

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION SITUATION IN EASTERN AFRICA

MARCH 2024 UPDATE

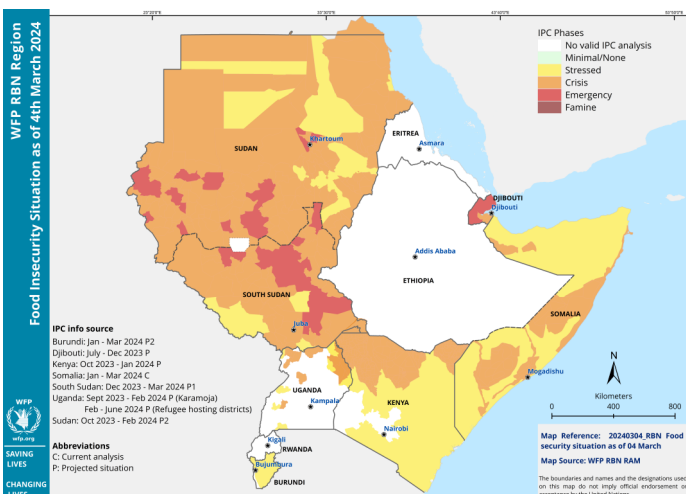
FOOD SECURITY OVERVIEW

Conflict, inflation, disease outbreaks and poor access to nutritious diets and safe water continue to impact the state of food security and nutrition in Eastern Africa.

As of March 2024, there are an estimated **54 million food-insecure people in Eastern Africa**. Hotspot countries include **Sudan** (17.7 million), **Ethiopia** (15.8 million people), and **South Sudan** (5.7 million).¹

Some 23.4 million people are displaced internally or abroad, including 5 million refugees and asylum seekers and 18.4 million IDPs.² Since the conflict started in **Sudan**, more than 6 million have been displaced internally, and 1.7 million have been forced to flee across borders.³

MAP 1: REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY SITUATION ACCORDING TO IPC CLASSIFICATION AS OF MARCH 2024



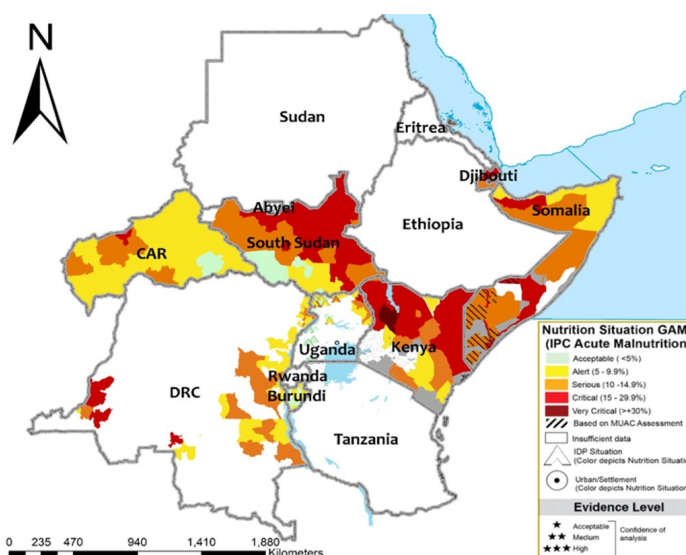
NUTRITION OVERVIEW

The war in **Sudan** continues to be a leading cause of increased cases of malnutrition and associated mortality in the region (see more in the box on page 2).⁴

In **South Sudan**, between July 2023 and June 2024, an estimated 1.7 million children between 6-59 months are expected to suffer acute malnutrition including half a million children expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition (SAM). 870,000 pregnant or breastfeeding women are expected to suffer acute malnutrition in this period.

In **Ethiopia**, the prolonged drought coupled with malaria, measles, and cholera outbreaks have exacerbated further the deterioration in nutritional security with Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates beyond the emergency threshold (>15 percent), with worst outcomes in Tigray, Afar, Amhara, and parts of the Oromia, Southern and Southwest regions. The ongoing conflict in Amhara has also led to the destruction or

MAP 2: REGIONAL ACUTE MALNUTRITION SITUATION, AS OF FEBRUARY 2024



closing down of schools, leaving 2.5 million out-of-school children, and increasing risks of child marriage and early childbearing for girls.⁵

KEY DRIVERS OF FOOD INSECURITY

AGRO-CLIMATIC SHOCKS

The favorable October-December 2023 rainfall season and good rains received in parts of the region between January-February 2024 sustained vegetation development and most surface water resources.

Rainfall forecasts for March-May 2024 point to a likelihood of two consecutive season with wetter-than-usual conditions over most of **Kenya**, **Somalia**, southern **Ethiopia**, **South Sudan**, **Uganda**, **Burundi**, **Rwanda**, and north-western **Tanzania**.

Enhanced rains will further support the regeneration of vegetation and water replenishment in pastoral and agropastoral areas, helping improve livestock body condition and productivity, allowing for breeding to take place, and improving access to milk.

Positive effects on crop production are likely, which, in turn, will increase market supply and lower food prices. In addition, the availability of agriculture wage labour is likely to increase household purchasing power – with positive implications on access to food.

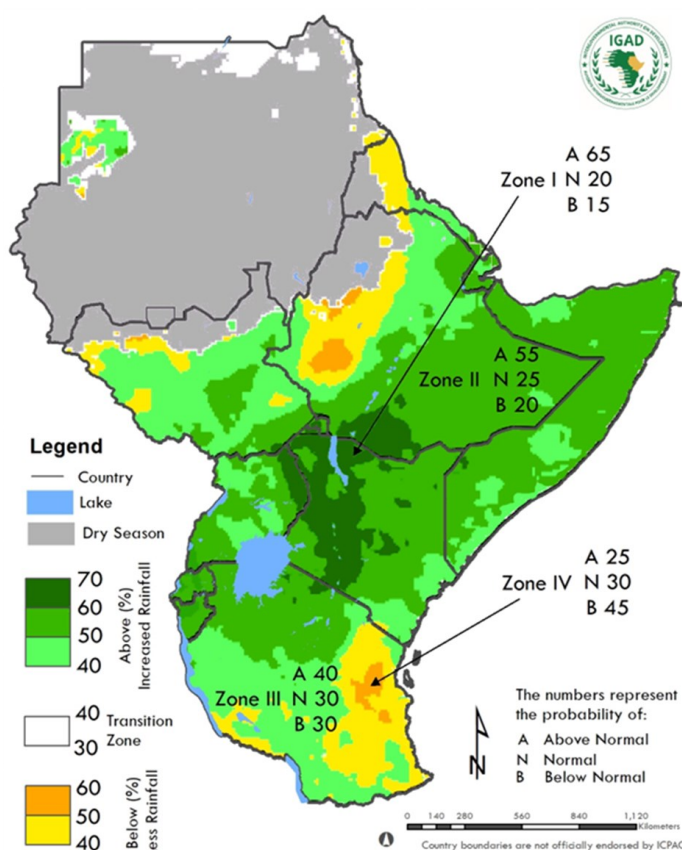
Yet, the wetter-than-normal conditions are likely to trigger landslides in the hilly areas of **Kenya**, eastern & western **Uganda**, **Rwanda** and **Burundi**. Flooding and flooding-induced displacement are likely to occur in Juba-Shabelle basin in **Ethiopia** and **Somalia**, along the Lake Victoria basin and Nile in **South Sudan**, and eastern **Uganda**.

Favorable climatic and vegetation conditions might also trigger the breeding and spread of desert locusts, which will negatively impact on crop production and rangeland vegetation unless effective control measures are implemented on time. Currently, swarms have been reported in northwest **Somalia**, eastern **Ethiopia**, and in the coastal areas of **Eritrea**, **Sudan**, **Yemen**, and **Saudi Arabia**.

During the March-May period, the northern part of the region (**Sudan**, **South Sudan**, **Djibouti**, **Eritrea**,) will

face dry weather conditions and elevated land surface temperatures increasing the likelihood of heat stress, water and pasture deterioration, competition for available resources and livestock mobility that will lead to deteriorating livestock body condition, reduced production and productivity, and livestock market value that impacts on food security conditions. In some of these countries, the climatic shocks will be compounded by the effects of conflict, macroeconomics, and other underlying vulnerabilities.

MAP 3: THE PROBABILITY OF MARCH-MAY 2024 SEASONAL RAINS. GREEN (YELLOW AND ORANGE) SHADES CORRESPOND TO ABOVE (BELOW) AVERAGE RAINFALL



CONFLICT IN SUDAN WORSENING NUTRITION NEEDS ACROSS THE REGION



The war in **Sudan** continues to be a leading cause of increased cases of malnutrition and associated mortality in the region. Sudan is now estimated to have the world's highest prevalence of global acute malnutrition.⁶

Currently, 12.2 million children 6-59 months are suffering from acute malnutrition, 3 million of whom are suffering from SAM. An estimated 3.6 million pregnant and breastfeeding women are acutely malnourished.⁷

A report by MSF warns that 13 children die per day in Zamzam, one of Sudan's camps for displaced people in North Darfur.⁸ An estimated 4.7 million Sudanese women and children are expected to require nutrition assistance in 2024. This comprises 2.8 million moderately acutely malnourished children 6 – 59 months and 1.2 million pregnant and breastfeeding women. Disease outbreaks of cholera, dengue, measles, and malaria continue to increase mortality associated with malnutrition, particularly in overcrowded shelter sites and sites with poor water, sanitation and hygiene. Even in relatively safe locations hosting displaced populations, living conditions are deteriorating.⁹

HIGH FOOD PRICES AND COST OF LIVING¹⁰

Cost of living across Eastern Africa remained high in the last quarter of 2023 – inflation was 10.1 percent on average across the region in December 2023. The cost of living was particularly high in **Burundi** and **Ethiopia** which both continued to record double-digit annual inflation (28.7 and 20 percent respectively). Due to the conflict, inflation rates for **Sudan** have not been issued by the Central Bank since February 2023; however, inflation is estimated to have remain above 500 percent.

Local currencies across Eastern Africa continued to lose value vis-a-vis the US dollar towards the end of 2023 – with **South Sudan**, **Sudan**, and **Burundi** recording the highest depreciation in both official and parallel currencies. The Kenyan Shilling (KES) recorded the highest drop vs the USD in the last 30 years.

Food prices remain high across Eastern Africa, with average food inflation at 9.8 percent as of December 2023. **Ethiopia** and **Burundi** continued to report double-digit food inflation (30.6 and 22.2 percent as of December 2023 respectively).

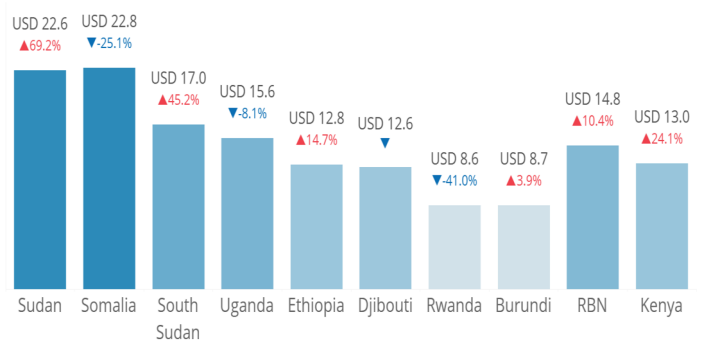
As of December 2023, the average per capita monthly price of a local food basket reached USD 14.8 across the region – a 10.4 percent increase from the same month last year. The highest spikes are in **South Sudan** – where the food basket increased by 45 percent compared to 2022 levels and **Sudan** where it

increased by 70 percent. Average pump prices were 23.6 percent higher than the same month last year.

FIGURE 1: AVERAGE ANNUAL INFLATION AND FOOD INFLATION ACROSS EASTERN AFRICA, DECEMBER 2023



FIGURE 2: COST OF THE WFP FOOD BASKET (USD) AND CHANGE IN DECEMBER 2023 COMPARED TO DECEMBER 2022



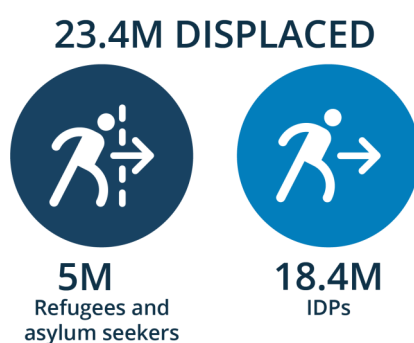
CONFLICT, INSECURITY AND DISPLACEMENT

In the region there are an estimated **23.4 million displaced people**, including 18.4 million IDPs and 5 million Refugees and Asylum seekers.

The conflict in **Sudan** continues to have ramifications on the food security situation in the country and across the region.

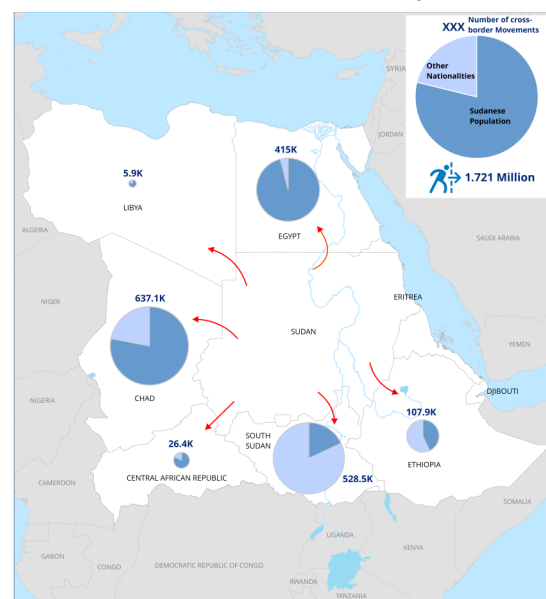
As of the end of 2023, 9 million people were internally displaced in **Sudan**, more than 6 million since the start of the conflict, and 1.7 million have been forced to flee across borders. As well as disrupting agricultural production, increasing inflation and food prices, the conflict has impacted on food security in the rest of the region. For example, in **South Sudan**, there has been reduced fuel and food availability as the areas were previously reliant on Sudanese imports.

Other conflicts such



as Gaza and Ukraine continue to take global attention and resources and are likely to affect regional imports, particularly due to the impact on shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

FIGURE 3: CROSS-BORDER MOVEMENTS FROM SUDAN AS OF JANUARY 2024



OUTLOOK FOR 2024Q2

Food insecurity is likely to remain stable moving towards the 2nd quarter of 2024 due to the counterbalancing effects of the improved weather conditions and the lean season.

The conflict in **Sudan** looks likely to continue through 2024 and with it continued high displacement both internally and to other countries such as **South Sudan** and **Ethiopia** exacerbating an already fragile situation.

Food prices in the Region remain high and the trend is projected to continue especially with an outlook to a potential escalation of the conflict in the Middle East that could negatively impact global oil prices and supply chains.

Conflict-related shocks could be counterbalanced by a wetter-than-normal climatic season that will provide an

opportunity for the region to continue its recovery from the 2020-2023 drought.

Two consecutive wetter-than-normal season will provide an opportunity for the region to continue recovering from the effects of the 2020-2023 drought. Yet, in floods-prone areas across **Ethiopia**, **Somalia**, and **South Sudan** humanitarian needs are likely to increase due to floods-induced human displacement, and lower food production through destruction of farmlands and crops.

Access to services and supply of goods is also likely to be threatened by floods. The spread of water-borne (e.g., cholera, dysentery) and vector-borne (malaria) diseases as well as plant and livestock pests and diseases are also of concern.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Close monitoring of the food security and nutrition situation in areas at risk of further deterioration, including but is not limited to, Tigray and Amhara regions of **Ethiopia**, **South Sudan** and **Sudan**.
- Continuous monitoring of the drivers of food insecurity for timely early warning information for action. This includes supporting and strengthening initiatives to address and mitigate conflict as well as monitoring of rivers and lakes that are known to cause massive flooding.
- Strengthening of disease surveillance as well as screening and activities and interventions aiming to malnutrition treatment and prevention.
- Strengthening anticipatory actions and strengthening community-based disaster risk reduction to withstand shocks.

REFERENCES

¹According to the most recent country-level food security assessments - includes IPC3+ or equivalent including refugees.

²Total refugees and IDPs according to the [UNHCR data portal](#) (accessed on 22nd February 2024).

³IOM DTM Sudan. [Monthly Displacement Overview \(01\)](#), February 2024.

⁴Ethiopia HRP Mar 2024, Kenya IPC AMN Sept 2023, Somalia IPC AMN Sept 2023 for children & internal estimations for PBW, South Sudan PC Nov 2023, Sudan PiN 2024, Djibouti IPC June 2023, Uganda IPC Feb 2023 (Karamoja)

⁵Ethiopia OCHA Situation Report January 2024

⁶WFP Regional Sudan Crisis Appeal #3

⁷Ibd.

⁸MSF February 2024

⁹OCHA Sudan Crisis: Humanitarian Key Messages – November 2023

¹⁰Eastern Africa Regional Market and Trade Update Q4 2023

World Food Programme | Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa
Research, Assessment and Monitoring (RAM), Nutrition, Security

RBN RAM
rbn.raminfo@wfp.org

RBN Nutrition
RBN_Nutrition_Unit_List@wfp.org

RBN Security
rbn_secanalysis@wfp.org

