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East Africa

Food Security Outlook Update

Conflict and El Niño-related drought remain major drivers of acute food insecurity in the Region

February 2016

Key Messages:

A relatively smaller population of highly conflict-affected households in central and southern Unity State in South Sudan likely face Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) acute food insecurity as they experience large gaps in their basic food needs. Larger populations of conflict-affected households in Unity, Upper Nile, and Jonglei States are in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) as their availability of and access to food remains highly restricted due to severely constrained access to their typical livelihoods and markets. National-level staple food availability remains constrained by below-average, conflict-affected seasonal production and on-going macroeconomic stresses on markets.

The largest acutely food insecure population is in Ethiopia, where many households face Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) acute food insecurity following 2015 El Niño-related drought across much of central and eastern reaches of the country. Worst-affected areas include pastoral Afar Region and Sitti Zone of Somali Region, as well as agricultural and agropastoral East and West Hararghe in Oromia Region, and Wag Himra in Amhara Region.

Poor El Niño rains have also impacted the northern pastoral and agropastoral areas of Somalia, leading to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) acute food insecurity outcomes. Food insecurity is expected to worsen, through the first quarter of 2016, accentuated by the early start to the lean season. Similarly, below average El Niño rains have resulted in well below-average agricultural production in Darfur, Kassala, North Kordofan, Red Sea, West Kordofan, White Nile, states in Sudan, which is expected to lead to atypically high food security needs among resident, non-displaced households.

About 5.6 million conflict-affected people in Burundi, South Sudan, Sudan, and Yemen were displaced as of mid-February. Most households have limited pre-conflict productive assets and face limited access to income-earning opportunities and markets, increasing their vulnerability to food insecurity.

Many household throughout the rest of the region saw improvements to their food security in February, resulting from overall favorable crop and livestock production, including in central and southern Somalia, Kenya, Rwanda, and large parts of Uganda. Enhanced production, driven by above-average to average October to January El Niño rains has contributed to keeping much of the Region in Minimal (IPC Phase 1), likely through the onset of March to May rains.

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