and collaboration with the Burundi Red Cross (BRC) continued with the successful rolling out of the pilot phase of the Forecast-based Financing (FbF) initiative. This innovative approach aims to capacitate the BRC to establish an AA system ahead of floods. As a result, a draft flood early action protocol was developed, and 12,835 people at risk of further flooding of the rising Lake Tanganyika received anticipatory cash and were able to take preventive measures. In June 2021, WFP managed to secure further funding and scale up the initiative to widen it to a multi-hazard anticipatory system that also includes droughts, epidemics, and man-made disasters.

Desert locust crisis response:

WFP Somalia

A key regional achievement of 2021 was a substantive reduction in the desert locust crisis that had been threatening livelihoods across much of the region. Over 2020 and 2021 WFP has been collaborating with, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Governments, and partners to address the implications of the desert locusts.

In Somalia, WFP reached 581,000 people whose livelihoods were affected by desert locust infestation across 45 districts. Hereby, WFP leveraged the national social safety net, which WFP implements on behalf of the Federal Government of Somalia.

Programme targeting and prioritization: *WFP Rwanda and Uganda*

Another key achievement in 2021 has been the progress on programme targeting and prioritisation recognizing limited resources and overwhelming humanitarian needs in the region. To maximize available resources, WFP and UNHCR in **Rwanda and Uganda**, through the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub, strengthened targeting practices to prioritize assistance to the most vulnerable populations while concurrently promoting self-reliance of refugee populations.

Challenges

Access constraints in northern Ethiopia: Humanitarian operations in northern Ethiopia remain severely restricted by operational constraints, including insecurity, bureaucratic impediments, limited access to people in hard-to-reach areas, and limited presence of partners on the ground, especially in Afar. As of Dec 2021, **no humanitarian supplies have entered Tigray Region by road since 14 December and fuel stocks have not been replenished since August 2021.** The lack of fuel in Tigray has a major impact on the delivery of assistance, with humanitarian organizations forced to suspend operations.

Ration Cuts: Due to substantial funding shortages in the region, significant **refugee ration cuts of up to 50 percent** are affecting some 70 percent of the total refugee population in the region. This includes cuts of 50 percent of the minimum required food basket in **South Sudan, 48 percent cut in Kenya, and 40 percent cut in Ethiopia.** This has resulted in growing risks for refugees, including increased malnutrition and anaemia, stunted growth of children, protection risks such as child labour, and security risks to humanitarian workers.

Ration cuts are not only affecting refugees. In South Sudan for example, the immense scale of needs and funding shortages mean substantial ration cuts for vulnerable populations both internally displaced and facing acute food insecurity. Due to limited funding, WFP is only able to provide 70 percent rations in the two most severely affected counties, and 50 percent rations in all other areas, and only over the lean season.



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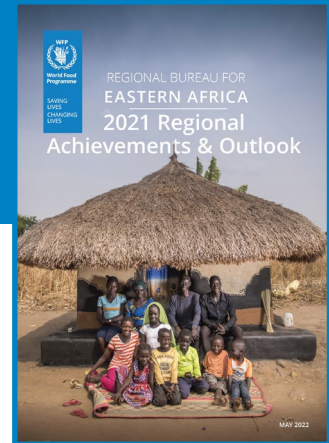
PHOTO CREDITS

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ENDNOTES

- 1 WFP, Emergency Food Security Assessment of the Tigray Region of Ethiopia, January 2022.



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